



## **Blossoming Hearts Play Therapy**

### **Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy**

**May 2025**

Blossoming Hearts Play Therapy adheres to the PTUK Safeguarding Policy (2021), this can be found at: [https:// playtherapy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/PTUK-safeguarding-policy.pdf](https://playtherapy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/PTUK-safeguarding-policy.pdf)

I am committed to every child's right to a childhood free from all forms of abuse and works to ensure the safety and physical and emotional well-being of children.

I take my safeguarding responsibilities seriously at all times and remains mindful of their obligations under all relevant legislation including:

- the Children's Act (2004),
- the General Data Protection Regulation (2018),
- the Freedom of Information Act (2012),
- the Health & Safety at Work Act (1974),
- the Counter-Terrorism & Security Act (2015) and
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018).

The best way to ensure that all children are protected as far as possible is to work in effective partnership with relevant organisations, Safeguarding Partnerships and parents/carers where appropriate.

This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the relevant policies of the school/organisation in which the Play Therapy is taking place.

### **Safeguarding & child protection**

Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.

#### **Safeguarding means:**

- protecting children from abuse and maltreatment,
  - preventing harm to children's health or development,
  - ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care,
  - taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes.
- (PTUK Safeguarding Policy, 2021).

For the purpose of this policy, a child is a person under 18 years of age.

### **Child abuse & safeguarding concerns**

All children are vulnerable to abuse. Children with Disabilities or Special Educational Needs may be at increased risk and may be less able to communicate their concerns. Child abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, neglect or a combination of these. A thorough definition of child abuse and an

outline of types of abuse can be found on the NSPCC website: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/>

I endeavour to ensure all signs or indicators of abuse are noted and passed on to the school/organisation's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) without delay.

Blossoming Hearts Play Therapy Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy May 2025 indicators of abuse are noted and passed on to the school/organisation's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) without delay. Other safeguarding concerns include but are not limited to: abuse linked to faith or belief, alcohol use, breast flattening, bullying and cyberbullying, Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), child-on-child abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), child trafficking, domestic abuse, drug use, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, gang involvement (also known as 'County lines'), grooming, Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB), honour based abuse, modern slavery, online abuse, radicalisation and extremism, self-harm.

### **Disclosures & allegations of abuse**

During Play Therapy, through the process of child-led play, a child may work through difficult issues and past experiences, either verbally or nonverbally.

If a child discloses abuse suffered by them or another child this will be taken very seriously. I will listen to them without interrupting them and no leading questions will be asked. I will explain to the child what action needs to be taken, in a manner appropriate to their age and level of understanding. A record will be made of what the child has shared, in the child's words where possible, along with the date, time, place and names of those present, and any other relevant information.

If a disclosure or allegation of abuse is made this will be passed on to the school/organisation's DSL without delay. This may lead to a referral to the relevant Local Safeguarding Partnership or applicable organisation (structures vary between Local Authorities).

A safeguarding concern may emerge within a child's play without an explanation from the child, this will be passed on to the school/organisations' DSL without delay. This may lead to a referral to the relevant Local Safeguarding Partnership or applicable organisation.

If the allegation is about an adult who works/volunteers with children/vulnerable adults this will be referred to the school/organisation's DSL, and to the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) as appropriate.

In the case of a difference of opinion which cannot be resolved between the school/organisation's DSL and myself, in the best interests of the child, I reserve the right to make a referral to the appropriate Local Safeguarding Partnership or LADO independently of the school/ organisation.

### **Allegations against the Play Therapist**

Play Therapy sessions usually take place 1-1 or in small groups, without the presence of another adult. If a child makes an allegation against the Play Therapist, the session will be ended immediately

and the therapist will cease working 1-1 with the child as soon as possible.

Any allegation made against the therapist will be reported to the school/organisation's DSL without delay, and an assessment will be made as to whether sessions with other children will continue, depending on the Blossoming Hearts Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy May 2025 nature of the allegation. A record will be made of what the child has stated, in the child's words where possible, along with the date, time, place and names of people present, and any other relevant information.

### **Recording & information sharing**

Any safeguarding concern, disclosure or allegation of abuse will be carefully and factually recorded and stored confidentially as outlined in Blossoming Hearts Play Therapy's Data Protection Policy (see Blossoming Hearts Incident Form located at the end of this Policy).

Any safeguarding concern remains confidential and will only be shared with those who need to know i.e. with a DSL, Local Safeguarding Partnership or social worker.

Safeguarding concerns may be shared with parents/carers if appropriate following discussion with the school/organisation's DSL. If it is felt that sharing the concern with the parent/carer could lead to potential harm to the child (emotional, physical or otherwise) the information will not be shared and will be passed on to the relevant Local Safeguarding Partnership.

### **Training**

I update my Safeguarding & Child Protection training annually. This ensures practice remains up to date with all relevant legislation, procedures and emerging safeguarding issues.

### **Prevent Duty**

Blossoming Hearts Play Therapy promotes and upholds British values within the ethos of the provision. I am trained to recognise the importance of having "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism" (Counter Terrorism & Security Act 2015) and all forms of non-violent extremism which can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism and can popularise views which terrorists can exploit as outlined in the Prevent Strategy (2011).

### **FGM**

The Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003) outlines FGM as illegal in the UK. I adhere to the mandatory reporting duty introduced in 2015 for 'known' cases of FGM in under 18s. I am aware of the additional risk factors for FGM including: family belonging to a community in which FGM is practiced, child preparing to go on holiday or planning absence from school, prolonged absence from school e.g. absent following a school holiday, talk of a special procedure/ceremony, bladder/menstrual problems, difficulty walking/sitting/standing/appearing in discomfort.

## Whistleblowing

In the instance of myself witnessing another professional who works with children, behaving inappropriately this will be referred to the school/organisation's DSL and if necessary directly to the Local Safeguarding Partnership or LADO.

### Use of mobile phones & cameras

No mobile phones or cameras will be used during Play Therapy sessions. No images will be taken of any child.

Digital images of children's creative work may be taken on a camera or phone. These would be stored electronically with no reference to the child, then immediately removed from the camera/mobile phone. Images stored may be used for research or training purposes, where consent has been provided.

## Ethical practice

Blossoming Hearts Play Therapy adheres to the principles of the Play Therapy UK (PTUK) Ethical Framework, this can be found at: <https://playtherapy.org.uk/ethical-framework/>

This policy will be reviewed annually.

### Risk assessment

I understand my duty to keep children and myself safe during sessions therefore I will carry out a risk assessment before the start of the sessions taking in account individual needs of each child. When providing

Play Therapy in settings such as a child's school, I will follow their Risk assessment and carry out my own risk assessment of the Play room and the Play Therapy Tool kit.

Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole – Children's First Response Hub:	01202 123334 <a href="mailto:childrensfirstresponse@bcpcouncil.gov.uk">childrensfirstresponse@bcpcouncil.gov.uk</a>
In an emergency, or out of hours contact:	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Out of Hours Service: 01202 738256 Email: <a href="mailto:childrensOOHS@bcpcouncil.gov.uk">childrensOOHS@bcpcouncil.gov.uk</a>  Police non-emergency: 101  Police Emergency: 999
Dorset – Family Support and Advice Line:	01305 228558 (including out of hours)

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# Blossoming Hearts Play Therapy Incident Form

In the event of a disclosure or incident during a play therapy session the following form must be completed:

The Child's account, of what has happened and how:
Please provide details of the person alleged to have caused the incident / injury.
Please provide details of any witnesses to the incident(s):
<div>Signed..... Date.....</div> <div>Name of signatory..... Date.....</div> <div>Signed..... Date.....</div> <div>Name of signatory..... Date.....</div>

The form should be signed and dated by all those involved in its completion and kept confidentially on the child's file. The name of the person making the notes should be written alongside each entry.