



Safeguarding Policy

1. Introduction

Little Hoopers is dedicated to creating a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment for all participants, staff, and volunteers. This Safeguarding Policy outlines our commitment to protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults from harm. Our policy applies to all staff, volunteers, franchisees, and anyone working on behalf of Little Hoopers.

2. Scope

This section of the Little Hoopers Safeguarding Policy clarifies the breadth of its application, ensuring a consistent and comprehensive approach across the entire organisation.

Applicability

The Safeguarding Policy extends to all facets of Little Hoopers, including, but not limited to:

- **All Staff and Volunteers:** This includes full-time, part-time, temporary, and volunteer roles within Little Hoopers, regardless of their position or the nature of their direct or indirect engagement with children and young people.
- **Franchisees and Franchise Operations:** Every franchise under the Little Hoopers brand is required to adhere to this policy, ensuring uniformity in safeguarding practices across different locations and operations.
- **Participants:** All children, young people, and vulnerable adults participating in Little Hoopers' activities are under the protection of this policy.
- **Contractors and External Partners:** Any external entities or individuals who work with Little Hoopers in a capacity that brings them into contact with our participants must comply with the safeguarding measures outlined in this policy.

Responsibility Delegation

To ensure the effective implementation of this policy without necessitating intensive oversight from the owner, the following delegation structure is established:

- **Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):** A DSO is appointed at both the organizational and franchise levels to oversee the day-to-day management of safeguarding concerns and policy adherence.
- **Franchise Managers:** Franchise managers are responsible for ensuring their operations fully comply with this policy, including staff training, participant safety, and incident reporting.



- **Staff and Volunteer Training:** Comprehensive training programs are in place to equip all staff and volunteers with the knowledge and skills needed to uphold safeguarding standards. This responsibility is managed by the DSO, with digital resources and periodic workshops.

Implementation Mechanisms

- **Regular Audits and Reviews:** Scheduled audits and reviews of safeguarding practices are conducted to ensure ongoing compliance and identify areas for improvement.
- **Digital Reporting and Management Systems:** Utilisation of digital platforms for reporting safeguarding concerns and managing documentation streamlines the process and reduces the administrative burden on the owner and managerial staff.
- **Communication Channels:** Established channels for communication between all levels of staff, volunteers, participants, and parents ensure transparency and responsiveness to safeguarding issues.

This policy's scope ensures that Little Hoopers' commitment to safeguarding is ingrained in every aspect of our operations, promoting a culture of safety and wellbeing that aligns with our organisational values and legal obligations.

3. Principles

The safeguarding principles of Little Hoopers articulate the foundational beliefs and commitments that guide our actions and decisions in protecting children and young people. These principles are designed to ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are understood and shared across the organisation, reducing the operational burden on the owner while ensuring comprehensive protection for all participants.

Child-Centered Approach

- Every decision and action taken within Little Hoopers prioritises the best interests, safety, and welfare of the children and young people. This approach ensures that their voices are heard and considered in matters affecting them.

Equality and Inclusivity

- Little Hoopers is committed to providing a safe environment for all children, regardless of their age, disability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status. Our safeguarding practices are designed to be accessible and effective for every child.

Shared Responsibility



- Safeguarding is a collective responsibility. While the policy framework and strategic oversight are provided by the owner, the operational implementation of safeguarding measures is shared among all staff, volunteers, and franchisees. This shared model ensures a widespread, vigilant safeguarding culture.

Education and Empowerment

- Regular training and education on safeguarding issues are provided to all staff and volunteers, ensuring they are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills. Children and young people, along with their parents or guardians, are also educated on safeguarding awareness, further empowering our community to recognise and respond to concerns.

Partnership and Collaboration

- Little Hoopers collaborates with parents, guardians, local communities, and external agencies to strengthen our safeguarding practices. This partnership approach enhances our capacity to protect children and respond effectively to safeguarding concerns.

Transparency and Accountability

- Our safeguarding operations are conducted with transparency, fostering trust within our community. Regular reviews and audits ensure accountability, with findings and actions communicated appropriately to maintain high standards of safeguarding.

Responsive and Proactive

- Little Hoopers is committed to being both responsive to immediate safeguarding concerns and proactive in identifying and mitigating potential risks to children and young people. This dual approach ensures that our safeguarding practices are dynamic and adaptable to changing needs and challenges.

By adhering to these principles, Little Hoopers ensures that safeguarding responsibilities are integrated throughout the organisation, promoting a culture of safety and respect that protects all participants.

4. Policy Objectives

The objectives of Little Hoopers' Safeguarding Policy outline the goals and aims that our safeguarding practices strive to achieve. These objectives are designed to streamline the safeguarding process, ensuring efficient oversight and implementation while reducing the direct operational demands on the owner.

1. Establish a Safe Environment



- To create and maintain an environment where children and young people feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to. Ensuring that all Little Hoopers locations, including franchises, adhere to safety standards and practices that prioritize participant welfare.

2. Staff and Volunteer Awareness

- To ensure that all staff and volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities within Little Hoopers' safeguarding framework through comprehensive, regularly updated training programs. This includes the use of digital training modules to facilitate easy access and consistent learning experiences across the organization.

3. Efficient and Effective Reporting Procedures

- To implement clear, accessible reporting mechanisms that allow concerns to be raised without barriers. This involves the utilisation of digital platforms for reporting and tracking concerns, ensuring that the safeguarding process is both efficient and effective.

4. Foster Strong Partnerships

- To develop strong partnerships with external agencies and organisations, including local child protection services and law enforcement, to benefit from their expertise and resources. These partnerships aim to enhance Little Hoopers' safeguarding capabilities and ensure a coordinated response to any incidents.

5. Promote Child Participation

- To ensure that children and young people are empowered within Little Hoopers, promoting their participation in decisions that affect their lives. This objective includes educating participants on their rights and providing platforms for their voices to be heard in a safe and supportive environment.

6. Continuous Monitoring and Improvement

- To regularly monitor and review safeguarding practices and incidents to identify trends, areas for improvement, and to celebrate successes. This includes the deployment of digital tools for data analysis and the establishment of feedback loops with staff, volunteers, participants, and parents.

7. Transparent Communication and Documentation

- To maintain transparent communication channels and comprehensive documentation regarding safeguarding practices and incidents. Ensuring that records are securely stored and accessible to authorised personnel only, facilitating accountability and continuous learning.

By achieving these objectives, Little Hoopers aims to not only comply with legal and ethical standards but also to foster a culture of vigilance, respect, and care. This approach ensures that safeguarding responsibilities are effectively managed across



the organization, safeguarding the welfare of all participants while streamlining operational demands on leadership.

5. Responsibilities

All members of the Little Hoopers community have a responsibility to safeguard the welfare of children and young people. Specific responsibilities include:

- **Franchise Owners:** Ensure this policy is implemented effectively within their operations. This includes providing necessary safeguarding training and resources to staff and volunteers.
- **Coaches and Staff:** Adhere to this policy, attend regular training, and report any concerns or incidents in line with our procedures.
- **Safeguarding Officer:** Each Little Hoopers entity will appoint a Safeguarding Officer responsible for safeguarding matters, including reporting and advising on policy adherence.

The safeguarding responsibilities within Little Hoopers are a collective commitment, involving various roles and functions across the organisation and its franchises. These responsibilities are delineated to ensure a cohesive approach to safeguarding across the board.

Franchise Owners and Managers

Franchise Owners and Managers hold a pivotal role in the local implementation of the Little Hoopers Safeguarding Policy. Their responsibilities include:

- **Policy Implementation:** Ensuring that the Safeguarding Policy is fully implemented within their franchise, including any adaptations necessary to comply with local laws and regulations.
- **Training and Awareness:** Organising regular, mandatory safeguarding training for all staff and volunteers to ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting children. This includes recognising and responding to signs of abuse or neglect.
- **Creating a Safe Environment:** Establishing a culture of safety and respect within the franchise, where children feel valued and heard. This includes conducting risk assessments for all activities and ensuring that physical environments are secure.
- **Designating a Safeguarding Officer:** Appointing a qualified individual to act as the Safeguarding Officer for the franchise, who will be the point of contact for all safeguarding concerns and liaise with external agencies as needed.

Coaches and Staff

All coaches and staff, whether directly employed or volunteering, have a duty to:



- **Adhere to Safeguarding Policies:** Understand and comply with Little Hoopers' Safeguarding Policy and procedures, including the code of conduct and the procedure for reporting concerns.
- **Promote Well-being:** Ensure the activities are inclusive and accessible to all children, promoting their physical, social, and emotional well-being.
- **Ongoing Education:** Participate in ongoing safeguarding education and training to stay updated on best practices and policy updates.
- **Report Concerns:** Immediately report any concerns about a child's welfare to the designated Safeguarding Officer, maintaining confidentiality and professionalism throughout the process.

Safeguarding Officer

Each Little Hoopers entity, including franchises, will have a designated Safeguarding Officer with the following responsibilities:

- **Primary Contact:** Act as the first point of contact for all safeguarding concerns within the franchise, ensuring that all concerns are taken seriously and responded to appropriately.
- **Liaison:** Work closely with local authorities, child protection agencies, and other relevant organisations to manage and follow up on safeguarding issues.
- **Record Keeping:** Maintain detailed, secure records of all safeguarding concerns, actions taken, and outcomes.
- **Training and Support:** Provide ongoing support and guidance to staff and volunteers on safeguarding matters, including delivering or arranging for regular training sessions.

Parents, Carers, and Children

While the primary responsibility for safeguarding lies with Little Hoopers and its staff, parents, carers, and children are also considered integral to the safeguarding process:

- **Awareness and Communication:** Parents and carers are encouraged to be aware of the Safeguarding Policy and to communicate any concerns or suggestions to improve child safety and welfare.
- **Children's Input:** Children's views and feelings are respected and taken into account. Little Hoopers is committed to creating channels through which children can express concerns or report abuse in a safe and supportive environment.

Reporting Mechanism

A clear, accessible reporting mechanism is established to ensure that any concerns can be raised without barriers. This includes anonymous reporting options and assurance that all reports will be treated with the utmost seriousness and confidentiality.



By delineating these responsibilities, Little Hoopers ensures that safeguarding is woven into the fabric of its operations, creating a safe and positive environment for all children and young people in its care.

6. Recruitment and Training

In line with our commitment to safeguarding, Little Hoopers has developed a comprehensive approach to the recruitment and training of our staff and volunteers. This approach is designed to ensure that all individuals working with children and young people are suitable and have the necessary skills and knowledge to provide a safe environment.

Recruitment

The recruitment process for all new staff, volunteers, and franchise partners includes several key steps designed to rigorously assess their suitability to work with children:

- **Background Checks:** Comprehensive background checks, including Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks or equivalent, are mandatory for all new hires. For regions outside the UK, local legal requirements for background checks are followed.

Training

Ongoing training and development in safeguarding are critical components of our strategy to protect children and young people:

- **Initial Training:** All new staff and volunteers undergo comprehensive initial training in safeguarding policies and procedures, including recognising signs of abuse and neglect, how to report concerns, and understanding the legal framework around child protection. This may be done externally and demonstrated via a Safeguarding certification.
- **Regular Updates:** Staff are encouraged to have regular training to ensure all staff and volunteers are aware of the latest safeguarding best practices, policy updates, and any changes in legislation.
- **Specialised Training:** Depending on their role, some staff members may receive specialised training, such as online safety, working with children with disabilities, and managing disclosures of abuse.
- **Franchise Training:** Franchise owners receive additional training focused on implementing safeguarding policies within their operations, including risk management and creating a safe environment.

Support and Supervision

Support and supervision mechanisms are in place to ensure staff and volunteers feel confident in applying safeguarding practices:



- **Mentorship:** New staff and volunteers might be paired with experienced mentors who provide guidance and support as they familiarise themselves with Little Hoopers' safeguarding practices.
- **Regular Supervision Sessions:** Regular one-on-one supervision sessions allow for the discussion of any concerns, feedback on performance, and identification of additional training needs.
- **Safeguarding Officer Support:** Designated Safeguarding Officers are available to provide support and advice on safeguarding matters to all staff and volunteers.

By implementing these comprehensive recruitment and training protocols, Little Hoopers ensures that everyone involved in delivering our programs is equipped to maintain the highest standards of child protection and welfare. This robust approach to safeguarding underpins our commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment for all participants.

7. Recognising Signs of Abuse and Neglect

Little Hoopers is committed to ensuring all staff, volunteers, and franchise partners are equipped with the knowledge and skills to recognise the signs of abuse and neglect. This is crucial for the early identification and intervention in situations where a child's welfare may be at risk. Understanding the various forms of abuse and their indicators is a fundamental aspect of our safeguarding training.

Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse: This includes hitting, shaking, burning, poisoning, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Indicators may include unexplained bruises, burns, or fractures, as well as flinching or withdrawal from physical contact.

Emotional Abuse: This involves persistent emotional maltreatment such as conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved, or inadequate. Signs may include a child's excessive withdrawal, fear, depression, or extreme behaviour.

Sexual Abuse: This encompasses forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. Indicators can include knowledge of sexual activities inappropriate for the child's age, physical symptoms, and behavioural changes such as avoidance of certain situations.

Neglect: Failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs is neglect. Signs include poor appearance and hygiene, lack of appropriate clothing, constant hunger, and untreated medical issues.

Bullying and Cyberbullying: Repeated bullying can cause significant emotional harm. This includes cyberbullying, which occurs online. Symptoms may include changes in behaviour, reluctance to go to school, or unexplained injuries.



Training on Recognising Signs

Little Hoopers ensures all personnel receive comprehensive training on recognizing these signs of abuse and neglect. This training includes:

- **Interactive Workshops:** Facilitated sessions that allow staff and volunteers to learn through scenarios and discussions, enhancing their ability to notice subtle signs of abuse or neglect.
- **E-Learning Modules:** Accessible online training modules cover a wide range of topics related to safeguarding, allowing for flexible learning.
- **Regular Updates:** Ongoing training sessions are provided to keep all personnel updated on new research and insights into identifying abuse and neglect.

Responding to Concerns

Recognising signs of abuse and neglect is only the first step. Little Hoopers ensures that all staff, volunteers, and franchise partners understand how to respond appropriately and sensitively to concerns about a child's welfare. This includes:

- **Immediate Reporting:** Ensuring that any concern, no matter how small, is immediately reported to the designated Safeguarding Officer.
- **Documenting Observations:** Keeping detailed, confidential records of any signs or disclosures of abuse or neglect, including dates, times, and the words used by the child, if any.
- **Supporting the Child:** Understanding how to provide immediate emotional support to the child in a way that is appropriate and non-intrusive, ensuring they feel heard and taken seriously.

Through comprehensive training and clear procedures, Little Hoopers empowers its staff, volunteers, and franchise partners to play a pivotal role in safeguarding the children and young people in our programs. This proactive approach to recognizing and responding to signs of abuse and neglect is a cornerstone of our commitment to creating a safe and nurturing environment for all participants.

8. Reporting Concerns

A critical component of Little Hoopers' safeguarding policy is the mechanism for reporting concerns about a child's welfare. Our policy ensures that all staff, volunteers, franchise partners, and members of the Little Hoopers community understand their obligation to act on concerns and know precisely how to report these concerns. This structured approach to reporting aims to ensure that all allegations and suspicions of abuse or neglect are taken seriously, treated confidentially, and responded to promptly and appropriately.

Reporting Procedure



- **Immediate Action:** Any individual within Little Hoopers who has concerns about a child's welfare, whether based on observation, disclosure by the child, or any other form of suspicion, must take immediate action by reporting these concerns to the designated Safeguarding Officer.
- **Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):** Each Little Hoopers entity, including franchises, is required to have a designated Safeguarding Officer who is trained to handle safeguarding concerns. The DSO serves as the primary contact for reporting and managing safeguarding issues within their respective entity.
- **Confidential Reporting:** All reports are treated with the utmost confidentiality. The identity of the person making the report will be protected to ensure they feel safe and supported in coming forward with their concerns.
- **Documentation:** The individual reporting the concern is encouraged to document the details as accurately and comprehensively as possible, including the date, time, and nature of the concern, without leading the child or influencing their account.
- **External Reporting:** In cases where there is immediate risk to a child or if the internal response is deemed insufficient or inappropriate, staff are advised on how to escalate concerns externally to child protection services or law enforcement agencies.

Training on Reporting Procedures

To ensure all Little Hoopers personnel are confident and clear on how to report concerns, comprehensive training is provided, covering:

- **Detailed walkthroughs** of the reporting procedure, emphasising the importance of acting swiftly and sensitively.
- **Scenario-based training** to help staff and volunteers understand how to handle various types of concerns or disclosures.
- **Legal and ethical considerations** in reporting, including understanding the balance between confidentiality and the need to act in the child's best interests.

Support for Reporters

Recognising the emotional impact that reporting a safeguarding concern can have on the individual making the report, Little Hoopers provides:

- **Access to support services** for staff and volunteers who have reported concerns, acknowledging the potential stress and emotional toll involved.
- **Protection against retaliation**, ensuring that individuals who report concerns in good faith are protected from any form of reprisal or negative consequence.

Review and Feedback

- **Follow-Up:** The designated Safeguarding Officer will follow up on all reports, ensuring appropriate action has been taken and providing feedback to the person who made the report, where appropriate.



- **Continuous Improvement:** Little Hoopers is committed to continuously reviewing and improving its reporting procedures based on feedback from staff, volunteers, and external agencies, ensuring our practices are aligned with best practices in safeguarding.

By establishing clear, accessible, and supportive reporting mechanisms, Little Hoopers underscores its commitment to safeguarding the children and young people within its care, ensuring that all concerns are addressed in a manner that prioritizes their welfare and safety.

9. Record Keeping

Effective record-keeping is a cornerstone of Little Hoopers' safeguarding policy, ensuring that all concerns, actions, and outcomes related to safeguarding are documented systematically and securely. This approach not only aids in the management and resolution of individual cases but also contributes to the continuous improvement of our safeguarding practices.

Principles of Record Keeping

- **Accuracy:** Records must capture information as accurately and comprehensively as possible, including the details of the concern, actions taken, decisions made, and the rationale behind these decisions.
- **Confidentiality:** All records are kept confidentially, accessible only to individuals directly involved in managing the safeguarding concern or in a designated oversight role. Strict controls are in place to protect the privacy of all individuals involved.
- **Security:** Paper-based records are stored in a secure, locked location, while electronic records are protected with appropriate cybersecurity measures, including encryption and access controls.
- **Timeliness:** Concerns and actions are documented promptly, ensuring that records are updated in real-time as cases evolve. This ensures that information is current and accurate, facilitating effective decision-making.

Contents of Records

- **Details of the Concern:** This includes the nature of the allegation or suspicion, who reported it, and any specific observations or direct disclosures from the child.
- **Actions Taken:** Every step taken in response to the concern, including immediate measures to ensure the child's safety, referrals made to external agencies, and any support provided to the child and their family.



- **Decisions and Rationale:** Documentation of decisions made by the Safeguarding Officer or other involved parties, including the reasons behind these decisions, to provide a clear audit trail.
- **Outcomes and Follow-Up:** The results of any investigations or interventions, as well as details of ongoing monitoring or support plans for the child.

Management and Access

- **Review and Oversight:** Designated Safeguarding Officers periodically review safeguarding records to ensure cases are managed appropriately and to identify any patterns or trends that may require broader organisational action.
- **Access Requests:** Little Hoopers complies with legal requirements related to data protection and privacy, including handling requests from individuals to access records about them, while balancing the need to protect the welfare of children.

Retention and Disposal

- **Retention Periods:** Records are retained for a period defined by legal requirements and best practice guidelines, ensuring that information is available for future reference if needed, such as in the event of late disclosures of abuse.
- **Secure Disposal:** Once the retention period has expired, records are disposed of securely, with paper records being shredded and electronic records being permanently deleted in a manner that prevents recovery.

Training and Awareness

Little Hoopers ensures that all staff and volunteers are trained in the importance of accurate, confidential, and secure record-keeping as part of their safeguarding responsibilities. Regular refresher sessions are provided to keep all personnel up-to-date with any changes in record-keeping practices or legal requirements.

Through meticulous record-keeping, Little Hoopers maintains the integrity of its safeguarding process, providing a robust framework to protect children and young people, support individuals affected by safeguarding concerns, and continuously enhance the organisation's safeguarding measures.

10. Code of Conduct

To ensure the highest standards of behaviour and practice within Little Hoopers, a comprehensive Code of Conduct has been developed. This code serves as a guideline for all staff, volunteers, franchisees, and anyone associated with Little Hoopers activities, outlining the expected behaviours and the commitment to safeguarding children and young people in our care.

Core Elements of the Code of Conduct



- **Respect and Dignity:** Treat all children and young people with the utmost respect and dignity. Ensure interactions are appropriate and respectful, maintaining a safe and positive environment for everyone involved.
- **Professional Boundaries:** Maintain appropriate professional boundaries with all children and young people involved in Little Hoopers. This includes avoiding inappropriate physical contact and ensuring that any physical interaction is necessary, minimal, and in response to the child's needs.
- **Communication:** Engage in open, honest, and respectful communication. Ensure language is appropriate and inclusive, avoiding any form of discrimination, intimidation, or bullying.
- **Confidentiality:** Respect the confidentiality of information related to children and young people, sharing it only with those who have a legitimate need to know within the context of safeguarding their welfare.
- **Reporting Concerns:** Adhere strictly to the reporting procedures outlined in the Safeguarding Policy. All suspicions or allegations of abuse, neglect, or any other type of harm must be reported immediately to the designated Safeguarding Officer.
- **Social Media and Digital Communication:** Exercise caution and professionalism in the use of social media and digital communications related to interactions with children and young people. Adhere to Little Hoopers' guidelines on digital communication to avoid any inappropriate contact or content sharing.
- **Inclusivity and Accessibility:** Commit to providing an inclusive environment that respects the diversity of children and young people. Make reasonable adjustments to ensure activities are accessible to all participants, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds.
- **Safety and Welfare:** Prioritise the safety and welfare of all children and young people. This includes adhering to health and safety guidelines, conducting risk assessments for activities, and being vigilant to any signs of distress or discomfort among participants.
- **Personal Conduct:** Maintain high standards of personal conduct, both within Little Hoopers activities and in personal life, recognising that personal behaviour can impact professional credibility and the safety of children and young people.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Engage in ongoing professional development and training related to safeguarding and child protection. Remain open to feedback and committed to improving personal practice in line with evolving safeguarding standards.

Implementation and Compliance



- **Acknowledgment:** All staff, volunteers, and franchisees are required to sign an acknowledgment form, confirming they have read, understood, and agreed to adhere to the Code of Conduct.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Little Hoopers conducts regular monitoring and evaluations to ensure compliance with the Code of Conduct. This may include observations, feedback sessions, and reviews of practice.
- **Breach of Conduct:** Any breaches of the Code of Conduct will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment or association with Little Hoopers. Severe breaches will be reported to relevant authorities as required by law and Little Hoopers' safeguarding procedures.

Through this extended Code of Conduct, Little Hoopers underscores its commitment to creating a safe, respectful, and nurturing environment for all children and young people, ensuring that all interactions within Little Hoopers reflect our core values and safeguarding principles.

11. Online Safety

In the digital age, ensuring the online safety of children and young people participating in Little Hoopers activities is of paramount importance. Little Hoopers recognises the potential risks associated with digital and online interactions and is committed to implementing comprehensive measures to protect participants in all online and digital platforms associated with our programs.

Online Safety Policies

- **Digital Communication:** Establish clear guidelines for digital communication between staff, volunteers, and children/young people. This includes the use of email, social media, and messaging apps, ensuring all communication is appropriate, professional, and transparent.
- **Social Media Use:** Define acceptable use policies for social media, including guidelines for interactions on platforms where Little Hoopers has a presence. Staff and volunteers must maintain professional boundaries and are prohibited from engaging in private or personal communications with children and young people through these channels.
- **Cyberbullying Prevention:** Implement strategies and educational programs to prevent cyberbullying, including awareness campaigns for children, parents, and staff. Encourage reporting of cyberbullying incidents and outline clear procedures for responding to such reports.
- **Online Content:** Ensure that all content posted on Little Hoopers' websites, social media, or other online platforms is appropriate for children and young people.



Regularly review and monitor online content to prevent exposure to harmful or inappropriate material.

- **Data Protection:** Adhere to strict data protection protocols to safeguard the personal information of participants. This includes secure storage of digital data, controlled access to personal information, and adherence to privacy laws.

Training and Education

- **Staff and Volunteer Training:** Provide regular training for all staff and volunteers on online safety, including recognising and responding to online risks, understanding digital boundaries, and using digital tools responsibly in interactions with children and young people.
- **Educating Participants and Parents:** Offer educational resources and workshops for participants and their parents on online safety, including safe internet use, understanding digital footprints, and strategies to manage online risks.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct ongoing awareness campaigns within Little Hoopers' community to promote safe online behaviours and create an open environment for discussing online safety concerns.

Monitoring and Reporting

- **Monitoring Online Interactions:** Implement measures to monitor online interactions associated with Little Hoopers programs, ensuring compliance with online safety policies and identifying potential risks.
- **Reporting Mechanisms:** Establish clear reporting mechanisms for online safety concerns, allowing children, parents, staff, and volunteers to report concerns confidentially and securely.
- **Response Protocols:** Develop protocols for responding to online safety incidents, including immediate actions to protect children, investigation procedures, and cooperation with law enforcement if necessary.

Review and Improvement

- **Policy Review:** Regularly review and update online safety policies to reflect emerging risks, technological advancements, and best practices in online child protection.
- **Feedback Loops:** Create feedback loops involving staff, children, and parents to continuously improve online safety measures based on the community's experiences and insights.

By extending its safeguarding policies to encompass online safety, Little Hoopers demonstrates its commitment to creating a safe and positive environment for children and young people, both in physical spaces and in the digital realm. Through education, monitoring, and responsive actions, Little Hoopers aims to empower participants to navigate the online world safely and confidently.



12. Partnership with Parents and Carers

Little Hoopers recognises the critical role that parents and carers play in the safeguarding and overall welfare of children and young people. As such, fostering strong, transparent, and collaborative partnerships with parents and carers is a central component of our safeguarding strategy. This section outlines the steps Little Hoopers takes to engage parents and carers actively and constructively in our safeguarding efforts.

Open Communication

- **Welcome Meetings:** Host welcome meetings for parents and carers of new participants to introduce them to Little Hoopers, our safeguarding policy, and how we implement it in practice. This serves as an initial touchpoint for building trust and understanding.
- **Regular Updates:** Provide regular updates to parents and carers on any changes to safeguarding policies or practices, as well as general news about Little Hoopers activities, through newsletters, emails, and parent meetings.
- **Safeguarding Information Sessions:** Offer information sessions dedicated to discussing safeguarding topics, online safety, and how parents can contribute to creating a safe environment for their children, both within Little Hoopers activities and at home.

Involvement and Feedback

- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish clear mechanisms for parents and carers to provide feedback on Little Hoopers programs and any concerns they might have regarding safeguarding. This could be through surveys, suggestion boxes, or parent forums.
- **Parental Involvement:** Encourage parental involvement in Little Hoopers activities where appropriate, such as volunteering at events, participating in workshops, or joining parent committees, to foster a community-focused approach to safeguarding.
- **Consultation on Policy Changes:** Involve parents and carers in consultations when making significant changes to safeguarding policies or practices, ensuring their perspectives and concerns are considered.

Support and Resources

- **Support Services:** Inform parents and carers about available support services, both within Little Hoopers and through external agencies, for any safeguarding issues or concerns they may have.



- **Educational Resources:** Provide parents and carers with access to educational resources on safeguarding, child welfare, and related topics, empowering them with the knowledge to support their children's safety and well-being.
- **Emergency Contacts:** Ensure that parents and carers have access to emergency contact information for Little Hoopers' designated Safeguarding Officer and other relevant personnel.

Collaboration on Child Welfare

- **Individual Welfare Plans:** In cases where specific welfare concerns arise, work collaboratively with parents, carers, and, where appropriate, external agencies to develop and implement individual welfare plans for affected children.
- **Shared Responsibility:** Emphasize the shared responsibility between Little Hoopers and parents/carers in safeguarding children, encouraging an active and engaged partnership to protect and promote the welfare of all participants.

By extending our safeguarding policy to include a robust partnership with parents and carers, Little Hoopers aims to create a cohesive community dedicated to the safety, protection, and overall well-being of children and young people. Through open communication, involvement, support, and collaboration, we strive to ensure that safeguarding is a collective effort that benefits from the insights, experiences, and active participation of the entire Little Hoopers community.

13. Review and Monitoring

An essential aspect of Little Hoopers' safeguarding framework is the ongoing review and monitoring of our policies, practices, and the overall safeguarding environment within all facets of our operations. This continuous oversight ensures not only compliance with current safeguarding standards but also allows for the proactive identification and mitigation of potential risks to children and young people.

Continuous Review Process

- **Annual Policy Review:** Conduct an annual review of the Safeguarding Policy and all related procedures to ensure they remain relevant, effective, and in line with any changes in legislation, guidance, or best practice. This review involves input from a range of stakeholders, including staff, volunteers, parents, and, where appropriate, children and young people themselves.
- **Regular Safeguarding Audits:** Implement regular safeguarding audits across all Little Hoopers franchises to assess compliance with the Safeguarding Policy, identify any gaps in practice, and recommend improvements. These audits are conducted by trained safeguarding professionals and include both announced and unannounced visits.



- **Monitoring Compliance and Effectiveness:** Use a variety of tools and methods to monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding practices, including feedback forms, interviews, and safeguarding incident reports. This data is analyzed to identify trends, areas for improvement, and to celebrate areas of strong practice.

Staff and Volunteer Monitoring

- **Safeguarding Supervision:** Provide regular supervision sessions for staff and volunteers focused on safeguarding, offering a space to discuss concerns, reflect on practice, and receive targeted support.
- **Ongoing Training and Development:** Ensure all staff and volunteers engage in ongoing training and professional development related to safeguarding, keeping them informed of the latest developments and enhancing their skills in protecting children and young people.
- **Performance Reviews:** Include safeguarding responsibilities and competencies as a key component of staff and volunteer performance reviews, reinforcing the importance of safeguarding in everyday practice.

Feedback and Involvement

- **Stakeholder Feedback:** Actively seek and encourage feedback on safeguarding practices from children, parents, staff, and volunteers through surveys, suggestion boxes, and regular meetings. This feedback is invaluable in assessing the impact of our safeguarding measures and identifying areas for enhancement.
- **Child and Youth Involvement:** Involve children and young people in the review of safeguarding practices, ensuring their voices and experiences help shape a safer Little Hoopers. This can be facilitated through youth forums, feedback sessions, and inclusion in policy review discussions.

Reporting and Accountability

- **Annual Safeguarding Report:** Produce an annual safeguarding report summarising key developments, incidents, and actions taken throughout the year. This report is shared with key stakeholders, including franchise owners, staff, and where appropriate, parents and carers.
- **Safeguarding Action Plan:** Develop and implement a Safeguarding Action Plan following each annual review, outlining specific objectives, actions, and timelines for further enhancing safeguarding across Little Hoopers. Progress against this plan is monitored regularly and reported in the annual safeguarding report.

By establishing a comprehensive review and monitoring framework, Little Hoopers commits to maintaining the highest standards of safeguarding, ensuring that our practices not only protect children and young people but also promote their welfare and development in a secure and nurturing environment. This ongoing commitment to safeguarding excellence underscores Little Hoopers' dedication to being a leader in child protection and welfare within the sports and recreation sector.



14. Allegations Against Staff and Volunteers

Creating and maintaining a safe environment for all children and young people within Little Hoopers necessitates a transparent and effective approach to managing allegations against staff, volunteers, or any individuals associated with our operations. Our policy ensures that all allegations are taken seriously, thoroughly investigated, and managed in a way that prioritises the welfare of the child while also ensuring fairness to the accused.

Immediate Action and Suspension

- **Immediate Response:** Upon receipt of an allegation, immediate steps are taken to ensure the safety and welfare of any child or young person involved. This may involve temporarily suspending the individual accused from their duties, without prejudice, as a precautionary measure until a full investigation can be conducted.
- **Risk Assessment:** Conduct an initial risk assessment to determine the immediate risk to children and whether the accused individual should be temporarily removed from contact with children pending the outcome of the investigation.

Investigation Process

- **Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) Involvement:** The DSO is immediately informed of any allegations, and they oversee the process to ensure it is handled appropriately, in line with Little Hoopers policies and relevant legal requirements.
- **External Reporting:** Where necessary, allegations are reported to external bodies, including child protection services and law enforcement, to ensure a comprehensive investigation that may require resources or expertise beyond what Little Hoopers can provide.
- **Confidential Investigation:** A thorough and confidential investigation is conducted, gathering evidence from all relevant parties, including the individual making the allegation, the accused, and any potential witnesses.
- **Support Mechanisms:** Provide support to all parties involved in the allegation, including the individual making the allegation, the accused, and any children or young people affected by the situation. This support is tailored to the needs of the individuals and may include counselling services.

Outcome and Actions

- **Transparent Communication:** Ensure clear and ongoing communication with all parties involved, keeping them informed of the progress of the investigation and its outcome, within the bounds of privacy and confidentiality laws.



- **Disciplinary Action:** If the investigation finds that the allegation is substantiated, take appropriate disciplinary action against the accused, which may include dismissal, in accordance with Little Hoopers' policies and procedures.
- **Review and Learn:** Following the resolution of an allegation, conduct a review of the incident to identify any lessons learned or improvements that can be made to Little Hoopers' safeguarding practices to prevent future occurrences.
- **Record-Keeping:** Maintain detailed records of the allegation, investigation process, and outcome, stored securely and confidentially, accessible only to those with a legitimate need to know.
- **Reintegration:** In cases where allegations are found to be unsubstantiated, support the accused individual in reintegrating into their role, if appropriate, ensuring they feel supported and valued upon their return.

Training and Awareness

- **Regular Training:** Provide regular training to all staff and volunteers on how to handle allegations against colleagues in a way that protects children and ensures a fair and unbiased process.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct awareness campaigns within Little Hoopers to ensure everyone understands the importance of reporting concerns or allegations and feels supported in doing so.

By adhering to these procedures, Little Hoopers emphasises its zero-tolerance stance on abuse, ensuring that all allegations are handled with the utmost seriousness and sensitivity. This comprehensive approach to managing allegations protects children and young people and upholds the integrity and trust in Little Hoopers and its dedicated team of staff and volunteers.

15. Confidentiality

The safeguarding of children and young people within Little Hoopers is underpinned by a stringent approach to confidentiality. This ensures that sensitive information is protected, respecting the privacy of all individuals involved while also ensuring that necessary actions can be taken to protect children and young people.

Principles of Confidentiality

- **Need to Know Basis:** Information about safeguarding concerns, allegations, or incidents is shared only with individuals who have a legitimate need to know, such as designated Safeguarding Officers, relevant staff members involved in the case, and external authorities when required.



- **Data Protection Compliance:** All handling of personal data, including safeguarding records, complies with relevant data protection legislation, ensuring that individuals' privacy rights are respected and protected.
- **Secure Storage:** Safeguarding records, both electronic and paper-based, are stored securely. Access is strictly controlled and monitored, with electronic records encrypted and paper-based records kept in locked cabinets or rooms with restricted access.

Managing Confidentiality

- **Informing Parties:** When a safeguarding concern is raised, the parties involved are informed about who will be made aware of the concern and why their information is being shared, respecting individuals' rights to privacy while balancing the need to protect children and young people.
- **Confidential Discussions:** Discussions regarding safeguarding concerns are conducted in private settings to prevent unauthorised individuals from overhearing sensitive information.
- **Agreements and Consent:** Where possible and appropriate, obtain consent from children, young people, and their parents or carers before sharing personal information. However, it is also made clear that there are circumstances where the need to protect a child or young person may override the need for consent.

Breaches of Confidentiality

- **Reporting Breaches:** Clear procedures are in place for reporting and managing breaches of confidentiality, ensuring that any breaches are investigated, and appropriate actions are taken to mitigate any harm caused.
- **Training and Awareness:** Regular training is provided to all staff and volunteers on confidentiality policies and the importance of maintaining confidentiality in safeguarding matters. This includes guidance on how to securely handle and communicate sensitive information.

Review and Audit

- **Regular Audits:** Conduct regular audits of safeguarding records and data handling practices to ensure compliance with confidentiality policies and data protection laws.
- **Feedback and Improvement:** Encourage feedback from children, families, staff, and volunteers on the handling of confidential information, using this feedback to continually improve confidentiality practices.

By embedding these principles and practices of confidentiality into all aspects of its safeguarding approach, Little Hoopers ensures that sensitive information is handled with the utmost care and respect. This not only protects the privacy and dignity of individuals involved in safeguarding matters but also fosters an environment of trust



and security, encouraging individuals to come forward with concerns, knowing that they will be managed discreetly and professionally.

16. Training and Compliance

To uphold the highest standards of safeguarding within Little Hoopers, a robust framework for training and compliance is essential. This framework ensures that all staff, volunteers, franchisees, and anyone involved in Little Hoopers' activities are well-informed about safeguarding principles, understand their responsibilities, and are equipped to act appropriately to protect children and young people.

Comprehensive Training Program

- **Initial Safeguarding Training:** Mandatory for all new hires and volunteers, covering Little Hoopers' safeguarding policies, recognizing signs of abuse and neglect, and understanding how to respond and report concerns.
- **Specialized Modules:** Depending on their role, individuals may be required to complete specialized training modules, such as online safety, working with children with disabilities, and managing disclosures.
- **Refresher Courses:** Annual refresher courses are mandatory for all staff and volunteers to ensure their knowledge and skills remain current, addressing any changes in legislation, policy updates, or emerging safeguarding issues.
- **Leadership Training:** Specific training for franchise owners, managers, and designated Safeguarding Officers, focusing on implementing safeguarding policies, creating a safe environment, and leading by example.

Compliance and Accountability

- **Compliance Checks:** Regular compliance checks and audits are conducted to ensure that all Little Hoopers entities are adhering to the safeguarding policy, with findings reported to senior management for review.
- **Certification and Documentation:** Staff and volunteers are required to provide documentation of completed training, which is recorded in their personnel files. Certificates of completion for safeguarding courses are maintained as part of compliance records.
- **Performance Evaluations:** Safeguarding responsibilities and adherence to the Code of Conduct are included in performance evaluations for staff, reinforcing the importance of safeguarding in day-to-day operations.

Monitoring and Reporting

- **Monitoring Mechanisms:** Systems are in place to monitor the implementation of safeguarding practices across all Little Hoopers activities, including spot checks,



feedback from participants and parents, and regular reviews of safeguarding incidents.

- **Incident Reporting:** A clear and accessible incident reporting system is established, enabling staff, volunteers, children, and parents to report any safeguarding concerns or breaches of policy without fear of reprisal.

Continuous Improvement

- **Feedback Loops:** Mechanisms for collecting and analyzing feedback from training participants, enabling continuous improvement of the training content and delivery methods.
- **Policy Review:** The safeguarding policy and training programs are reviewed annually, or more frequently if necessary, to incorporate feedback, address identified gaps, and update content based on new research or legislation.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engagement with external safeguarding experts, local authorities, and child protection agencies to ensure Little Hoopers' training and policies reflect best practices and comply with legal requirements.

Support and Resources

- **Support for Staff and Volunteers:** Ongoing support is provided to all staff and volunteers dealing with safeguarding issues, including access to professional advice, counselling services, and peer support networks.
- **Resource Library:** Access to a comprehensive library of safeguarding resources, including guidelines, policy documents, and training materials, available to all staff and volunteers.

By maintaining a focus on training and compliance, Little Hoopers ensures that its safeguarding efforts are effective, up-to-date, and reflective of best practices. This comprehensive approach not only protects children and young people but also fosters a culture of vigilance and care across the entire organisation.

17. Protocol for Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

The effectiveness of Little Hoopers' safeguarding measures heavily relies on the clear understanding and execution of our reporting protocol. This ensures that all concerns regarding the welfare of a child or young person are addressed promptly and appropriately. Below is the detailed protocol for reporting safeguarding concerns within Little Hoopers:

Immediate Reporting

- **Observation or Disclosure:** Any staff member, volunteer, or franchisee who observes signs of abuse or receives a disclosure directly from a child must take immediate action.



- **Contact Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):** The first step is to contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) for Little Hoopers or the respective franchise without delay. If the DSO is unavailable, the next step is to contact an alternate designated person identified in the safeguarding policy.
- **Confidentiality:** Maintain confidentiality at all times. The details of the concern should only be shared with those who need to know, such as the DSO or alternate designated person.

Documentation

- **Record the Concern:** Document the concern using the designated safeguarding concern form or system. Include all relevant details such as the date, time, location, individuals involved, and a factual account of the observation or disclosure. Avoid making personal judgments or assumptions in the report.
- **Submit the Report:** Submit the completed safeguarding concern form to the DSO as soon as possible. If digital submission is not possible, ensure the report is handed over securely and directly.

DSO Action

- **Initial Assessment:** The DSO conducts an initial assessment of the concern to determine the immediate risk to the child and whether external authorities need to be involved.
- **Action Plan:** The DSO, in consultation with other safeguarding team members if necessary, decides on the actions to be taken. This could include monitoring, internal intervention, referral to external agencies (social services, law enforcement), or immediate protective action.
- **External Reporting:** If the concern warrants, the DSO is responsible for making referrals to external agencies and ensuring that all information is provided to facilitate an investigation or intervention.
- **Follow-Up and Support:** The DSO follows up on the concern, keeping records of any developments and ensuring that support is provided to all affected parties.

Training and Awareness

- **Regular Training:** All Little Hoopers personnel receive regular training on this protocol, ensuring they understand their responsibilities and the steps to follow when a safeguarding concern arises.
- **Updates and Reminders:** The safeguarding policy and protocols are regularly reviewed and updated. Staff and volunteers are reminded of the reporting protocols through regular communications and during safeguarding training sessions.

Additional Protocols

Protocol for Handling Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers



- **Immediate Suspension:** Any staff or volunteer against whom an allegation is made may be temporarily suspended pending an investigation, as a precautionary measure and not as a presumption of guilt.
- **Investigation:** An internal investigation is initiated immediately, alongside any external investigation by child protection services or law enforcement.
- **Support and Fair Treatment:** Ensure the individual accused is treated fairly and provided with support throughout the investigation process.

Protocol for Emergency Situations

- **Immediate Action:** In case of an immediate risk to a child, staff are instructed to act promptly to ensure the child's safety, which may include contacting emergency services.
- **Notification:** The DSO and relevant authorities are notified immediately of the emergency and actions taken.

By establishing and adhering to these protocols, Little Hoopers ensures a consistent, informed, and effective response to safeguarding concerns, prioritizing the welfare and safety of children and young people in our care.

18. Contacts

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