



Peopleton Brook Care Farm

Interim Mixed-Age Provision: Supporting Children, Young People and Adults Policy

Policy owner	Jake Payne
Operational lead	Operations Manager
Safeguarding leads	DSL and DDSL
Applies to	All employees, volunteers, agency staff, contractors and placement staff
Effective from	1st September 2026
Review date	September 2026, and annually thereafter (currently under review)
Review sooner if	There is a safeguarding incident, significant change in service delivery, change in legislation or commissioner concern

1. Purpose

Peopleton Brook Care Farm supports both:

- children and young people under the age of 18; and
- adults aged 18 and over, including adults who may have care and support needs.

The organisation currently is not required to operate exclusively as either an education service or an adult social care service. However, it must be able to demonstrate that each cohort is supported safely, appropriately and in accordance with their different legal, safeguarding, educational and care requirements.

This policy explains how Peopleton Brook Care Farm will:

- support children and adults who access the service at the same time;
- distinguish between child and adult safeguarding responsibilities;
- plan safe staffing and supervision;
- assess the suitability of mixed-age groups and activities;
- ensure staff are trained for both cohorts;
- manage risks arising from shared spaces and activities;
- maintain clear management and safeguarding oversight.

For safeguarding purposes, a child is anyone under 18. The current statutory education guidance therefore applies to all learners under 18, even where they appear mature or are approaching adulthood. ([GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk))

Adult safeguarding duties apply where an adult has care and support needs, is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and is unable to protect themselves because of those needs. ([GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk))

2. Policy statement

Peopleton Brook Care Farm is committed to providing a safe, respectful and person-centred service for children, young people and adults.

The organisation recognises that:

- children and adults may require different safeguarding responses;
- chronological age alone does not determine the level of support or supervision required;
- an adult may require more intensive support than a child;
- a young person may have care needs similar to those of an adult receiving social care;
- mixed-age provision is not automatically unsafe, but it must be individually assessed and properly managed;
- no child or adult will be placed in a group solely because a space is available;
- staffing decisions will be based on assessed need and risk rather than a fixed ratio alone;
- safeguarding concerns will be referred through the correct child or adult pathway.

The welfare, dignity, rights, wishes and safety of each person will remain central to decision-making.

3. Core principles

The service will follow these principles:

Individual assessment

Every student will have their needs and risks considered individually before they begin attending.

Proportionate supervision

Supervision will reflect the person, activity, environment and identified risks.

Clear distinction between safeguarding pathways

Staff will know whether a concern should be managed through:

- child safeguarding;
- adult safeguarding;
- both pathways;
- staff-conduct or LADO procedures;
- emergency procedures.

Person-centred practice

Adults will be involved in safeguarding decisions wherever possible, with consideration given to their wishes, outcomes, consent and mental capacity. Adult safeguarding should promote wellbeing and establish what being safe means to the individual rather than imposing measures without considering their wider rights and choices.

([GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk))

Child-centred practice

For children and young people, their welfare is paramount. Their views and wishes will be heard, but staff must take protective action where required and must not allow concerns about consent or parental reaction to prevent an appropriate safeguarding referral.

Least restrictive safe practice

Restrictions will be used only where necessary, proportionate and supported by assessment, policy or lawful authority.

Professional curiosity

Staff must remain alert to signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation, coercion, harmful behaviour or unsafe professional practice.

4. Definitions

Child

A person under the age of 18.

Adult

A person aged 18 or over.

Adult at risk

For the purpose of this policy, an adult who:

- has needs for care and support;
- is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- because of those needs is unable to protect themselves from the risk or experience of abuse or neglect.

Mixed-age provision

Any session, activity, area or service in which children and adults are present at the same time.

Mixed-age group

A directly supervised activity group containing at least one learner under 18 and at least one learner aged 18 or over.

Cohort-specific needs

Needs associated with the individual's age, safeguarding status, education, care plan, communication, capacity, health, behaviour or statutory arrangements.

5. Admissions and placement planning

Before a placement begins, Peopleton Brook Care Farm will obtain sufficient information to determine whether the service can safely meet the learner's needs.

This should include, where relevant:

- age and legal status;
- education, health and care plan;
- care and support plan;
- safeguarding history;
- current risk assessments;
- behaviour support information;
- communication needs;
- medical conditions and medication;
- mobility and personal-care needs;
- sensory needs;
- known triggers and de-escalation strategies;
- risk of exploitation, absconding, self-harm or harm to others;
- level of supervision required;
- restrictions relating to animals, tools, vehicles or environments;
- whether 1:1 support is required;
- emergency and family-contact arrangements.

The placement decision must consider:

- whether the learner can safely be supported alongside the existing cohort;
- potential risks posed to or by other learners;
- whether separate activities, spaces or session times are required;
- whether staffing levels and competencies are sufficient;
- whether additional training is required before admission;

- whether the learner's referring body has provided adequate information.

Where information is incomplete, the placement will not begin until management is satisfied that risks can be understood and controlled.

6. Individual risk assessment

Each child and adult must have a current risk assessment proportionate to their needs.

The assessment must consider:

- risks to the individual;
- risks the individual may present to others;
- risks arising from mixing with younger or older learners;
- vulnerability to influence, coercion, bullying or exploitation;
- sexualised or harmful behaviour;
- communication and understanding;
- emotional regulation;
- physical size and strength;
- access to tools, animals and equipment;
- personal-care and privacy needs;
- transport and handover arrangements;
- community access;
- online contact and exchange of personal information;
- supervision during breaks and transitions;
- known relationships between learners;
- emergency arrangements.

Risk assessments must be reviewed:

- before admission;
- after an incident or safeguarding concern;
- when the learner's needs change;
- when group composition changes significantly;
- following information from families or professionals;
- at planned review intervals.

7. Decisions about mixed-age groups

Children and adults may take part in the same activity where management is satisfied that this is safe, suitable and beneficial.

The decision must consider:

- the developmental and emotional maturity of those involved;
- individual vulnerabilities;
- behaviour and safeguarding risks;
- the nature of the activity;
- the environment and available escape or quiet spaces;
- the competence of the staff leading it;
- the level of direct supervision;
- whether any learner requires 1:1 support;
- privacy and dignity;
- potential power imbalances;
- whether group membership could increase risk.

Mixed-age participation must not be authorised solely because:

- learners have similar interests;
- their timetables overlap;
- there are insufficient staff to separate groups;
- a member of staff believes everyone will “get on”;
- there is physical space available.

Where risks cannot be adequately controlled, learners will be supported in separate groups, areas or sessions.

8. Staffing and deployment

Staffing will be planned according to actual learner needs and activity risk.

The service will generally work towards an average of approximately two learners to each directly supporting staff member. However, this is not an automatic or guaranteed ratio.

Some groups may safely operate with three learners to one staff member where:

- risk assessments support this;
- learners are sufficiently independent;
- the activity is suitable;
- the environment is controlled;
- the member of staff is competent;
- additional management or floating support remains available.

Other learners may require:

- dedicated 1:1 support;
- increased supervision during particular activities;
- separate support at transitions or breaks;
- two staff for specific personal-care, behavioural or safety needs.

The Operations Manager will remain free from a routine student allocation so that they can:

- oversee deployment;
- respond to incidents;
- manage safeguarding concerns;
- provide temporary contingency support;
- coordinate with professionals and families.

The teacher will remain free from routine practical support allocations so that teaching, AQA provision and educational oversight are protected.

From the 2026/2027 academic year, a Supervisor will also ordinarily remain free from a fixed student group to support oversight, practical coordination and emergency response.

9. Daily deployment process

Before activities begin, the Operations Manager or delegated lead will review:

- planned learners;
- actual attendance;
- staff present;
- individual 1:1 requirements;
- known risks;
- mixed-age group composition;
- planned activities;
- staff competencies;
- management and emergency cover.

The daily staffing record will show:

- staff planned;
- staff actually present;
- learners expected;
- learners actually present;
- staff-to-learner allocations;
- children and adults within each group;
- 1:1 arrangements;
- management, teaching and floating cover;
- any changes;
- contingency action taken;
- confirmation that supervision remained safe.

If staffing falls below what is required, management may:

- reallocate staff;
- obtain cross-site support;
- reduce group size;
- move learners to lower-risk activities;
- separate children and adults;
- postpone activities;
- restrict access to particular areas;
- reduce attendance;
- cancel a session where safe support cannot be maintained.

Financial or operational pressure must not override safeguarding.

10. Supervision in shared environments

Where children and adults are present on site together:

- staff must know who they are directly responsible for;
- learners must not move between groups without agreement;
- breaks, toilets, changing areas and quieter spaces must be considered within the risk assessment;
- learners must not exchange personal telephone numbers or social-media details where this would create a safeguarding risk;
- staff must intervene in inappropriate, coercive, sexualised, intimidating or exploitative interactions;
- vulnerable learners must not be left unsupported with another learner where risk has been identified;
- tools, medicines, vehicles, animal areas and restricted spaces must be controlled;
- unknown visitors must be challenged and managed through the visitor procedure;
- staff must record and report concerns involving interactions between cohorts.

Shared activities must have a named lead and a clear supervision arrangement.

11. Safeguarding children

For every learner under 18, staff must follow the child safeguarding procedure.

Staff must:

- report concerns immediately to the DSL or DDSL;
- make a timely factual record on CPOMS or the approved safeguarding system;
- record the child's own words;
- avoid investigating or asking leading questions;
- act immediately where there is danger;

- follow the South Gloucestershire child safeguarding referral pathway;
- remain alert to child-on-child abuse, exploitation, neglect, domestic abuse, online harm and professional-boundary concerns;
- escalate where they believe a concern has not been addressed.

All staff working with children must understand the expectations set out in the applicable version of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*. The 2025 version remains in force until 31 August 2026, with the 2026 version taking effect from 1 September 2026. ([GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94426/Keeping_Children_Safe_in_Education_2025.pdf))

Safeguarding children requires coordinated action between organisations and professionals who provide help, support and protection to children and families. ([GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94426/Keeping_Children_Safe_in_Education_2025.pdf))

12. Safeguarding adults

For learners aged 18 or over, staff must follow the adult safeguarding procedure.

Staff must:

- recognise signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation and self-neglect;
- report concerns to the DSL/DDSL or responsible safeguarding lead;
- record the concern on CPOMS or the approved safeguarding system;
- establish, where possible, the adult's wishes and desired outcomes;
- consider mental capacity where relevant;
- avoid assuming that an adult can protect themselves because of their age;
- act without consent where there is immediate danger, a crime, risk to others, coercion, or another lawful safeguarding reason;
- follow the South Gloucestershire adult safeguarding referral pathway;
- record reasons for decisions about consent and information sharing.

Adults may experience physical, sexual, psychological, financial, discriminatory or organisational abuse, neglect, domestic abuse, exploitation or self-neglect.

Everyone in paid or voluntary contact with adults must understand their safeguarding role and have access to practical guidance, advice and support. Organisations should maintain adult safeguarding procedures that allow swift, personalised and proportionate responses. ([GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94426/Keeping_Children_Safe_in_Education_2025.pdf))

13. Key differences staff must understand

Area	Children under 18	Adults aged 18 and over
Primary focus	Safeguard and promote the child's welfare	Protect from abuse and neglect while promoting wellbeing, rights and choice
Consent	A referral may be required without the child's or parent's consent	Adult's wishes and consent should normally be considered, subject to risk, capacity and lawful exceptions
Mental capacity	Child competence and understanding may be relevant, but child safeguarding duties still apply	Capacity is decision-specific and must not be assumed solely from diagnosis or disability
Parent/carer contact	DSL decides whether and when contact is safe	The adult normally determines who is involved, unless capacity or safeguarding considerations require otherwise
Referral route	Children's safeguarding/social care pathway	Adult safeguarding/social care pathway
Recording	Child's words, risk, action and referral	Adult's words, desired outcomes, consent/capacity considerations, risk and action
Harm between learners	May be child-on-child abuse or harm by an adult	May be adult safeguarding, criminal conduct, or a concern affecting a child

Area	Children under 18	Adults aged 18 and over
Staff allegations	Consider LADO where the concern relates to conduct towards a child	Consider adult safeguarding, police, HR and relevant regulatory routes

Staff must not attempt to decide complicated legal thresholds alone. They should report promptly and seek advice.

14. Concerns involving both cohorts

Some incidents may affect both a child and an adult.

Examples include:

- an adult learner harming or exploiting a child;
- a child harming a vulnerable adult;
- harmful sexual behaviour between learners of different ages;
- bullying, coercion or financial exploitation;
- a staff member behaving inappropriately towards both cohorts;
- a shared environmental or supervision failure.

In these circumstances:

1. Make everyone safe.
2. Inform the DSL/DDSL and Operations Manager immediately.
3. Record separate factual records for each affected person, with appropriate cross-referencing.
4. Consider both child and adult safeguarding pathways.
5. Consider police involvement where an offence may have occurred.
6. Review group composition and supervision immediately.
7. Update risk assessments and support arrangements.
8. Avoid treating one person automatically as the victim or person responsible solely because of age.

Where there is uncertainty, advice should be sought from both safeguarding services.

15. Personal relationships and professional boundaries

Staff must maintain consistent professional boundaries with children and adults.

Staff must not:

- share personal phone numbers;
- use personal social-media accounts to communicate;
- form private relationships with learners;
- meet learners outside agreed provision arrangements;
- give unauthorised lifts;
- exchange personal gifts;
- continue personal contact after employment ends;
- encourage secrecy;
- favour one learner;
- disclose confidential information unnecessarily.

Staff must recognise that an adult learner may still be vulnerable to grooming, exploitation or abuse.

Any concern about another staff member must be reported through the staff-concern, whistleblowing or LADO process as appropriate.

16. Training requirements

All staff must receive training appropriate to their role covering:

- child safeguarding;
- adult safeguarding;
- reporting and recording on CPOMS or LearnTrek;
- child and adult referral pathways;
- professional boundaries;
- whistleblowing and concerns about staff;
- LADO procedures;
- mental capacity and consent at an appropriate level;
- information sharing;
- child-on-child and adult-on-adult harm;
- harmful behaviour across mixed-age groups;
- risk assessment;
- behaviour support;
- site and animal safety;
- emergency procedures.

Training records will show:

- course title;
- completion date;
- provider;
- renewal date;
- role-specific requirements;
- outstanding actions.

Staff must not be allocated duties beyond their competence.

17. Staff briefings and information sharing

Weekly briefings will include:

- safeguarding updates;
- new learners;
- changes to risk assessments;
- mixed-age group considerations;
- staffing and 1:1 requirements;
- relevant medical and communication information;
- behaviour support;
- site and activity risks;
- lessons from incidents;
- any restrictions or special arrangements.

Only necessary information will be shared with staff.

Staff absent from a briefing must receive a catch-up before taking responsibility for affected learners.

Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis, but confidentiality must not prevent necessary safeguarding action.

18. Recording and information management

Safeguarding information will be recorded on CPOMS or another formally approved system.

Records must include:

- date, time and location;
- people involved;

- factual account;
- exact words where relevant;
- observed presentation;
- immediate risk;
- action taken;
- person informed;
- advice and referrals;
- consent or capacity considerations for adults;
- follow-up responsibility;
- outcome.

Child and adult records must be clearly categorised so that:

- the correct procedure is followed;
- patterns can be identified;
- access is restricted appropriately;
- records are not fragmented between systems.

Poor information sharing can contribute to missed safeguarding risks, so records must be timely, accurate and capable of being shared lawfully with relevant professionals. ([GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk))

19. Management oversight

The Operations Manager, DSL/DDSL and senior management will provide oversight through:

- review of daily staffing and deployment;
- monthly safeguarding audits;
- analysis of child and adult safeguarding themes;
- checks on mixed-age group decisions;
- review of incidents and near misses;
- supervision of staff;
- training-compliance monitoring;
- review of referrals and outcomes;
- checks that actions are completed;
- commissioner and professional liaison;
- policy review.

Safeguarding audits should consider separately:

- concerns involving children;
- adult safeguarding concerns;
- cross-cohort incidents;
- staff-conduct concerns;
- recurring locations, activities or times;
- whether supervision arrangements contributed;
- whether referrals were timely and appropriate.

20. Governance reporting

Senior management will receive regular assurance on:

- number and type of safeguarding concerns;
- child and adult referral activity;
- staff concerns and whistleblowing;
- serious incidents;

- mixed-age group risks;
- staffing sufficiency;
- training gaps;
- overdue actions;
- risk-assessment reviews;
- external audit recommendations.

Reports will protect personal confidentiality while providing sufficient information for effective oversight.

21. Responding to concerns about staffing or suitability

Where staff believe that mixed-age arrangements are unsafe, they must raise the concern immediately.

Staff will not be criticised for:

- requesting additional support;
- refusing to begin an activity that cannot be safely supervised;
- reporting inappropriate group composition;
- challenging a deployment decision;
- raising safeguarding or whistleblowing concerns in good faith.

Management must review the concern and record the resulting decision.

22. Transitions from child to adult services

A learner's eighteenth birthday does not automatically mean that all their needs, risks or support arrangements change immediately.

Transition planning should begin before age 18 and consider:

- safeguarding pathway changes;
- consent and mental capacity;
- parental involvement;
- adult social care arrangements;
- education status;
- funding and commissioning;
- changes to referrals and professional contacts;
- risk-assessment updates;
- staff understanding.

The learner should be involved in transition planning in an accessible and meaningful way.

23. Monitoring the effectiveness of this policy

The policy will be considered effective where there is evidence that:

- staff can explain the difference between child and adult safeguarding;
- referrals follow the correct pathway;
- mixed-age groups are risk assessed;
- staffing reflects actual needs;
- management and teaching roles are protected;
- 1:1 support is delivered where required;
- records are complete and timely;
- training is current;
- incidents lead to learning and action;
- children and adults report feeling safe and respected;

- commissioners receive clear assurance.

24. Staff declaration

I confirm that I have read and understood the Peopleton Brook Care Farm Mixed-Age Provision Policy.

I understand:

- that child and adult safeguarding procedures differ;
- that every learner must be considered individually;
- that mixed-age groups require appropriate assessment and supervision;
- that I must report concerns immediately;
- that I must follow the correct referral pathway;
- that I must challenge unsafe deployment or practice;
- that I must maintain professional boundaries with all learners.

Staff name: Jake Payne

Role: Business Manager

Signature: Jake Payne

Date: 04/08/2026