

Safeguarding Policy



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IMMEDIATE SAFEGUARDING ACTION

If a child is in immediate danger, call 999. A concern that a child may be suffering or at risk of significant harm is referred without delay through Hampshire Children's Services. Staff must never delay action while trying to obtain complete information, management approval or parental consent.

1. Policy statement

Dottie Tots Nursery School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child. The welfare of the child is paramount. We create a vigilant, inclusive and professionally curious culture in which children are listened to, concerns are reported promptly and adults understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

This policy is the core safeguarding policy for Dottie Tots provision operating in Hampshire. It is supported by separate operational procedures for allegations against adults and Ofsted notifications. It replaces the corresponding safeguarding sections in the previous merged policy from 1 September 2026.

2. Scope

This policy applies to employees, managers, directors, agency workers, students, apprentices, volunteers, contractors and anyone working for or on behalf of Dottie Tots in Hampshire. It applies on the premises, during outings, transport, remote communication and any activity connected with the setting.

3. Legal and statutory framework

- Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective 1 September 2026.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 and Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton (HIPS) safeguarding procedures.
- Children Acts 1989 and 2004; Childcare Act 2006; Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015; Domestic Abuse Act 2021; Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.
- UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018, Human Rights Act 1998 and Equality Act 2010.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 where it applies to a school-based Dottie Tots provision or is used as supplementary good practice.

4. Definitions and safeguarding principles

- Safeguarding means providing help and support as soon as problems emerge; protecting children from maltreatment inside or outside the home, including online; preventing impairment of health or development; ensuring safe and effective care; and acting so children have the best outcomes.
- Child protection is the action taken where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.
- Harm includes ill-treatment, including sexual abuse and non-physical ill-treatment, and impairment of physical or mental health or physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. It includes harm from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.
- Abuse may be physical, emotional or sexual, or arise through neglect. A child may experience more than one form and may be harmed by adults, other children or online activity.
- Professional curiosity means looking beyond the presenting explanation, noticing patterns, checking inconsistencies and respectfully seeking more information without investigating the concern oneself.

5. Roles and reporting routes

All staff and adults

- Read and follow this policy, the Staff Code of Conduct and reporting procedures.
- Recognise signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation, domestic abuse, online harm, radicalisation and other safeguarding risks.
- Listen, reassure without making promises, record facts and report immediately to the Nursery Manager / setting DSL or Deputy Manager / DDSL.
- Use the DSO, Head of Operations, unimplicated Company Director or direct external route where the DSL/DDSL or another usual recipient is implicated, unavailable, conflicted or does not act.
- Make a direct referral or contact emergency services where necessary to protect a child; tell an unimplicated DSL, DDSL or senior safeguarding contact as soon as it is safe to do so.

Setting DSL and DDSL

- The Nursery Manager / DSL takes setting lead responsibility. The Deputy Manager / DDSL has authority to receive concerns, take immediate protective action, make or support referrals and act when the DSL is absent or implicated.
- Maintains current knowledge of Hampshire thresholds, referral routes and HIPS procedures.
- Ensure effective DSL/DDSL cover whenever children attend and a clear handover during absence, while recognising that urgent action never waits for a particular post-holder.
- Monitors concerns, absences, injuries, family circumstances and patterns across children, siblings and settings.
- Ensures parents are informed where safe and appropriate and that the child's wishes and feelings are considered.

Provider DSO, Head of Operations and Company Directors

- The DSO, who is also the Ofsted Nominated Person and a Company Director, has complete provider-level safeguarding oversight except where personally implicated or conflicted.
- The Head of Operations acts as Alternative Senior Safeguarding Contact and operational case coordinator. The other Company Director provides independent provider decision-making when the DSO is implicated or conflicted.
- Ensure allegations about adults are managed under DT-PR-01.1A, notifications under DT-PR-01.1B and no individual controls a concern about themselves.
- Provide resources, safe staffing, training, supervision and secure systems; audit practice and ensure safeguarding action is not compromised by employment, reputational or operational considerations.
- Apply safer recruitment and suitability checks before anyone starts work or a placement. The recruiting manager checks identity, employment history, references, qualifications and right to work where applicable, and obtains the enhanced DBS and Children's Barred List information required for the role. An authorised manager records the suitability decision and confirms release to start in writing; a proposed start date or supervision does not replace clearance. Follow DT-P-01.8 and DT-PR-01.8A for the full checks, lawful eligibility rules and the limited occasional-volunteer exception.

6. Recognising safeguarding concerns

Staff remain alert to changes in behaviour, presentation, attendance, development, relationships or family circumstances. A single sign may have an innocent explanation; a pattern or combination may increase concern. Staff do not diagnose abuse or wait for proof.

- Unexplained or inconsistent injuries; delayed presentation for treatment; repeated accidents or inappropriate explanations.
- Fearfulness, withdrawal, distress, aggression, sexualised behaviour, regression, self-harm indicators or marked changes in eating or sleep.
- Poor hygiene, hunger, unsuitable clothing, lack of supervision, unmet medical needs or persistent failure to collect.
- Domestic abuse or coercive control; parental substance misuse or mental ill-health; homelessness; family conflict; adults posing a risk.
- Child sexual or criminal exploitation, trafficking, county lines, modern slavery, missing episodes, harmful sexual behaviour or abuse by another child.
- Online grooming, sexual imagery, cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content or technology-facilitated abuse.
- Female genital mutilation, forced marriage, honour-based abuse, fabricated or induced illness, spiritual or faith-related abuse and radicalisation.
- Discrimination, racism, disability-related abuse, transphobic or homophobic abuse and barriers which make it harder for a child to communicate.

7. Responding to a disclosure or concern

1. Listen calmly and give the child time. Use the child's preferred communication method and do not show shock or disbelief.
2. Reassure the child that they were right to tell and that the concern will be shared only with people who need to help. Never promise secrecy.
3. Ask only open, minimal questions needed to clarify what the child is saying. Do not investigate, repeatedly question or suggest an answer.
4. Take immediate action for urgent medical need or danger. Preserve evidence and do not confront an alleged perpetrator.
5. Report to the setting DSL or DDSL immediately. If the concern is about an adult working with children, use DT-PR-01.1A and its role-specific alternative routes.
6. Make a clear contemporaneous record using the child's exact words, visible presentation and actions taken. Separate fact, observation and professional judgement.
7. The DSL coordinates and records the safeguarding response, including consultation, referral, parental communication and follow-up. Where there is a concern about a child's safety or welfare, the local authority children's social care team must be notified immediately in line with local reporting procedures; in an emergency call the police. Any practitioner may contact children's social care or the police directly when necessary. An unavailable DSL, internal discussion or incomplete information must not delay action. The practitioner must inform an unimplicated safeguarding lead as soon as it is safe to do so.

8. Hampshire consultation and referral

CURRENT HAMPSHIRE ROUTE

If a child is in immediate danger, call 999. For a child living in Hampshire, professionals submit the Hampshire Inter-Agency Referral Form. For an urgent child protection enquiry, professionals can call 01329 225379. Hampshire Children's Services' public number is 0300 555 1384 during office hours (Monday–Thursday 8:30am–5:00pm; Friday 8:30am–4:30pm). Outside those hours, call the Children and Families Out of Hours Service on 0300 555 1373. Do not delay urgent action while completing a form. Numbers checked against Hampshire County Council on 24 September 2026; check the live Hampshire safeguarding page at each policy review.

- The DSL uses the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and Children's Trust Thresholds Chart to consider level of need, while recognising that professional judgement and immediate safety remain central.
- Where a child lives outside Hampshire, the referral is made to the children's social care service for the child's home authority unless emergency or professional advice indicates otherwise.
- Consent is normally sought for early help and support, but is not required where seeking consent may place a child at risk, cause delay, prejudice an investigation or where another lawful safeguarding basis applies.
- If Dottie Tots disagrees with an agency response and remains concerned, the DSL uses professional challenge and escalation procedures and continues to protect the child.

9. Parents, carers and information sharing

Dottie Tots works openly with parents and carers unless doing so could increase risk, cause avoidable delay, prejudice an investigation or place another person at risk. The reason for informing or not informing parents is recorded.

- Information is shared lawfully, proportionately, accurately, securely and with people who need it for safeguarding.
- Data protection law does not prevent necessary information sharing to safeguard a child.
- The child's wishes, feelings, age, communication and understanding are considered, but the child is not made responsible for the safeguarding decision.
- Third-party and sibling information is not disclosed unnecessarily.

10. Child absences and non-attendance

Unexplained or prolonged absence can be a safeguarding indicator. Dottie Tots follows up absence promptly, contacts parents and alternative emergency contacts, considers patterns and known vulnerability and takes safeguarding action where contact cannot be made or concern increases. Attendance records and decisions are clear and contemporaneous.

11. Concerns about adults working with children

USE THE STANDALONE PROCEDURE

Any concern or allegation about an employee, manager, agency worker, volunteer, student, apprentice, contractor or other adult working for or on behalf of Dottie Tots must be reported immediately under Managing Allegations, Low-Level Concerns and LADO Procedure DT-PR-01.1A. The person receiving the report must not investigate before taking safeguarding and LADO advice.

The manager distinguishes allegations that may meet the harm threshold from low-level concerns, complaints and ordinary practice issues. Concerns are considered in context and patterns are reviewed. The Ofsted notification duty is assessed separately under DT-PR-01.1B; LADO contact does not itself notify Ofsted.

12. Whistleblowing and alternative routes

- Staff report concerns about practice, management action or organisational wrongdoing through the Whistleblowing Policy.
- No person is disadvantaged for raising a genuine safeguarding concern in good faith, even where it is not substantiated.
- If a setting lead, DSO, Head of Operations or director is implicated, conflicted, unavailable or fails to act, staff use the next unimplicated internal route and may contact Hampshire Children's Services, Hampshire LADO, police, Ofsted or the NSPCC directly as appropriate. No internal permission is required.
- Deliberately false or malicious information may be addressed under conduct procedures; an unsubstantiated concern is not, by itself, malicious.

13. Safe practice, mobile devices and online safety

- Adults follow the Staff Code of Conduct, professional-boundary, intimate-care and safer-working requirements.
- Only authorised setting devices and systems are used for children's images or records. Personal devices are not used in childcare areas except under an authorised emergency arrangement.
- One-to-one situations, physical contact, communication with families and online activity are transparent, necessary and appropriate to the role.
- Concerns about another adult's boundary, device or online behaviour are reported, even where no individual child has disclosed harm.

14. Training, induction and supervision

- All staff receive safeguarding and child-protection induction before duties, including reporting routes, whistleblowing and concerns about adults.
- Safeguarding training meets EYFS Annex C and is renewed at least every two years; Dottie Tots considers annual refreshers and provides updates when risk or guidance changes.
- DSLs and DDSLs complete role-appropriate training; the DSO maintains provider oversight and all safeguarding post-holders maintain current knowledge of Hampshire arrangements.
- Supervision provides confidential discussion of children's wellbeing, child-protection concerns, professional boundaries and support, without delaying immediate action.
- Training is delivered through role-specific induction, safeguarding courses, updates when guidance or local procedures change, and practical discussion of reporting scenarios. Managers check understanding during induction, supervision and observed practice, revisit any uncertainty, and record course completion, checks of understanding and follow-up support in the training and supervision records.

15. Safeguarding records

- Records are factual, dated, timed, attributable and clear about the concern, child's words, observations, decisions, advice, action and outcome.
- Child safeguarding records are kept separately from general learning records and transferred securely when a child moves, in accordance with safeguarding and retention requirements.
- Adult allegation and low-level concern records are restricted and separate from the child's record and general supervision notes.
- Access is limited by role. Records are retained, shared and destroyed under Dottie Tots' safeguarding retention and data-protection arrangements.
- Electronic systems must preserve chronology, authorship, amendments and secure access.

16. Ofsted, DBS and other statutory action

The DSO / Ofsted Nominated Person normally oversees the assessment and recording of every applicable Ofsted notification under DT-PR-01.1B. If the DSO is implicated or conflicted, responsibility transfers automatically to the other Company Director, supported operationally by the Head of Operations. From 1 September 2026, allegations of harm or abuse by anyone living, working or looking after children at the premises fall within the EYFS notification requirement. Appropriate referrals are also made to the DBS, police, children's social care, LADO, a professional regulator or placing organisation where the relevant threshold is met. These are separate duties.

17. Confidentiality, complaints and support

Safeguarding information is not discussed with people who have no professional need to know. Dottie Tots provides appropriate support to the child, family and staff while maintaining fair processes. A complaint about safeguarding practice is handled under the complaints procedure but does not delay or replace referral, LADO or notification action.

18. Related documents

- Managing Allegations, Low-Level Concerns and LADO Procedure - DT-PR-01.1A.
- Ofsted Notifications and Significant Events Procedure - DT-PR-01.1B.
- Staff Suitability and Continuing Disclosure Policy - DT-P-02.1.
- Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy - DT-P-01.8; DBS Procedure - DT-PR-01.8A.
- Whistleblowing Policy - DT-P-01.7; Online Safety, Mobile Phones, Cameras and Electronic Devices Policy - DT-P-01.6; Screen Use and Digital Technology Policy - DT-P-07.2; Staff Code of Conduct - DT-P-05.2; Child Absence, Missing Child, Intimate Care, Complaints, Data Protection and Record Retention documents.

19. Sources and live local routes

- **EYFS statutory framework effective 1 September 2026:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>
- **Hampshire safeguarding for early years providers:**
<https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/childrenandfamilies/childcare/providers/safeguarding>

Appendix 1 - Staff acknowledgement

I confirm that I have read and understood this document and the reporting hierarchy. I will report concerns immediately to the setting DSL or DDSL, or use the DSO, Head of Operations, unimplicated Company Director or direct external route where a usual recipient is implicated, unavailable, conflicted or does not act.

Name	Role	Signature	Date

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