Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Parent-led peer support, family activities and online community safeguarding

Safeguarding Lead	Alicia Hughes – Founder & Lead Coordinator
Deputy Safeguarding Lead	Cait Guinney – Coordinator
Safeguarding contact	[insert safeguarding email address]
Policy approved	[insert date]
Review date	September 2027

1. Purpose

NICU Parents of Blackpool Victoria Hospital CIC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults who come into contact with our organisation. We provide parent-led peer support, community activities, family events, information and signposting for parents and families whose babies have received neonatal care at Blackpool Victoria Hospital. Our role is peer support and signposting, not medical, clinical or professional counselling.

2. Scope of this policy

This policy applies to directors and coordinators, volunteers, anyone representing NICU Parents, anyone involved in organising or delivering events and activities, our online community and communication channels, and parents, carers, children and families participating in our activities. Safeguarding responsibilities apply to both face-to-face and online activities.

3. Our safeguarding principles

NICU Parents will put safety and wellbeing first; take concerns seriously; respond promptly; never ignore or minimise concerns; maintain appropriate peer-support boundaries; respect confidentiality while sharing information where necessary to protect someone; follow relevant local safeguarding procedures and statutory guidance; and regularly review safeguarding arrangements.

4. Safeguarding children

Our work involves parents and families of babies and children who have received neonatal care. Children may also attend family activities and events. Concerns may include physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect, domestic abuse, exploitation, online abuse, bullying, self-harm or risk of suicide, an unsafe environment, or circumstances affecting a parent’s ability to provide safe care. Where a concern relates to a child, the Safeguarding Lead will consider appropriate referral to children’s social care, police or another relevant safeguarding service.

5. Safeguarding adults

NICU Parents supports adults who may, in some circumstances, be considered adults at risk. Possible concerns include physical, emotional, sexual, financial or domestic abuse, neglect or self-neglect, exploitation, coercive or controlling behaviour, discrimination, online abuse, or serious concerns about immediate safety. Where appropriate, concerns will be referred to the relevant adult safeguarding service or emergency service.

6. Safeguarding Lead

The Safeguarding Lead is Alicia Hughes, Founder & Lead Coordinator. The Deputy Safeguarding Lead is Cait Guinney, Coordinator. The Safeguarding Lead is responsible for receiving and responding to concerns, making appropriate referrals, maintaining safeguarding records, ensuring policies and procedures are reviewed, ensuring coordinators and volunteers understand responsibilities, and liaising with safeguarding professionals where necessary. If a concern involves the Safeguarding Lead, the Deputy Safeguarding Lead should manage it and seek external advice where appropriate.

7. Responding to a safeguarding disclosure

If someone discloses abuse, neglect or another safeguarding concern, coordinators and volunteers should listen calmly; take the person seriously; allow them to speak in their own words; avoid leading or investigative questions; avoid promising absolute confidentiality; explain that information may need to be shared; record the concern as soon as possible; and report it to the Safeguarding Lead promptly. Coordinators and volunteers should not investigate allegations themselves. If someone is in immediate danger, call 999.

8. Recording safeguarding concerns

Safeguarding concerns will be recorded securely. Records should include the date and time, names where known, what was said or observed, immediate action, who was informed, referrals made and relevant follow-up. Records will be restricted to those who need the information for safeguarding purposes and will not be stored in public Facebook groups or ordinary group conversations.

9. Online safeguarding

The organisation operates an online community and may communicate through Facebook, Instagram, email and, where introduced, a dedicated organisational WhatsApp account. The same safeguarding responsibilities apply online as in person. Harmful or abusive content will be managed appropriately; confidential safeguarding information will not be shared publicly; disclosures will be responded to appropriately; and parents may be encouraged to contact the Safeguarding Lead privately.

10. One-to-one peer support

NICU Parents may provide one-to-one peer support and signposting. This is peer-led and is not counselling, therapy, medical advice or clinical care. Organisational WhatsApp or phone communication will remain within appropriate boundaries. Safeguarding concerns will be escalated appropriately, and people needing professional or emergency support will be signposted to appropriate services.

11. Boundaries and professional conduct

Coordinators and volunteers must maintain appropriate boundaries. They must not provide medical diagnosis or treatment advice, present themselves as therapists or healthcare professionals when acting for NICU Parents, enter inappropriate personal relationships with people they support, request or accept inappropriate gifts or financial benefits, share confidential information unnecessarily, or use their position to exert pressure or influence.

12. Safeguarding at events

Before face-to-face events, NICU Parents will consider safeguarding risks. Depending on the activity this may include venue checks, risk assessments, suitable supervision, safe arrival and departure, emergency contacts, first aid and emergency procedures, consideration of babies and children, accessibility, photography and social-media arrangements, and clear reporting arrangements. Parents remain responsible for supervising their own children unless an activity is specifically designed and staffed as a supervised children’s activity.

13. DBS checks

The organisation will assess roles individually to determine whether a DBS check is appropriate and what level is legally available. Alicia Hughes holds a DBS check and Cait Guinney holds a DBS check. Where additional staff or volunteers are recruited, DBS eligibility and other safer-recruitment checks will be considered before relevant activities are undertaken. DBS checks do not replace supervision, safeguarding procedures, training or risk assessment.

14. Safeguarding training

Those with safeguarding responsibilities will be encouraged to maintain appropriate safeguarding knowledge and training. Safeguarding training requirements will be considered when recruiting volunteers or expanding activities, and relevant training records will be maintained.

15. Allegations or concerns about a coordinator or volunteer

Any allegation or concern involving a coordinator, director or volunteer will be taken seriously and recorded. Where appropriate, the organisation will seek advice from the relevant local authority safeguarding service, police or another appropriate agency. No person will investigate an allegation against themselves. Where a concern relates to the Safeguarding Lead, the Deputy Safeguarding Lead will manage it and seek external advice where necessary.

16. Confidentiality and information sharing

NICU Parents respects confidentiality. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where information indicates that a child may be at risk of significant harm, an adult may be at serious risk of abuse or neglect, someone is at immediate risk of serious harm, or information must be shared with an appropriate safeguarding or emergency service. Information will be shared only where necessary and proportionate.

17. Equality, dignity and respect

NICU Parents is committed to treating everyone with dignity and respect. Safeguarding arrangements will be applied fairly, and the organisation will seek to reduce barriers to reporting abuse or accessing support.

18. Photography and social media

Photographs or videos taken at events will be managed sensitively. Appropriate consent will be obtained for identifiable children or families intended for organisational publicity. No one will be pressured to participate, and images will not be used in a way that could reasonably place a child or family at risk.

19. Complaints and concerns

Anyone involved with NICU Parents can raise a safeguarding concern with the Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Safeguarding Lead. Safeguarding concerns will be treated separately from ordinary complaints where necessary. Where external intervention is required, the organisation will refer to the appropriate safeguarding or emergency service.

20. External safeguarding support

NICU Parents will follow the safeguarding procedures of the relevant local authority and safeguarding partnership for the area in which an incident occurs. Concerns may be referred to local authority children’s social care, adult safeguarding, police, emergency services or other appropriate professional services. In an emergency, call 999.

21. Review of this policy

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner following a serious safeguarding incident, significant changes to activities, new safeguarding guidance or legislation, changes to staffing or volunteers, or where a review identifies a need for amendment. Next scheduled review: September 2027.

22. Declaration

NICU Parents of Blackpool Victoria Hospital CIC is committed to creating a culture where safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All coordinators, directors and volunteers are expected to understand this policy and act promptly where they have concerns about the safety or welfare of a child or adult at risk.

Alicia Hughes
Founder & Lead Coordinator

Signature: _____
Date: _____

Cait Guinney
Coordinator

Signature: _____
Date: _____