



AUthenTISM Ltd: Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

A Guide for Parents and Carers

At AUthenTISM Ltd, the welfare, happiness, and safety of your child are paramount. We believe all children have a right to play, learn, and develop in a secure environment free from harm. Because our service specialises in supporting neurodivergent children, our safeguarding approach combines strict statutory compliance with neurodiverse-affirming, communication-accessible safety measures.

1. Statement of Intent

AUthenTISM Ltd acknowledges a duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children attending our sessions. We operate a child-centred approach where we recognise, value, and accommodate the unique sensory and communication profiles of the children we support. We work in partnership with parents, carers, and statutory bodies under the guidance of the **Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI)**.

2. Statutory Framework

This policy is written in compliance with regional legislation and inspection benchmarks, including:

- **The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995**
 - **The Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI (2017) guidelines**
 - **HSC Minimum Standards for Childminding and Day Care (Aged under 12) – Version 3**, strictly upholding **Standard 1: Safeguarding and Child Protection**.
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3. Key Safeguarding Roles

We have dedicated, trained professionals responsible for coordinating child protection issues and liaising with the HSC Trust Early Years teams:

- **Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):** Sharon Lyttle

- **Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer:** [Insert Name]
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4. Core Safeguarding Procedures & HSC Minimum Standards

Strict Supervision Ratios

- In strict adherence to **HSC Version 3 Standards**, any room where children play **must be supervised by at least two members of staff at all times**, regardless of the minimum adult-to-child ratio.
- This dual-staff rule guarantees that no single adult is ever left completely unobserved with children.

Mandatory Staff Training

- Every member of staff and volunteer at AUthenTISM Ltd must complete a **minimum three-hour face-to-face formal certificated Safeguarding/Child Protection course every three years**.
- Staff maintain valid child protection certificates at all times.
- Our team receives specialized training in interpreting distress, sensory overload, and unconventional communication cues to prevent misidentifying a sensory meltdown as a behavioral disruption.

Safer Vetting and Recruitment

- No adult will work or volunteer at AUthenTISM Ltd without a fully enhanced **AccessNI criminal record check** and robust reference checks.

Partnering with Parents

- Parents are normally the first point of contact unless doing so would place the child at risk of significant harm. In this instance, we will contact Gateway for advice without parental consent.
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5. PlayBoard NI Informed Practice: Balancing Safety and Play

Following the PlayBoard NI Play Safety Forum Guidance, we use **Risk-Benefit Assessments**. Children have a right to experience enriching, therapeutic, and challenging play. Rather than eliminating activities that carry minor physical risks (e.g., sensory climbing equipment), we safely manage the environment to maximize the developmental benefits of play while preventing severe harm.

6. Recognising and Responding to Concerns

Abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual, or take the form of neglect. Children can be uniquely vulnerable to safeguarding risks due to communication barriers. Staff at AUthenTISM Ltd are trained to look for:

- Unexplained changes in behavior, regression in skills, or targeted shifts in sensory seeking/avoidance.
- Explicit or implicit signs of distress.
- Disclosures made through alternative communication methods, including Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices, visuals, or echolalia.

If a staff member has a concern, they will document it objectively and report it to the **Designated Safeguarding Officer** immediately. The DSO will determine if a referral must be made to the local **HSC Trust Gateway Team** or the PSNI.

7. Digital and Online Safety

In line with the SBNI Online Safety templates, AUthenTISM Ltd ensures children are protected from digital risks. Tablets or digital tools used within the facility for communication (AAC) or sensory regulation are strictly filtered, monitored, and kept offline unless explicitly required for a safe learning program. Staff are prohibited from using personal mobile phones in areas where children are present.

8. Codes of Conduct & Whistleblowing

All staff abide by a strict Code of Behaviour. If you ever have a concern regarding the conduct of a staff member, you can report it directly to Sharon Lyttle (DSO). We maintain a comprehensive Whistleblowing Policy to ensure that any professional malpractice can be flagged safely and investigated transparently by the registering HSC Trust Social Worker.

Review Cycle

This policy is a living document reviewed regularly, or immediately following any updates to Northern Ireland statutory regulations, to maintain the highest quality of care.

Date of Policy Issue: 22 June 2026

Date of Next Scheduled Review: 22 June 2028
