Inspiring Animal Therapy Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Updated: January 2026
Next Review Due: January 2027

This policy reflects our current service delivery, including on-site provision and outreach work, and updated safeguarding reporting arrangements for Cheshire East, Derbyshire and Tameside Local Authorities.

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1. Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy statement is:

To protect children and young people who receive Inspiring Animal Therapy's services from harm. This includes the children of adults who use our services, to provide staff and volunteers, as well as children and young people and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of Inspiring Animal Therapy including senior managers, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students.

Inspiring Animal Therapy is a company run for the following purpose:

We provide Animal Assisted Therapy for children, young people and adults. This may include disadvantaged children, children with additional needs.

We believe everyone has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

We will give equal priority to keeping all children and young people safe regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Some of our referrals to access Inspiring Animal Therapy are supported by agencies such as schools, who have their own safeguarding policies in place.

1.1. Our Principles

Safeguarding arrangements at Inspiring Animal Therapy are underpinned by four principles:

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: all staff / anyone who has contact with a child or young person including volunteers should play their full part in keeping children safe this includes any child under 18 years of age
- We aim to protect children using national, local and school child protection procedures
- We aim to work in partnership and have an important role in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements as set out by the latest Working Together guidance
- That all staff /anyone who has contact with a child or young person have a clear understanding regarding abuse and neglect in all forms; including how to identify, respond and report. This also includes knowledge in the process for allegations against professionals. Staff should feel confident that they can report all matters of Safeguarding, and that the information will be dealt with swiftly and securely, following the correct procedures with the safety and wellbeing of the child in mind at all times

1.2. Aim

- To provide protection for the children and young people who receive Inspiring Animal Therapy services, including the children of adult referrals.
- To provide staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should follow in the event that they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm. This policy applies to all staff working on behalf of Inspiring Animal Therapy.

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting them
- Appointing a nominated child protection lead for children and young people.
- Adopting child protection and safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures and code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures so that all staff and volunteers know about and follow our policies, procedures and behaviour codes confidently and competently

- Recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- Recording, storing and using information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance.
- Sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children and their families via leaflets, posters, group work and one-to-one discussions
- Making sure that children, young people and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern

2. Types, Definitions and Signs of Abuse

Inspiring Animal Therapy CIC recognises the following categories of abuse:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Online abuse

Detailed signs and indicators are outlined in **Appendix A**.

3. Child Protection and Safeguarding

3.1 Standards

All staff and volunteers must:

- Hold an appropriate DBS check
- Complete safeguarding training
- All staff and volunteers are trained to Level 1 Safeguarding
- Director and Designated Safeguarding Lead Rebecca Taylor is trained to Level 3
- Follow this policy at all times
- Report concerns immediately
- Maintain professional boundaries
- Promote a safe and supportive environment

All staff receive safeguarding briefing at induction and regular updates.

3.2 Designated Person

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
Rebecca Taylor – Director

Tel: 07772 715804
Training Level: Safeguarding Level 3

Deputy Safeguarding Lead
Anna Provart
Tel: 07463 913271

If the concern involves the DSL, contact the Deputy.

The DSL is responsible for:

- Managing safeguarding concerns and referrals
- Liaising with local authorities, police and partners
- Maintaining records
- Ensuring staff training and policy review

3.3 First steps – What to do in the first instance?

If someone discloses that they are being abused, whether in the home or the setting, then upon receiving the information, you should:

- React calmly
- Reassure the child that they were right to tell and that they are not to blame and take what the child says seriously
- Keep questions to an absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. Don't ask about explicit details
- Reassure but do not promise confidentiality, which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments
- Inform the child/young person what you will do next
- Make a full and written record of what has been said/heard as soon as possible and don't delay in passing on the information.

If you think abuse has or may have occurred act immediately. It is the responsibility of the person first becoming aware of a situation where there may be a child subject to, or at risk of, abuse to make safe and deal with the immediate needs of the person. This may mean taking reasonable steps to ensure the child is in no immediate danger and seeking medical treatment if required as a matter of urgency.

Do NOT discuss the allegation of abuse with the alleged perpetrator.

Do NOT disturb or destroy articles that could be used in evidence. Where an assault of some kind is suspected do not wash or bathe the person unless this is associated with first aid treatment necessary to prevent further harm.

Do NOT discuss concerns or disclosures with other members of staff other than the safeguarding lead.

If the allegation is about a staff member or volunteer of any organisation, ensure that the allegation is properly managed. Tell your safeguarding lead or another manager /Chief Officer if your safeguarding lead is unavailable or is implicated in the allegation.

Contact the police if it is thought a crime has just been committed. Telephone 101 or 999 if an emergency

The individual who first received/witnessed the concern should make a full written record of what was seen, heard and/or told as soon as possible after observing the incident/receiving the report. This is the 'report of the first account' and must be kept securely. It is important that the report is an accurate description. The named person (if appropriate) can support the worker during this process but must not complete the report for the worker. This report must be made available on request from either the police and/or social care teams and should include:

a) The allegation or concerns, including the date and time of the incident or allegation
b) The child's name, age and date of birth
c) The child's home address and telephone number
d) Whether or not the person making the report is expressing his or her own concerns of those of someone else, making a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay
e) What the child said about the abuse and how it occurred or what has been reported to you.
f) The appearance and behaviour of the victim.
g) Any injuries observed.
h) Details of witnesses to the incidents
i) Have the parents been contacted? And if so, what has been said?
j) Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details
k) Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact that took the referral should be recorded.
l) Whether any other children are also at risk

3.4 Contact Details – Making a Safeguarding Referral

If advice or referral is needed, the DSL will contact the appropriate Local Authority depending on the child's home or setting location.

Cheshire East (Primary Area)

Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS)
0300 123 5012 (office hours)
0300 123 5022 (out of hours)

Derbyshire

Call Derbyshire (Starting Point)
01629 533190

Tameside

Children's Social Care
0161 342 4101 (office hours)
0161 342 2222 (out of hours)

Police

101 (non-emergency)
999 (emergency)

NSPCC Helpline

0808 800 5000

4. Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers

If an allegation is made:

- Ensure the child is safe
- Inform the DSL immediately
- Do not question the alleged person
- Record the concern

The DSL will:

- Contact the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- Seek advice from the appropriate local authority (Cheshire East, Derbyshire or Tameside)
- Consider suspension or removal from duties if required
- Record all actions

Whistleblowing is supported and staff will not be disadvantaged for raising concerns.

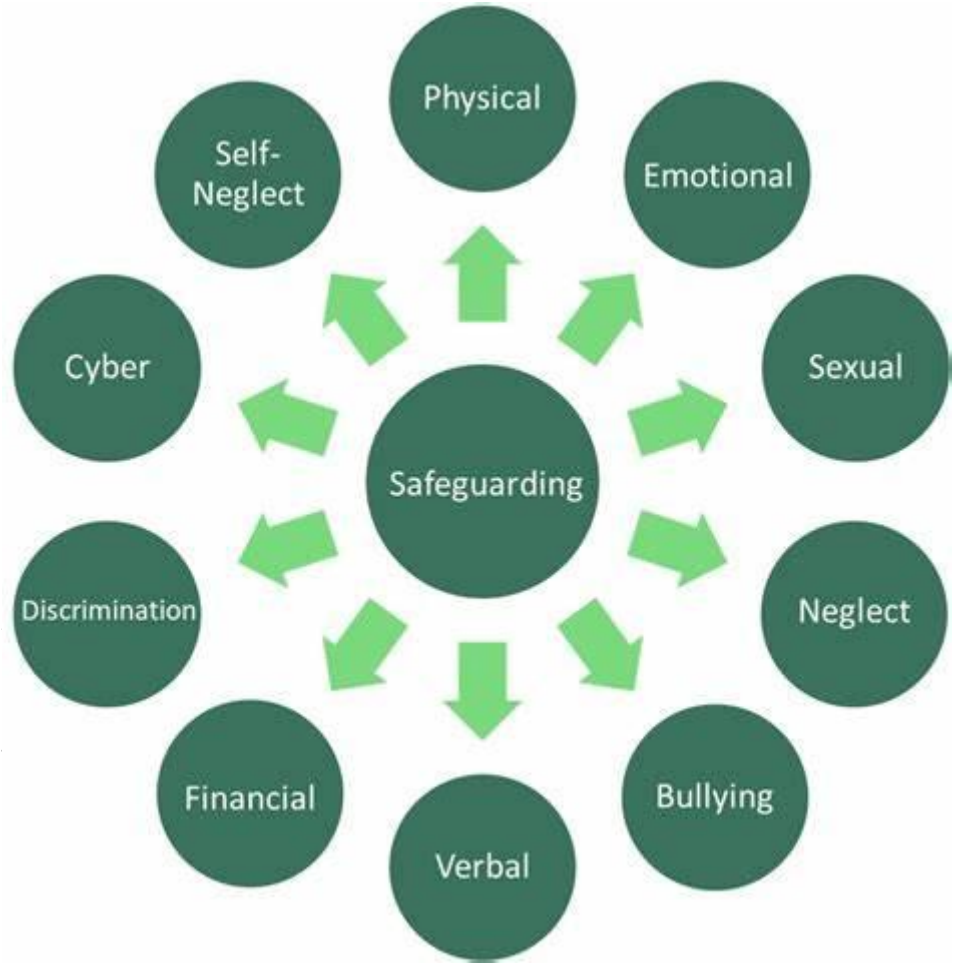
4.1 Responsibility of the Safeguarding Lead

The DSL will:

- Decide on immediate action
- Ensure the child is safe
- Arrange medical help if needed
- Preserve evidence
- Make same-day referral where required
- Record all decisions and actions

Appendix A

Types of abuse and signs



1. **Definitions and Signs of Abuse Definition of Abuse**

An abused child is anyone under 18 years of age, who has suffered from, or is believed likely to be, at risk of significant risk of physical injury, neglect, emotional abuse or sexual abuse.

Sexual Abuse

Actual or likely sexual abuse / exploitation of a child or young person. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) and non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Signs

Although these signs do not necessarily indicate that a child has been abused, they may help adults recognise that something is wrong.

- Being overly affectionate or knowledgeable in a sexual way inappropriate to the child's age
- Medical problems such as chronic itching

- Pain in the genitals
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Other extreme reactions, such as depression, self-mutilation, suicide attempts, running away, overdoses, anorexia
- Personality changes such as becoming insecure or clinging
- Regressing to younger behaviour patterns such as thumb sucking or bringing out discarded cuddly toys
- Sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating
- Being isolated or withdrawn
- Inability to concentrate
- Lack of trust or fear of someone they know well, such as not wanting to be alone with a babysitter or child minder
- Starting to wet again, day or night/nightmares
- Become worried about clothing being removed
- Suddenly drawing sexually explicit pictures
- Trying to be 'ultra-good' or perfect; overreacting to criticism

Physical Abuse

Actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering), to a child. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Factitious Illness may also constitute physical abuse.

Signs

Although these signs do not necessarily indicate that a child has been abused, they may help adults recognise that something is wrong. The possibility of abuse should be investigated if a child shows a number of these symptoms, or any of them to a marked degree:

- Unexplained recurrent injuries or burns
- Improbable excuses or refusal to explain injuries
- Wearing clothes to cover injuries, even in hot weather
- Refusal to undress for gym
- Bald patches
- Chronic running away
- Fear of medical help or examination
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Aggression towards others Fear of physical contact - shrinking back if touched
- Admitting that they are punished, but the punishment is excessive (such as a child being beaten every night to 'make him study')
- Fear of suspected abuser being contacted

Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional damage is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though emotional abuse may occur alone.

Signs

Although these signs do not necessarily indicate that a child has been abused, they may help adults recognise that something is wrong. The possibility of abuse should be investigated if a child shows a number of these symptoms, or any of them to a marked degree:

- Physical, mental and emotional development delay
- Sudden speech disorders
- Continual self-depreciation
- Overreaction to mistakes
- Extreme fear of any new situation
- Inappropriate response to pain
- Neurotic behaviour
- Extremes of passivity or aggression

Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Signs

Although these signs do not necessarily indicate that a child has been abused, they may help adults recognise that something is wrong. The possibility of abuse should be investigated if a child shows a number of these symptoms, or any of them to a marked degree:

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing
- Emaciation
- Untreated medical problems
- No social relationships
- Compulsive scavenging
- Destructive tendencies

Online Abuse

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet, facilitated through technology like computers, tablets, mobile phones and other internet-enabled devices. It can happen anywhere online that allows digital communication. This can happen if the original abuse happened online or offline. Children and young people may experience several types of abuse online:

- Bullying/cyberbullying

- Emotional abuse (this includes emotional blackmail, for example pressuring children and young people to comply with sexual requests via technology)
- Sexting (pressure or coercion to create sexual images)
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual exploitation

Children and young people can also be groomed online: perpetrators may use online platforms to build a trusting relationship with the child in order to abuse them. This abuse may happen online or the perpetrator may arrange to meet the child in person with the intention of abusing them. Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know as well as from strangers. Online abuse may be part of abuse that's taking place in the real world such as bullying or an abusive relationship. Or the abuse may happen online only.

Signs

A child who is experiencing abuse online may:

- Spend much more or much less time than usual online, texting, gaming or using social media
- Be withdrawn, upset or outraged after using the internet or texting
- Be secretive about who they're talking to and what they're doing online or on their mobile phone
- Have lots of new phone numbers, texts or e-mail addresses on their mobile phone, laptop or tablet.

Appendix C – Safeguarding Action Plan (Updated January 2026)

Action	Responsible	Status
All staff Level 1 safeguarding trained	Rebecca Taylor	Ongoing
DSL Level 3 safeguarding trained	Rebecca Taylor	Current
Safeguarding included in staff induction	Rebecca Taylor	Ongoing
Outreach risk assessments in place	Rebecca Taylor / Anna Provart	Implemented
Incident monitoring and review	DSL	Ongoing
Staff supervision arrangements	Directors	Ongoing

Appendix D – Accessing Support

Cheshire East Council

Website: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk
Children's Services (Safeguarding / Early Help Front Door – ChECS):
Tel: **0300 123 5012** (option 3, office hours)
Out of hours: **0300 123 5022**
Family Information Service:
Email: **fis.east@cheshireeast.gov.uk**
Tel: **0300 123 5033**

Derbyshire County Council

Website: https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk
Starting Point (Early Help and Safeguarding Front Door):
Tel: **01629 535353**
Email: **starting.point@derbyshire.gov.uk**

Tameside Council

Website: https://www.tameside.gov.uk
Children's Social Care:
Tel: **0161 342 4186**
Out of hours: **0161 342 2222**
Family Information Service:
Email: **fis@tameside.gov.uk**
Tel: **0161 342 4260**

Emergency

If a child is in immediate danger, call **999**.

Policy Review

Policy updated: **January 2026**
Last reviewed by: Rebecca Taylor (Director / DSL)
Next review due: January 2027

This policy applies to all Inspiring Animal Therapy CIC staff, volunteers and service users across on-site and outreach provision.