



Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

Mulberry 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>

Mulberry Play Therapy is 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. Mulberry Play Therapy takes their 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.

Mulberry Play Therapy Designated Safeguarding Lead:	Constance Bedingfield-Lowe connie@mulberryplaytherapy.co.uk
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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/> Mulberry Play Therapy will 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.

Other safeguarding concerns include but are not limited to: abuse linked to faith for 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 non-verbally.

If a child discloses abuse suffered by themselves or another child this will be taken very seriously, the Play Therapist will listen without interrupting the child and no leading questions will be asked. The Play Therapist 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 Mulberry Play Therapy's DSL, in the best interests of the child Mulberry Play Therapy reserves 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 i.e. they will leave the room to find another adult who can support the child.

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



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 Mulberry Play Therapy's Data Protection 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

As Mulberry Play Therapy's DSL, Constance Bedingfield-Lowe completes Safeguarding & Child Protection training a minimum of every 3 years. This ensures practice remains up to date with all relevant legislation, procedures and emerging safeguarding issues.

Prevent Duty

Mulberry Play Therapy promotes and upholds British values within the ethos of the provision. Mulberry Play Therapy recognises 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. Mulberry Play Therapy adheres to the mandatory reporting duty introduced in 2015 for 'known' cases of FGM in under 18s.

Mulberry Play Therapy is 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 Mulberry Play Therapy 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

Mulberry 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.