

Health & Safety Policy

STATEMENT OF GENERAL POLICY & ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEWBORN PHOTOGRAPHY

Safety is the first and foremost consideration when photographing newborns. No portrait is worth putting a baby's safety, comfort or wellbeing at risk.

To achieve this in practice, this Policy outlines how Sarah Plater Photography safeguards babies during newborn photography sessions. Sarah Plater has overall and final responsibility for health and safety and day-to-day responsibility for ensuring this Policy is put into practice.

In addition to the specific items listed below, the studio's policy is to apply commonsense thinking to each situation, approach each session with empathy and patience, and recognise that prevention is always better than cure: avoid or mitigate risks and err on the side of caution at all times.

BEFORE THE SHOOT

All newborn shoots will be preceded with a pre-shoot consultation, either by phone or email. As well as giving general session information, advice and guidance, the photographer will also use this time to explain relevant health and safety considerations. This is intended to achieve three things:

- Parents will be calmer, knowing their baby is in safe hands. Babies pick up on their parents' tension, so calmer parents will encourage a calmer baby.
- Parents will be better prepared for the session as they will know what to expect. For instance, they will know that shoots are 2 - 3 hours long, which enables them to ensure they plan for being out this long, eat beforehand and bring snacks with them. They will learn that the studio will be warm, which enables them to dress appropriately.
- Parents will know that safety comes before the photography, and will be equipped to support me in ensuring their baby's health, safety and wellbeing throughout their session.

During the pre-shoot consultation the photographer will also ask if there are any allergies or medical conditions (e.g. photosensitive epilepsy) she needs to be aware of to carry out the session safely.

DURING THE SHOOT

Comfortable posing

The baby will never be forced into an uncomfortable pose, or pushed to achieve or maintain a position or situation in which the baby is clearly unhappy or uncomfortable. All newborn sessions are 'baby-led', with the needs of the baby met and the photography considerations secondary to the baby's health and wellbeing at all times. If a baby isn't taking easily to a pose, or if he or she is showing signs of discomfort by waking, wriggling or wailing, the photographer will move on to the next pose instead.

Supervision

Babies will never be left unattended while in the studio, including when in a prop, on the posing beanbag or with a young sibling. If the photographer needs to move away from the baby, she will ask a parent to place their hands on or near to the baby before stepping away, or return the baby to his or her parents first.

Studio temperature

The temperature of the studio will be controlled and monitored to maintain it at sufficient warmth for the baby's level of dress.

Parents will be advised of the temperature beforehand and encouraged to wear layers which they can remove them as they get warmer. Parents will also be advised that they can step out of the studio at any time if they want or need to cool down again.

Mottled skin indicates that the baby is too cold. The photographer will wrap or swaddle the baby, replace clothes and/or increase the output of the studio heater.

Signs that the baby is too hot include sweat along the back of the baby's neck, increased perspiration rate, redness of the face or intense warmth to the touch if the baby is overheating. The photographer will loosen and/or remove any swaddling wraps and lower the studio temperature accordingly.

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Sanitisation

The photographer will wash her hands before the start of every session, to minimise the risk of infection.

Hard-surface props will be wiped with antiseptic wipes before and after each newborn shoot, while soft props (wraps, blankets, outfits etc.) will be washed after each shoot using detergent that is tested and approved for use with newborn babies.

Soft props that are not washable (e.g. headbands) will be sprayed with a non-toxic antibacterial cleaner.

Use of props/blankets

Babies will never be placed on or in an object or prop that could potentially break or fall.

Appropriate weights will be used in props such as the bucket, to ensure they are balanced and stable.

Appropriate wraps, stuffing and padding will be used in props to avoid the baby's skin coming into contact with any cold, rough or unfinished surfaces.

Props and blankets will be sanitised appropriately between sessions. Props will be made from safe and appropriate materials. No glass props will be used.

A parent or assistant will support the baby's head in poses such as the 'potato sack' and 'head on hands' with their hand or fingers. These supports will be cloned out in Photoshop afterwards.

A parent or an assistant will stay close to the baby for all prop shots, so they can react quickly if the baby startles or moves unexpectedly.

Wraps and swaddling

Swaddling wraps will be used to soothe the baby and achieve specific image types. The photographer will ensure that the baby is comfortable at all times, and that their circulation and respiration is not restricted.

Timing and feeding

Newborn sessions will be scheduled at the optimum time of day (typically 10am), unless the parents advise

the photographer that the baby's feeding pattern or schedule means that another time of day would be more suitable.

In the pre-shoot consultation, the photographer will advise the parents to give their baby a full feed before leaving home. On arrival, if the baby is awake, the photographer will suggest a top-up feed. During the session, feeding on demand will be encouraged.

Soothing

The following six soothing techniques will be used to calm newborns and aid the onset of sleep:

- **Shushing:** vocally or provided by a digital app (set to below 50 decibels).

- **Sucking:** dummy/soother introduced at a slight upwards angle to reach the soft palette towards the back of the infant's mouth. For newborns who haven't used a soother before, a light tap once the soother is in place will be used to help stimulate sucking. If the newborn has a short palette and the soother causes a gag reflex, it will be withdrawn immediately and retired from the session.

- **Raising the head relative to the body:** to avoid a newborn's liquid diet from flowing towards the head and pushing against their throat, the head will be kept raised slightly higher than their body. Squirming / scrunching of the face indicates that their head may need to be raised slightly higher.

- **Swaddling:** to replicate the comforting, restrictive environment of the womb, swaddling techniques will be used (covered separately).

- **Swaying:** gentle rocking motions will be used to help settle newborns, held slightly away from the photographer's body to avoid prompting the rooting reflex.

- **Touch:** gently tapping the baby's bottom replicates the sensation of the mother's heartbeat in the womb, helping to comfort him or her. A hand lightly resting on the baby's head replicates the pressure they experience from the mother's cervix while in the womb. The soft areas of the skull (such as the temples and fontanelles) have not yet fused together and will not be touched to avoid discomfort.

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Composite images

Where final portraits are intended to imply that baby is doing something that is physically impossible or dangerous to do in-camera (e.g. floating on a 'cloud' etc.), two images will be taken and a composite created in Photoshop to achieve the final effect.

Head on hands poses

Poses with the baby's head resting on their hands will be closely monitored and adjusted to avoid blocking the airways under the baby's throat. To avoid this, the bone structure in the newborn's jaw will be used to prop the head on the baby's hands, rather than putting any weight or pressure on the soft tissue in the baby's throat and neck.

However, this pose is not currently offered to clients.

Sibling portraits

Where siblings are unable to support their new brother or sister (typically when under age 2 or if there are learning or behavioural challenges), then the two children will be photographed in a way that ensures both are safe throughout. For example, with both children lying down, the older child kissing the newborn while the latter is lying down or a composite of each child photographed separately.

If the child is old enough, competent enough and willing to support the newborn, the pose will be created with the older child sitting down to minimise risk to the newborn. A parent and/or assistant will stay nearby to intervene if necessary.

If there is any doubt about the older child's capability to hold the newborn safely, then an alternative pose will be used.

Transitions

The photographer will prepare a shoot plan for each session that minimises the movements and disturbances experienced by the baby. Wherever possible, small movements will be used to transition between similar poses to achieve maximum variety without unsettling the baby more than necessary.

Overhead camera angles

The camera strap will be worn around the photographer's neck whenever the camera is picked up. This is especially important during overhead shots, when there is a risk of the camera dropping onto the baby.

Only safe height aids (such as ladders) will be used when additional distance is required on an overhead shot. This is to minimise the risk of falling on to the baby, or having an inappropriate height aid breaking. If a safe height aid is not available, the photographer will use a shorter focal length to achieve the image or twist the camera screen out and around to enable holding the camera away from the photographer's eye but still being able to capture the shot.

Unsafe image requests

Clients' requests for poses or specific photos that are felt to be unsafe will be refused.

Hydration and nutrition

It is just as important that the photographer, parents and any assistants in the studio stay hydrated, especially as the high studio temperature is likely to result in above average sweating. To encourage good hydration, fresh water will be provided for every person in the room.

To ensure sufficient nutrition to remain safe, steady and alert for the duration of each session, the photographer will eat a nourishing meal beforehand.

Health and safety law poster location: hallway

First aid box location: downstairs study (under desk)

Accident book location: downstairs study (desk drawer)

Signed:



Date: 1 January 2022

Review date: 1 January 2023

Health & Safety Policy

STATEMENT OF GENERAL POLICY & ARRANGEMENTS FOR SARAH PLATER PHOTOGRAPHY

Sarah Plater has overall and final responsibility for health and safety and day-to-day responsibility for ensuring this policy is put into practice.

Statement of general policy	Responsibility of	Action / Arrangements
Prevent accidents and cases of work-related ill-health by managing the health and safety risks in the workplace.	Sarah Plater	Assessment of risks and safety management on a daily basis.
Provide clear instructions and information, and adequate training, to ensure employees are competent to do their work.	Sarah Plater	All risks and concerns will be highlighted and discussed with ad hoc assistants and new risks must be immediately reported to the business owner when they appear.
Engage and consult with employees on day-to-day health and safety conditions.	Sarah Plater	Any concerns regarding illness or health and safety must be discussed immediately with the business owner.
Ensure the workplace is COVID-secure, following the Government's latest guidelines.	Sarah Plater	Action the additional COVID-secure policy for during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Implement emergency procedures – evacuation in case of fire or other significant incident.	Sarah Plater	Studio exit to be kept clear at all times and pointed out to clients on arrival. Evacuation plans are tested from time to time and updated as necessary.
Maintain safe and healthy working conditions, provide and maintain plant, equipment and machinery, and ensure safe storage/use of substances.	Sarah Plater	All working areas to be kept clear of clutter/cables. Lighting and background stands to be locked in a stable position. Studio to be regularly cleaned. Toilets, washing facilities and drinking water provided. System in place for routine inspections and testing of equipment and machinery and for ensuring that action is promptly taken to address any defects.

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