



Horserenity CIC

Policy on Supporting Children in Care

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1. Introduction

Horserenity CIC recognises that **Children in Care (CiC)**—including Looked After Children (LAC), children subject to care orders, children placed with foster carers, kinship carers, residential homes, and care leavers—may face additional emotional, social, and developmental challenges.

Our equine-facilitated learning environment offers opportunities for therapeutic benefit, emotional regulation, and trust-building. This policy outlines how Horserenity CIC will support CiC safely, sensitively, and in accordance with statutory safeguarding duties.

2. Purpose of the Policy

This policy aims to:

- Ensure CiC have equitable access to services at Horserenity CIC.
- Promote emotional wellbeing, consistency, and stability for CiC.
- Provide clear guidance for staff and volunteers in supporting CiC.
- Establish clear communication routes with social workers, carers, and responsible agencies.
- Meet legislative requirements under the Children Act 1989/2004, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, and relevant local safeguarding protocols.

- Clarify expectations regarding consent, information-sharing, and risk assessments.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All staff (paid or volunteer)
- Directors
- Contractors
- Children and young people attending sessions
- Foster carers, kinship carers, residential care staff, and social workers

This policy covers:

- Referrals and intake processes
- Safeguarding considerations
- Consent and parental responsibility
- Behaviour, emotional support, and wellbeing
- Data sharing and confidentiality
- Roles and responsibilities

4. Principles

Horserenity CIC is committed to:

- **Child-centred practice**—meeting the needs of CiC with empathy and respect.
- **Trauma-informed approaches**—recognising the impact of trauma and instability.
- **Consistency and predictability**—vital for CiC who may experience frequent changes.
- **Positive relationships and boundaries**—supporting trust and emotional safety.
- **Safe, non-clinical support**—we do not replace therapy but provide a supportive environment.
- **Multi-agency collaboration**—working with carers, social workers, and schools.
- **Equity of access**—ensuring CiC are not disadvantaged.

5. Understanding the Needs of Children in Care

CiC may experience:

- Attachment difficulties
- Trauma or developmental trauma
- Emotional regulation challenges
- Behaviour linked to past experiences
- High levels of anxiety or mistrust
- Low self-esteem or disrupted education

Staff and volunteers must maintain a **non-judgemental, patient, and consistent** approach.

6. Referral, Information Sharing & Consent

6.1 Referral Information Required

Before a CiC starts sessions, Horserenity CIC must receive:

- Contact details of the child's **allocated social worker**
- Details of foster/kinship/residential carer(s)
- Relevant background information (shared sensitively), including:
 - Known risks
 - Behavioural triggers
 - Communication preferences
 - Emotional or sensory needs
 - Medical and mental health information (where appropriate)
- Any existing plans (e.g., PEP, EHCP, risk assessments)

6.2 Consent

Due to the complexity of parental responsibility (PR):

- Written consent will be obtained from the **holder of PR**, which may be:
 - Local Authority (for children under full care orders)
 - Birth parents (depending on order)
 - Foster/kinship carers (delegated authority)
 - Social worker or Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

No child should participate until correct consent has been confirmed.

7. Safeguarding Children in Care

CiC are regarded as a **vulnerable group**, and safeguarding must be prioritised.

Horserenity CIC will:

- Follow its Safeguarding Policy and statutory guidance.

- Ensure all staff are trained in safeguarding and trauma-informed practice.
- Respond immediately to safeguarding concerns and escalate appropriately.
- Record all concerns factually and securely.
- Liaise with social workers, Virtual Schools, or relevant agencies when appropriate.

Confidentiality must be respected, but **never at the expense of safeguarding**.

8. Trauma-Informed Practice

Staff and volunteers must:

- Understand how trauma affects behaviour, trust, and emotional regulation.
- Use calm, predictable communication.
- Avoid sudden changes without explanation.
- Recognise that some behaviours are fear responses, not defiance.
- Offer choices where possible to increase a sense of control.
- Provide clear boundaries that feel safe and reliable.

We avoid:

- Physical restraint (never acceptable at Horserenity CIC)
- Punitive responses
- Shaming or dismissing emotions

9. Emotional and Behavioural Support

9.1 Managing Behaviour

Behaviour should be understood through a trauma lens. Staff should:

- Recognise triggers (noise, space, touch, unpredictability).
- Offer grounding, space, or a change of activity when needed.
- Keep sessions flexible and responsive to emotional needs.
- Reinforce strengths, effort, and positive communication.

9.2 Supporting Emotional Safety

Horserenity CIC helps CiC by:

- Creating a structured, nurturing environment.
- Using horses to support emotional awareness, regulation, and connection.
- Encouraging reflective conversations without forcing disclosure.
- Building trust gradually.

10. Working with Carers, Social Workers, and Schools

Horserenity CIC will:

- Maintain open, professional communication.
- Share attendance updates or concerns as agreed.
- Inform social workers and carers of any significant emotional incidents.
- Attend multi-agency meetings where appropriate and feasible (e.g., PEP or TAC/TAF meetings).
- Support consistency between care, education, and our sessions.

11. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All personal information is:

- Handled under UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018
- Stored securely and confidentially
- Shared only on a need-to-know basis
- Not discussed with anyone outside authorised professionals and carers

Children's experiences, trauma histories, or personal stories are **never shared** beyond safeguarding or operational necessity.

12. Attendance and Engagement

Given possible instability in placements:

- Attendance may fluctuate; sessions will be flexible where possible.
- Communication with carers/social workers supports consistency.
- Children must not be penalised for missed sessions beyond their control.

13. Supporting Transitions

CiC often experience frequent transitions. Horserenity CIC will:

- Prepare children gently when staff or routines change.
- Offer continuity wherever possible.
- Provide transition information to new carers or professionals when appropriate.
- Avoid abrupt endings—use planned, supported goodbyes.

14. Staff Training and Support

All staff and volunteers working with CiC will receive training in:

- Safeguarding
- Trauma-informed practice
- Attachment awareness
- Behaviour regulation strategies
- Professional boundaries
- De-escalation and emotional safety

Team debriefing may be used after challenging sessions.

15. Professional Boundaries

Staff must:

- Maintain therapeutic, not personal, boundaries.
- Avoid promises of confidentiality beyond safeguarding rules.
- Avoid physical contact unless appropriate and consensual.
- Not engage via personal social media or private messaging.
- Maintain consistency and clarity in expectations.

16. Risk Assessment

Before a CiC begins sessions, Horserenity CIC will complete:

- A site-specific risk assessment
- An activity-based risk assessment
- A behaviour or emotional risk management plan (if required)
- Any additional adjustments for SEND or medical needs

Risk assessments are reviewed as needed or when circumstances change.

17. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier if:

- Legislation or statutory guidance changes
- There is a significant safeguarding incident
- Feedback from staff or agencies indicates the need for revision