Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures

Policy owner: Managing Director Status: Core policy
Review cycle: Annual or sooner if legislation, guidance or organisational practice changes
Last review: June 2026 Next review: June 2027
Approved by the Board of Directors July 2026
This is a public document

Mud Pie Explorers policies and procedures are working documents. This is a core policy and will be reviewed annually, or sooner in response to changes in legislation or practice. Any updates to this policy will be reflected in the Safeguarding statement for parents and carers.docx

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this policy as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment;
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

(Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026)

Children are people under 18 years of age, therefore this policy covers our responsibilities to young people that volunteer with us.

Mud Pie Explorers acknowledges that safeguarding issues can arise anywhere and have a 'it could happen here' attitude. We actively encourage team members, parents/carers and other stakeholders to share any concerns they may have about a child that is in our care. You will be supported through the process of making a disclosure.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

In order that organisations, agencies and practitioners collaborate effectively, it is vital that everyone working with children and families, including those who work with parents/carers, understands the role they should play and the role of other practitioners. They should be aware of, and comply with, the published arrangements set out by the local safeguarding partners (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026).

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely;

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) and DfE Guidance for providers running out-of-school settings (February 2026).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)
- Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers. 2024: You can access this guidance here
- Special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice: 0-25 years 2015 You can access this guidance here

In addition to the documents listed above we also adhere to :

- The Children Act 1989
- United Convention of Rights of the Child 1991
- Data Protection Act 2018/General Data Protection Regulation
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Children Act 2004
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

Safer culture

Our commitment and approach to safeguarding children and promoting their welfare is embedded within our organisation. We promote a safer culture through the following policies and procedures:

- Disciplinary
- Capability
- Dynamic risk assessment policy
- Health and Safety
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Managing risk policy
- Peer on peer abuse
- Planning and assessment
- Physical touch policy
- Risk benefit assessments
- Child protection and safeguarding
- Safeguarding review procedure
- Safer recruitment & induction policy and procedure.docx
- Supervision
- Wellbeing policy
- Whistleblowing

We do not use corporal punishment and make sure that no-one caring for children, in regular contact with children, or living or working where childcare is provided, uses corporal punishment.

The language we use teaches body autonomy and consent e.g. ‘stop means stop’ and ‘no means no’. We also use opportunities to discuss internet safety as they crop up. All team members attend annual internal training and external training every 3 years. This ensures that the team are aware of what to look out for in relation to emotional, physical, sexual abuse and neglect. We ensure that we keep safeguarding high on everyone’s agenda.

We explicitly recognise and protect children’s rights and protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Safeguarding is embedded within our play-based approach, where children are supported to develop autonomy, understand consent, and learn to assess and manage risk safely through experience.

We recognise that some groups of children are more vulnerable than others and pay attention to the following risk factors when managing matters pertaining to wellbeing, safeguarding and child protection:

- children with special educational needs or disabilities
- living with domestic violence
- alcohol / substance abuse within the family
- mental health within the family
- having a person within the family who has a learning disability
- if they have been in the care system
- different cultural beliefs and practices (FGM, forced marriage, smacking and use of restraint)
- privately fostered children- friend of family takes on their child (there is a private fostering social work team we will report to if we hear of any such arrangements)
- social inequality
- young carers
- LQBTQ+

Images of children

Photos of children are used at Mud Pies as a tool to support assessment and to provide a visual representation of a celebration of progress. However, team members will not use personal cameras or personal mobile phones to take photographs or videos. We only take non-identifying photos - hands, feet, activities, backs of heads.

Photos/ videos are only taken of children on work devices. These devices are not linked to any clouds. Images are uploaded to the relevant file on the company “GoogleDrive” and then deleted, usually on the same working day.

We only allow stock images of children to be used on websites, publicity, or press releases.

Staff can bring their mobile devices into sessions, but these must be kept out of sight during contact time, unless in need of emergency.

Children will be asked for verbal consent before any images are taken.

Specialist provision notes, which include photos, will only be shared with team members and key staff within the school that the children are from.

We cannot be held accountable for photographs or video footage taken by parents or members of the public.

Responsibilities
Every team member is responsible for ensuring the safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. This is made clear in job/ role descriptions, person specifications and our code of conduct.

Clare Haughton, Designated Safeguarding Lead
clare@mud-pies.co.uk / 07852 434 378

Colleen Gough, Deputy Safeguarding Lead
colleen@mud-pies.co.uk / 07852 434 572

Mandy Collier-King is the Director appointed to the role of Safeguarding Director.

Their contact details, and those of the LADO, are easily accessible to the whole team in the forms Whatsapp group where the safeguarding and wellbeing form is also accessed.

The DSL is responsible for receiving, recording and managing safeguarding concerns in line with organisational procedures. The DSL, DDSL and Managing Director conduct termly safeguarding reviews. There will also be a documented annual review of all safeguarding paperwork. This will be conducted by the DSL and the designated safeguarding Director. Safeguarding review procedure

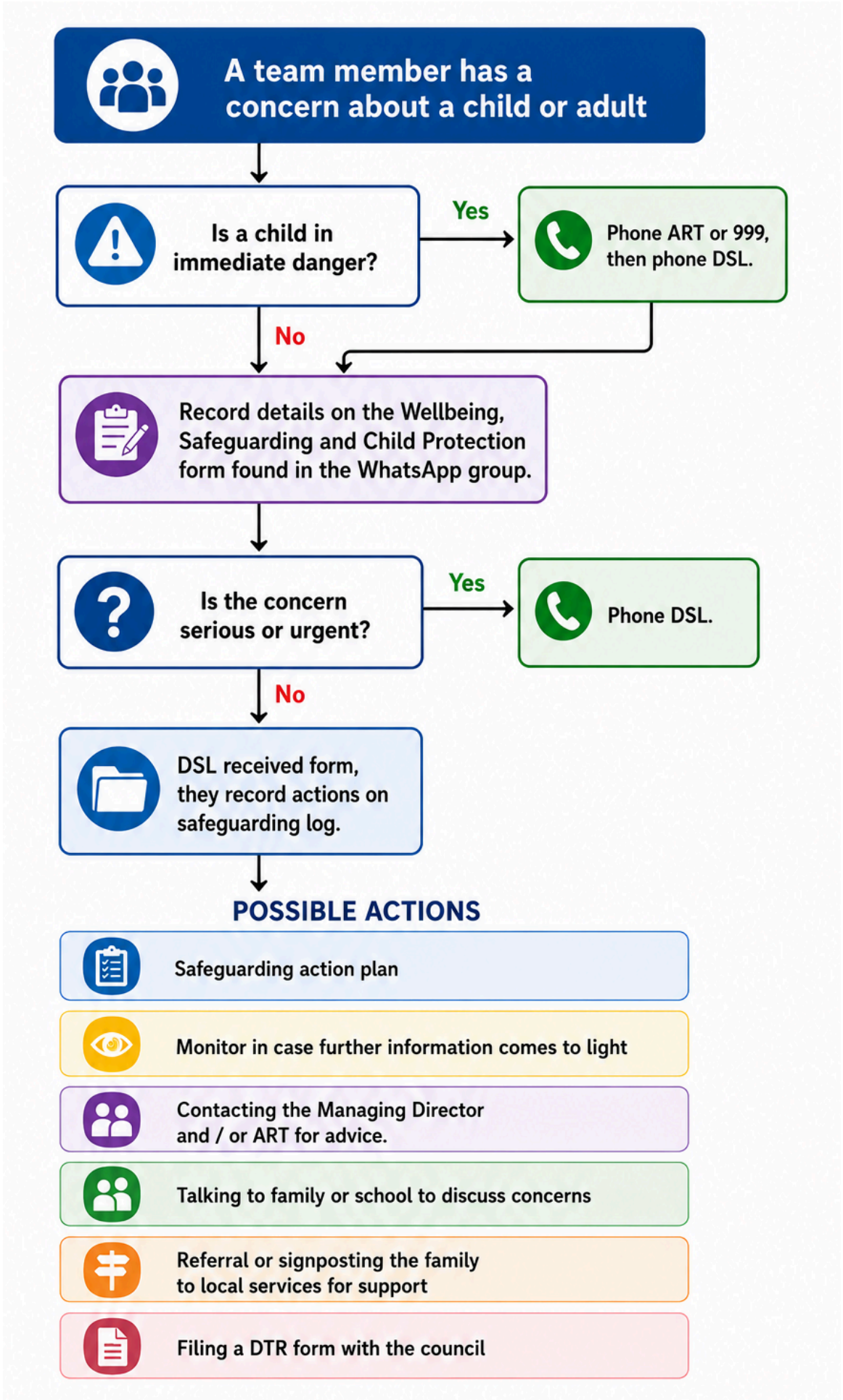
Escalating concerns is the responsibility of the DSL. Such actions will be taken with input from the DDSL wherever feasible.

Whistleblowing allegations and strategic safeguarding decisions are the responsibility of the Managing Director and Board.

Safeguarding themes, risks and learning are reviewed quarterly by the Board of Directors as a standing safeguarding agenda item.

If concerns arise

If a team member sees or hears something that concerns them, they will ALWAYS share their concerns with the DSL or DDSL, however small. This may be anything that they feel is a concern including possible neglect, sudden or unexplained changes such as eating habits or general behaviour. All details must be recorded on a .Wellbeing, safeguarding and child protection form The form states at the bottom… “Please call the manager on-call today if the matter is of a serious or urgent nature.”


A team member has a concern about a child or adult
Is a child in immediate danger?
Yes
Phone ART or 999, then phone DSL.
No
Record details on the Wellbeing, Safeguarding and Child Protection form found in the WhatsApp group.
Is the concern serious or urgent?
Yes
Phone DSL.
No
DSL received form, they record actions on safeguarding log.
POSSIBLE ACTIONS
Safeguarding action plan
Monitor in case further information comes to light
Contacting the Managing Director and / or ART for advice.
Talking to family or school to discuss concerns
Referral or signposting the family to local services for support
Filing a DTR form with the council

These are forms automatically emailed to the DSL once submitted. The DSL will review the information and take action as required- recording actions on the safeguarding log. Where concerns are ongoing or of a more complicated or serious nature the DSL will transfer the data to a Template safeguarding action plan. This action plan includes the details of the concern, background information actions and impacts. This will be shared and discussed with other team members who come into contact with the child, with parents/ carers if appropriate and with other settings if necessary all on a need to know basis.

When notifying the local authority using a Duty to Report form, we will:

- Use the child's own words
- NOT paraphrase/bleep what a child has said
- If the child says something in garbled order, we won't try to organise it
- Record behaviour - NOT "they were over excited", but "they were jumping off things, shouting, spinning around"
- Record incomplete information that they can try to verify - "I think that passerby was called Lisa, I've seen her walking her dogs here"

Only include facts, NOT opinions (they may ring and ask for an opinion later)
When we share concerns about a child with a partner agency, such as a school, we will ask them to inform us of the outcome and any actions they take. If we do not hear from the partner within a week we will get in touch with them to ascertain what happened following the sharing of the information.

Safeguarding logs and safeguarding action plans will be reviewed at least termly with feedback from the team members who work directly with the child concerned. If a decision is made to close the action plan the date and rationale for doing so will be recorded.

If concerns are reported verbally, a Wellbeing and safeguarding form must also be completed on the same day. All information will be recorded factually, without speculation, and stored securely.

When concerns arise within a school or another setting, we will also share relevant information with their Designated Safeguarding Lead on a need-to-know basis.

All data is handled in accordance with our GDPR and confidentiality policy for service provision.docx, the Data Protection Act 2018 and Human Rights Act 1998. Reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that sensitive information about a child or their family is only shared with those who need to know. Information sharing will follow the seven golden rules of information sharing: DfE non statutory information sharing advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services for children, young people,parents and carers

Where there is reason to believe that a child is suffering, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm, the welfare of the child takes precedence over confidentiality. Information will be shared without delay with appropriate safeguarding professionals and agencies.

Possible actions following a safeguarding concern may include:
• Monitoring the concern and retaining records in case further information comes to light.
• Seeking advice from the Managing Director, Access and Response Team (ART) or other safeguarding professionals.
• Meeting or speaking with the family to discuss concerns, where appropriate and safe to do so.
• Making a referral to ART or another service, with or without parental consent as required.
• Signposting the family to appropriate support services.

Safeguarding issues are reported to the Directors of Mud Pie Explorers.

If a child is removed from our setting following the raising of safeguarding concerns, the DSL will inform ART of those concerns, regardless of how insignificant they may appear.

Dealing with disclosures
If a child tells a team member something or behaves in a way which raises concerns that a child is at risk of harm in any of the following areas:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Neglect
- Radicalisation (the process that moves a person to legitimise their support or use of violence).

the following steps will be followed:

- Listen at the child's pace. Acknowledge what is being said, let them know they did the right thing in talking about it and that it's not their fault. Have a professional curiosity about what is being said.
- Do not ask any questions, even open ones - in a criminal case it can undermine the whole disclosure in court. Just be an active listener.
- Remember that you must not promise to 'keep a secret'. Make it clear that there are limits to confidentiality and that you will have to share the information.
- You can seek clarification about something they've said that you don't understand, e.g. "I'm not sure if you're talking about your mum or stepmum?"
- Reassure the child that they have done nothing wrong and that they have done the right thing in letting someone know.
- Give them a comeback option - let them know they can come back to you if they want to talk about this again, or they can also talk to ____ about it.
- Tell them what you're going to do with the information before you leave, e.g. "Thank you for telling me. To help me keep you safe I'm going to let someone else at Mud Pies know about this too, so we can figure out how to help you."
- If you leave without telling them that you'll pass the information on, it can totally destroy trust when they find out later.
- A safeguarding log form will be completed and shared with the DSL on the same day.
- Be prepared to answer the 'what happens next?' question.

Team members will be informed of the outcome of their reported concern. If they are unhappy with the outcome they can discuss it with the Managing Director or call the local authorities' Access and Response Team (ART) themselves for further advice.

Children at immediate risk of harm
If a team member has reason to believe that a child is in immediate risk of harm a referral should be made to ART or the Police immediately. Anyone can make a referral. If the DSL does not make the referral they, or the Deputy DSL, will need to be informed immediately.

Managing allegations against team members and volunteers
Mud Pie Explorers takes all concerns about the behaviour of staff, volunteers and other professionals seriously.

This applies where a person may have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against a child
- Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm

The child and the adult must not be questioned.

Any concern must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

If the concern relates to the DSL, the Managing Director must be contacted.

The DSL will:

- Record the concern clearly and factually
- Not investigate or ask leading questions
- Seek advice from the Access and Response Team (ART) and/or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day
- Follow advice on next steps

Where appropriate, this may include referral to children's social care, police or the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

Mud Pie Explorers will act promptly and proportionately, prioritising the safety and wellbeing of the child.

Low-level safeguarding concerns about other adults
Mud Pie Explorers recognises that safeguarding concerns are not always clear or serious at first. Small concerns, patterns of behaviour or a 'nagging doubt' about an adult's conduct can be early indicators of risk.

A low-level concern is any behaviour by an adult that:

- feels uncomfortable or inconsistent with our values, code of conduct or professional boundaries
- does not meet the threshold for a safeguarding referral but still raises a question or concern

This may relate to colleagues, volunteers or any adult in contact with children.

All low-level concerns, however small, must be shared with the DSL or DDSL as soon as possible. Concerns can be reported openly or through an anonymous reporting route.

We promote a culture of openness, curiosity and professional responsibility, where:

- concerns are shared without fear or blame
- patterns are identified early
- staff are supported to reflect on and adjust practice where needed

Low-level concerns are recorded, reviewed and considered alongside other safeguarding information and logs, including through termly safeguarding reviews. They may be used to inform supervision, support, training or further action where required.

If concerns are repeated, involve coercion, risk, or harm or suggest exploitation or neglect they will be managed in line with safeguarding procedures and external reporting requirements.

This approach is in line with the principles set out in Department for Education guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025), and is reinforced through team training and supervision.

Concerns about our safeguarding practice
If a team member has concerns about our safeguarding practice they are invited to discuss the matter with the DSL or safeguarding Director, in line with our whistleblowing policy.

If this is not possible or the team member feels the issue is not resolved after speaking with them they are advised to contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on 01454 866000 or the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline on 0800 028 0285/ help@nspcc.or.uk.

Emotional support for team members
Listening support/ debriefing is offered to team members that have found working with safeguarding issues challenging from their line manager as soon as possible and also through the staff appraisal process. In addition, all team members have access to the Employee Assistance program which has a 24 hour support line.

Date	Details of Change
Dec 18	Changed Nickie to Managing Director. Added photos stored on OneDrive.(NC)
Feb 19	Added that children with disabilities are more vulnerable to abuse. Added if a child leaves our setting after concerns raised, we will share info with ART.(NC)
Mar 20	Updated personal conduct. Added about corporal punishment. Safeguarding log updated. (NC)
May 20	Added contacting children during covid 19. Moved personal conduct into separate code of conduct document. Added this policy is relevant to the young people who volunteer with us- all those under 18.(NC)
June 20	Added the section about 'safer culture' referring to other policies and procedures. Added reviews.(NC)
June 21	Removed contacting children during covid 19 lockdowns. Made document more succinct(NC)
June 2022	Added Deputy DSL- Colleen Gough Policy changed to reflect move from paper to online forms Added reference to dynamic risk assessment policy and managing risk policy(NC)
Sept 2022	Policy reviewed and added Lucy Lucas as another DSL. Added wider policy context and links to relevant external documents. (NC)
Jan 23	Clarified procedure for images. (NC)
Feb 23	Updated images following GDPR review Updated following annual review of safeguarding reports with MCK. (NC)
May 2023	Section called "concerns about a colleague" changed to "concerns about another professional"
Feb 2024	Changed link to reflect updated name of form. Changed contacting Nickie to contact Lucy. Added list of vulnerable children Added when sharing info with partners we will need to know the outcome Added safer recruitment overview and DBS checks info
April 2024	Added contact details for DSL's and listed the types of abuse.
July 2024	Removed Managing Director as a safeguarding lead.

	Lucy and Colleen listed as DSL and Deputy.
Sept 2024	LL- added - 2 members of staff will be present in these instances. NC updated reference to KCSIE 2024
Nov 2024	Updated contact details to reflect changes in the team (NC)
March 2025	Link added to safeguarding review procedure (NC)
August 2025 (CG)	Removed: Use TED- tell me about it, explain to me, describe it for me Avoid closed or leading questions Timescales are important. For example, 'when was the last time this happened?' Added: Give them a comeback option - let them know they can come back to you if they want to talk about this again, or they can also talk to ____ about it. Tell them what you're going to do with the information before you leave, e.g. "Thank you for telling me. To help me keep you safe I'm going to let someone else at Mud Pies know about this too, so we can figure out how to help you." If you leave without telling them that you'll pass the information on it can totally destroy trust when they find out later. When notifying the local authority using a Duty to Report form, we will: ● Use the child's own words ● NOT paraphrase/bleep what a child has said ● If the child says something in garbled order, we won't try to organise it ● Record behaviour - NOT "they were over excited", but "they were jumping off things, shouting, spinning around" ● Record incomplete information that they can try to verify - "I think that passerby was called Lisa, I've seen her walking her dogs here" ● Only include facts, NOT opinions (they may ring and ask for an opinion later) (Following advice from recent training Colleen attended) Updated: DSL and DDSL details (Added Clare, removed Nickie)
Jan 2026	(NC) Added team members have access to the EAP under the support section. Added under responsibilities: The DSL is responsible for receiving, recording and managing safeguarding concerns in line with organisational procedures. The DSL, DDSL and Managing Director conduct termly safeguarding reviews. There will also be a documented annual review of all safeguarding paperwork. This will be conducted by the DSL and the designated safeguarding Director. Safeguarding review procedure

	Escalating concerns is the responsibility of the DSL. Such actions will be taken with input from the DDSL wherever feasible. Whistleblowing allegations and strategic safeguarding decisions are the responsibility of the Managing Director and Board. Safeguarding themes, risks and learning are reviewed quarterly by the Board of Directors as a standing safeguarding agenda item. Deleted reviews section and added to responsibilities above. Updated -safeguarding contact numbers to reflect change that safeguarding related contact numbers are easily accessible in the forms Whatsapp group
March 2026	Added reference to Safeguarding statement for parents and carers.docx Updated sections on managing allegations and concerns Removed references to defunct policies (NC)
April 2026	Added: **Low level concerns section** and "We explicitly recognise and protect children's rights and protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Safeguarding is embedded within our play-based approach, where children are supported to develop autonomy, understand consent, and learn to assess and manage risk safely through experience." (NC)
May 2026	Added: We only take non-identifying photos - hands, feet, activities, backs of heads. Added link to the 7 golden rule for information sharing Removed safer recruitment section as this is covered here: Safer recruitment & induction policy and procedure.docx (NC)
June 2026	Merged information sharing section with when concerns arise to decrease repetition. Moved some sections to improve flow (NC) Sent to the Board for approval. Sent to DSL for approval. Updated DSL phone number and updated link for Working Together to latest update
August 2026	Updated our approach to marketing photos to- "We only allow stock images of children to be used on websites, publicity, or press releases" (NC)
Next review	Add that for in-school sessions we must report concerns to the school on the same day.

Safeguarding: Equality Impact Assessment Screening Tool

This document must be completed in respect of any new or major change to Mud Pie Explorers CIC policy or procedure.

		Yes/No	Rationale
2.	Does the policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:		
	● Race	N	
	● Ethnic origins (including gypsies and travellers)	N	
	● Nationality	N	
	● Gender	N	
	● Religion or belief	N	
	● Sexual orientation	N	
	● Age	N	
	● Disability - learning disabilities, physical disability, sensory impairment and mental health problems	N	
2.	Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?	N	
3.	If you have identified potential discrimination, are there any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?	N	
4.	Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative?	N	
5.	If so can the impact be avoided?		
6.	What alternatives are there to achieving the policy/guidance without the impact?		
7.	Can we reduce the impact by taking different action?		

		Comments
8.	Actions identified following screening process	
9.	Screening identified a full impact assessment.	

If you have identified a potential discriminatory impact of this policy/procedure, please refer it to the next Directors meeting, together with suggested actions required to avoid/reduce this impact.