

Safeguarding Policy

1. Introduction

Every Mind Child Psychology Ltd is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people who access our services, whether as clients or as family members of clients.

As a neuroaffirming clinic specialising in diagnostic assessment and therapeutic support for autistic and ADHD children, we recognise that neurodivergent children may experience increased vulnerability to abuse, coercion, misunderstanding, social exclusion, and systemic inequality.

Our safeguarding practice is grounded in our core values:

- **Acceptance** – We recognise and respect neurodivergent ways of thinking, communicating and experiencing the world.
- **Authenticity** – We create spaces where children feel safe to be themselves without masking or fear of judgement.
- **Equality** – We challenge discrimination and ensure safeguarding practice is inclusive and accessible to all children, regardless of age, disability, neurotype, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, or sexuality.
- **Advocacy** – We actively promote children's rights, amplify their voices, and take decisive action where safety or wellbeing is compromised.

We believe all children, without exception, have the right to protection from abuse and neglect.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

2. Legislative Framework

This policy is informed by:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (current edition)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (where applicable)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children includes:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of health or development
- Ensuring safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable best possible outcomes

Child protection refers specifically to protecting children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

3. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Set out Every Mind Child Psychology Ltd's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
- Clarify roles, responsibilities and accountability for safeguarding
- Provide clear procedures for identifying, responding to and reporting safeguarding concerns
- Support staff, associates, contractors and volunteers to act appropriately and confidently when concerns arise

4. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals working for or on behalf of Every Mind Child Psychology Ltd, including:

- Directors
- Employees
- Self-employed clinicians and associates
- Assistant psychologists and trainees
- Contractors and volunteers

The policy applies to all work undertaken with children and families, including in-person, online and remote services.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead for Every Mind Child Psychology Ltd is:

Dr Liz Dawes – Clinic Director

The DSL has overall responsibility for:

- Providing advice and guidance on safeguarding concerns
- Making and overseeing referrals to Children's Social Care, MASH, LADO and the Police where required
- Managing allegations against staff, associates or contractors
- Ensuring safeguarding training requirements are met
- Liaising with external agencies
- Ensuring safeguarding records are maintained securely
- Reviewing and updating this policy

Deputy Safeguarding Lead

In the absence of the DSL, safeguarding responsibilities will be delegated to a nominated senior clinician appointed by the Clinic Director.

6. All Staff, Associates and Contractors

All individuals working with children have a responsibility to:

- Safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Remain alert to indicators of abuse or neglect
- Follow this policy and associated procedures
- Share concerns promptly with the DSL
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries

7. Understanding Vulnerability in Neurodivergent Children

We recognise that autistic and ADHD children may:

- Experience communication differences that affect disclosure
- Mask distress in clinical settings
- Be more vulnerable to bullying, exploitation or coercion
- Be misunderstood by professionals
- Have sensory or processing differences affecting how harm is expressed

Safeguarding practice must therefore:

- Use developmentally and neuroaffirming appropriate communication
- Avoid deficit-based assumptions
- Consider whether behaviour reflects unmet need or distress
- Ensure the child's voice is actively supported and interpreted sensitively

8. Definitions of Abuse and Harm

Abuse and neglect may occur in many forms. For safeguarding purposes, abuse is categorised as:

- **Physical abuse:** deliberate physical harm or injury
- **Emotional abuse:** persistent emotional maltreatment affecting emotional development or self-worth
- **Sexual abuse:** forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including online abuse
- **Neglect:** persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs

Additional safeguarding concerns include (but are not limited to):

- Domestic abuse
- Child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- Child criminal exploitation (CCE)
- Online and digital abuse
- Radicalisation
- Peer-on-peer abuse

9. Safer Recruitment and Selection

Every Mind Child Psychology Ltd is committed to safer recruitment practices. All staff and associates must:

- Hold appropriate professional qualifications and registrations
- Provide satisfactory references
- Complete safeguarding training appropriate to their role
- Hold an Enhanced DBS check

DBS checks will be monitored through the DBS Update Service where applicable.

10. Training and Supervision

- All clinicians must complete safeguarding training at a level appropriate to their role (minimum Level 3 for clinicians working directly with children)
- Assistant psychologists and trainees must receive safeguarding training and regular safeguarding supervision
- Safeguarding will be a standing item in clinical supervision where children are involved
- Refresher training will take place at least annually

11. Identifying and Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

Staff must be alert to signs of abuse, neglect or exploitation, including disclosures, behavioural indicators or concerning information shared by others.

Managing a Disclosure

If a child or young person makes a disclosure:

- Listen carefully and remain calm
- Allow the child to speak freely
- Do not ask leading questions
- Do not promise confidentiality
- Explain that information may need to be shared to keep them safe
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing
- Record the disclosure accurately using the child's own words where possible

Concerns must be shared promptly with the DSL and recorded appropriately.

12. Thresholds, Early Help and Referrals

Not all concerns will meet the threshold for statutory intervention. Where concerns are emerging or at a lower level, practitioners should:

- Seek advice from the DSL
- Consider Early Help or preventative support
- Document decision-making clearly

If a child is at risk of significant harm, a referral must be made immediately to the relevant Local Authority Children's Social Care or MASH. In emergencies, the Police must be contacted.

13. Escalation and Professional Challenge

If a practitioner disagrees with a decision made by another agency, or if concerns persist despite intervention, they must:

- Discuss the matter with the DSL
- Escalate concerns through appropriate safeguarding channels
- Re-refer if necessary

Every Mind Child Psychology Ltd supports professional challenge in the best interests of the child.

14. Allegations Against Staff or Associates

Any allegation or concern that a member of staff, associate or contractor has harmed a child, or may pose a risk to children, must be reported immediately to the DSL.

The DSL will:

- Consider the nature of the allegation
- Consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where appropriate
- Ensure no internal investigation takes place prior to LADO advice

15. Whistleblowing and Low-Level Concerns

Every Mind Child Psychology Ltd encourages an open and transparent culture. All staff and associates are expected to report:

- Concerns about safeguarding practice
- Low-level concerns about behaviour or professional boundaries

Concerns can be raised with the DSL without fear of reprisal.

16. Professional Boundaries and Safer Working Practice

All practitioners must:

- Maintain clear professional boundaries
- Avoid dual relationships
- Use approved communication systems only
- Follow lone working guidance
- Adhere to digital safety protocols

17. Use of Mobile Phones

- Mobile phones must not be used during sessions.
- No photographs of children may be taken during sessions.
- Where clinical material is photographed after a session, images must be stored securely in line with the Data Protection Policy and deleted from personal devices immediately.

18. Online and Remote Safeguarding

When working remotely, practitioners must:

- Ensure privacy and confidentiality
- Consider the child's physical environment
- Be alert to online coercion or third-party presence
- Follow identical safeguarding procedures as face-to-face work

19. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information sharing is essential to safeguarding. Practitioners should:

- Seek consent where appropriate and safe
- Share information without consent where a child is at risk of harm
- Share information proportionately and securely

The welfare of the child overrides confidentiality considerations.

20. Recording and Record Keeping

- Safeguarding concerns must be recorded within 24 hours
- Records must distinguish clearly between fact, opinion and third-party information
- Decisions and rationale must be clearly documented
- Records must be stored securely in line with data protection requirements

21. Policy Review and Governance

This policy is owned by the Clinic Director and will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- Legislation or guidance changes
- A serious safeguarding incident occurs

Last review date: 05/01/2026 **Next review date:** 05/01/2027

22. Related Policies

- Confidentiality Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy