

# Safeguarding Policy

**Practitioner:** Elizabeth Gunner – Specialist Speech and Language Therapist (BSc, MRCSLT, HCPC, ASLTIP)

**Practice:** Independent / Sole Trader

**Date of policy:** January 2026

**Review date:** January 2027 (or sooner if guidance changes)

## 1. Policy Statement

I am committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people with whom I work. Safeguarding is a core professional responsibility and underpins all aspects of my practice.

This policy sets out how safeguarding is managed within my independent practice when working across home, school, and community settings.

All children have the right to:

- Be safe from harm and abuse
- Be listened to and taken seriously
- Have their welfare prioritised
- Receive services in an environment that promotes dignity and respect

## 2. Legal and Professional Framework

This policy is informed by and aligned with:

- Children Act 1989 & Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, latest guidance)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE – latest version)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- RCSLT Safeguarding Guidance
- HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics
- Local Authority safeguarding procedures (as relevant to the setting)

## 3. Scope of This Policy

This policy applies to:

- All children and young people I work with (0–25 years)
- All environments I work in, including: - Family homes
- Schools (mainstream, independent and specialist)

- Nurseries and early years settings
- Clinics or community venues
- All communication methods (in-person, online sessions, email, phone, video)

## 4. My Safeguarding Responsibilities

As a sole practitioner, I take full responsibility for:

- Maintaining a current Enhanced DBS certificate (including update service)
- Keeping safeguarding knowledge up to date through regular CPD
- Working in accordance with professional standards (HCPC / RCSLT)
- Acting immediately if I have concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing
- Maintaining appropriate professional boundaries
- Recording safeguarding concerns accurately and securely

## 5. Recognising Safeguarding Concerns

I am alert to potential indicators of:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Exploitation (including online exploitation)
- Domestic abuse
- Radicalisation
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Peer-on-peer abuse
- Self-harm or serious emotional distress

Concerns may arise from:

- Direct disclosure by a child
- Observations of behaviour or presentation
- Changes in mood, communication, or engagement
- Information shared by parents, carers, or school staff

## 6. Responding to a Disclosure

If a child discloses information that suggests they may be at risk I will:

- Stay calm and listen carefully
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by speaking

- Avoid asking leading questions
- Not promise confidentiality
- Explain that I may need to share the information to help keep them safe

I will record:

- The child's words as closely as possible
- The date, time, and context
- My observations (factually, not interpretation)

## 7. Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

When working in schools or nurseries

If I am working in a setting with a designated safeguarding structure:

- I will report concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- I will follow the setting's safeguarding procedures
- I will request confirmation that the concern has been received and recorded

When working privately (e.g. home-based therapy)

If I have concerns about a child's safety when working directly with families:

- I will discuss concerns with parents/carers where appropriate and safe to do so
- If the concern is serious or a child may be at risk of significant harm, I will make a referral directly to:
  - Local Authority Children's Services (MASH)
  - Or NSPCC helpline (for consultation)
- I will document all actions taken

If a child is in immediate danger, I will contact emergency services (999).

## 8. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

Safeguarding records:

- Are factual, clear, and dated
- Are stored securely in line with GDPR
- Are shared only on a need-to-know basis with appropriate professionals

Confidentiality will be maintained unless doing so would place a child at risk of harm.

## 9. Lone Working and Personal Safety

As I work independently across multiple sites, I take the following precautions:

- Informing someone of my schedule and locations

- Using a work phone and maintaining professional communication
- Avoiding being alone behind closed doors where possible (e.g. keeping doors open in schools)
- Trusting professional judgement if a situation feels unsafe
- Ending a session early if safety becomes a concern

## 10. Professional Boundaries

I maintain clear professional boundaries by:

- Using professional contact methods only
- Not engaging with families via personal social media
- Ensuring communication with parents remains appropriate and professional
- Avoiding situations that could be misinterpreted
- Working transparently with schools and families

## 11. Online and Remote Working Safeguarding

When delivering online therapy:

- Sessions take place with parental knowledge and consent
- Platforms used are secure and professional
- No sessions are recorded without written consent
- A responsible adult must be aware of and nearby during sessions with young children

## 12. Allegations Against the Practitioner

If a safeguarding concern or allegation is made about me:

- I will cooperate fully with any investigation
- I understand concerns may be referred to:
  - Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
  - HCPC
  - RCSLT
- I will seek professional advice and support where needed

## 13. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if:

- Legislation changes
- Professional guidance is updated
- A safeguarding incident indicates the need for revision

## 14. Declaration

I confirm that I:

- Have read and understood this safeguarding policy
- Will adhere to this policy in all professional work
- Prioritise the welfare and safety of children at all times

**Signed:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "EG".

Elizabeth Gunner  
Specialist Speech and Language Therapist

**Date:** January 2026