



## **Cultural Concerns and Safeguarding**

At Little Hearts Preschool, we are deeply committed to safeguarding the well-being of all children in our care. We recognize the importance of being vigilant about cultural practices that can be harmful or abusive. Below are some critical areas of concern:

### **Genital Mutilation/Female Circumcision (FGM)**

FGM is a criminal act and a form of child abuse. It is considered a religious or cultural requirement in some communities, but no motive can justify this practice. It is illegal to arrange for a child to travel abroad for the purpose of undergoing FGM. If there are any concerns or suspicions that FGM might be occurring, we will immediately report these to the appropriate authorities to prevent this abuse.

### **Forced Marriage/Under-age Marriage**

In England, individuals under 16 cannot legally marry without parental consent, nor can they engage in sexual relationships. We do not condone forced marriages. Should we become aware of any plans for forced or under-age marriage within our community, we will notify the relevant authorities to intervene and protect the child.

### **Ritualistic Abuse**

Some belief systems hold that spirits or demons can possess individuals, including children. Using physical or psychological violence to exorcise these spirits is abusive and punishable by law, regardless of the intention to help the child. Any concerns about ritualistic abuse will be reported to the appropriate agencies to prevent harm.

### **Honour Based Violence**

Honour based violence is committed to protect or defend the perceived honour of a family or community. Signs of distress such as self-harm, frequent absences, infections from FGM, isolation, excessive monitoring by family, and unreasonable restrictions at home can be indicators. If we

suspect a child is at risk from honour-based violence, we will report these concerns to the relevant authorities to ensure their safety.

### **Trafficked Children/Slavery**

Child trafficking involves moving children across or within national or international borders for exploitation, including sex work, domestic servitude, forced labour, drug dealing, shoplifting, and benefit fraud. If we suspect or are aware that a child is being trafficked or exploited, we will report these concerns to the appropriate agency immediately.

### **Breast Ironing**

Breast ironing involves pounding and massaging a pubescent girl's breasts using hard or heated objects to stop them from developing. This practice is harmful and abusive. If we suspect a child is at risk from breast ironing, we will report these concerns to the relevant authorities to prevent this form of abuse.

### **Reporting Procedures**

Our staff are trained to recognize and respond to these and other forms of abuse. We take all concerns seriously and ensure they are reported to the appropriate agencies without delay. We work closely with local authorities and safeguarding boards to protect children from harm.

By addressing these cultural concerns proactively and comprehensively, we aim to create a safe and nurturing environment for every child at Little Hearts Preschool.

