Caring for Babies and Toddlers Policy

1. Purpose & Core Principles

At Grass Roots Nursery Group, we provide high-quality, emotionally attuned, and developmentally responsive care for babies and toddlers across our setting sites. We recognise that early experiences during these foundational years shape brain development, physical growth, and lifelong well-being.

Our primary objective is to create a safe, warm, and predictable environment where infants build secure attachments with a designated Key Person, gain confidence through sensory exploration, and build emotional resilience through active co-regulation.

2. Statutory Framework & Reference Guidance

This policy operates in full compliance with:

- **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework** (DfE, Published July 2026; Effective 1 September 2026)
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)** (DfE, 1 September 2026)
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children**
- **Data Protection Act 2018 & UK GDPR**

3. Emotional Well-being, Key Person & Emotion Coaching

- **Key Person Approach:** Every baby and toddler is assigned a dedicated Key Person prior to starting. The Key Person works closely with families during settling-in sessions to mirror home routines, understand individual cues, and foster secure attachments.
- **Emotion Coaching & Co-Regulation:** Staff implement Emotion Coaching techniques to validate feelings, help infants process frustration or separation anxiety, and support early emotional self-regulation.
- **Responsive Interactions:** Staff engage in frequent face-to-face interactions, gentle eye contact, vocal mirroring, singing, and lap-time stories to promote early language acquisition and secure bonding.

4. Operational & Care Protocols

Safeguarding & Welfare Tracking

- **CPOMS Logging:** Any pre-existing injuries or marks present on arrival, unexplained distress, or welfare concerns involving an infant are logged directly on Famly/CPOMS for Designated Safeguarding Lead (Emma Ford) oversight.
- **Famly App Synchronisation**: Real-time daily entries for bottle feeds, solid food intake, sleep durations, and nappy changes are shared with parents via Famly.

Safer Eating, Nutrition & Weaning

- **Home-First Allergen Introduction:** For infants undergoing weaning, we operate a strict Home-First Approach. Parents must trial each of the 14 major allergens at home twice before those foods are introduced on the nursery menu.

- **BSACI & Allergy Action Plans:** Meals and milk feeds strictly adhere to the child's BSACI Individual Allergy Action Plan and Allergy Awareness Card displayed in food preparation areas.
- **Choking Prevention Standards:** Staff sit directly facing babies and toddlers during mealtimes. High-risk spherical foods (grapes, cherry tomatoes, sausages) are cut lengthwise into quarters. Paediatric First Aid (PFA) qualified staff are physically present during all feeds.

Safe Sleep & Rest Routines

- **Individual Sleep Rhythms:** Sleep schedules are tailored to each infant's natural biological rhythm rather than enforced group times.
- **Lullaby Safe Sleep Standards:** Babies are placed on their backs to sleep in dedicated, well-ventilated sleep spaces with firm, flat mattresses and clear cots (no loose bedding or soft toys).
- **Continuous Monitoring:** Sleep rooms are physically checked by staff every 10–15 minutes, with physical breathing checks recorded on sleep monitoring logs.

Intimate Care & Hygiene Standards

- **Dignity & Respect:** Nappy changing and intimate care are treated as positive bonding opportunities. Staff talk to infants throughout the process, seeking cooperation through soft language.
- **Infection Control:** Disposable gloves and aprons (PPE) are worn for every change. Changing mats are disinfected, and hands are washed between every child.
- **Intimate Care Plans:** Individual care plans are established for children requiring specific creams, skin treatments, or delayed developmental support.

Outdoor Learning & Forest School Exploration

- **Daily Outdoor Access:** Babies and toddlers access outdoor environments daily, regardless of weather, using appropriate all-weather suits and footwear.
- **Sensory Outdoor Curriculum:** Experiences include natural grass exploration, allotment visits, community walks, and adapted sensory sessions within our Wild Roots forest school areas.

5. Staff Qualifications & Room Expectations

- **Qualified Team**: Practitioners working in baby and toddler rooms hold level-specific early years qualifications with targeted training in infant neurodevelopment, safe sleep, and PFA.
- **Room Leader Oversight:** Room Leaders oversee setting cleanliness, positioning of staff for direct line-of-sight supervision, and adherence to hygiene routines.