

Policy for Safeguarding and Protecting Children, young people and vulnerable adults

1. Policy Statement

Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) is fully committed to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults to whom we provide services directly or indirectly and with whom we come into contact.

We recognise our responsibilities to take all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and to protect children and young people from harm, abuse and neglect.

AVDC acknowledges its duty to act appropriately with regards to any allegations towards a member of staff or volunteer, or towards any disclosures or suspicion of abuse.

AVDC recognises its duty of care to safeguard children as detailed under the Children Acts' 1989 and 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015.

Although overall responsibility for Children's Services and Social Services in Buckinghamshire lies with Buckinghamshire County Council, AVDC has a duty to protect and promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults, both as a provider of services and as a partner within local Safeguarding arrangements.

AVDC believes that:

- The welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults is paramount
- All children, young people and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, ethnicity, religious or spiritual beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse
- All allegations, reports or suspicions of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to in a swift and appropriate manner

AVDC will ensure that:

- All children young people and vulnerable adults will be treated equally and with respect and dignity
- The welfare of each child, young person and vulnerable adult will always be of highest priority
- Bullying (in any form) is neither accepted nor condoned
- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour
- There is a clear line of accountability with regards to safeguarding concerns
- Staff and volunteers will be kept updated with regards to changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Staff and volunteers will undertake relevant and appropriate development and training in relation to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults
- All staff and volunteers within the organisation are fully aware of their responsibilities to safeguarding and their duty to the children, young people and vulnerable adults in their care, and that they fully understand the correct process for reporting concerns.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Act 1989 and 2004: and in line with the following:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015
- What to do if you are worried a child is being abused 2015.

Where reference is made to “employees”, this includes paid staff, volunteers, agency and casual workers and contract personnel.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

All AVDC employees, workers, volunteers and agency workers must:

- Understand the different categories of abuse and neglect, and how to recognise the signs.
- Recognise that some parents/carers may require additional support for example as a result of mental health issues, substance misuse or domestic abuse.
- Understand their responsibility to report any concerns that a child, young person or vulnerable adult is being, or is at risk of being, abused or neglected. This includes reporting any concern they may have regarding another staff member or volunteer’s behaviour towards a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- Understand the line of accountability for reporting safeguarding concerns, and be fully aware of the organisation’s safeguarding lead and their role within the organisation.
- If appropriate; liaise with other agencies, contribute to safeguarding assessments and attend child protection meetings / core groups / conferences.

3. Recognising the signs of abuse

Abuse and Neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child, young person or vulnerable adult. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child, young person or vulnerable adult by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children, young people and vulnerable adults may be abused in a family or in an institution or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others and can be carried out by an adult, or adults, or another child or children.

Further information on categories and signs of abuse can be found at

<http://www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk/safeguarding-adults-board/information-for-the-public/types-of-abuse/>

4. Details of Safeguarding Lead

All organisations working with children and young people should have a Safeguarding Lead in place. The Safeguarding Lead will provide a direct point of contact for any staff member or volunteer who has a child protection concern, record any concerns in a clear (and secure) manner, and ensure that the appropriate action is taken. The Safeguarding Lead should also ensure that the child protection policy is being fully adhered to.

The Safeguarding Lead for AVDC is Assistant Director Will Rysdale, who can be contacted on 01296 585561.

If the Safeguarding Lead is not available (due to annual leave, sickness etc.), staff and volunteers should report to the Deputy Safeguarding Lead who is Chris Oliver, who can be contacted on 01296 585005.

If neither the Safeguarding Lead nor Deputy Safeguarding Lead is available, advice should be immediately sought from: The First Response Team on 0845 4600001 (outside of office hours call: 0800 999 7677) email: secure-cypfirstresponse@buckscc.gov.uk NB. This email address is only secure if emailing from another secure account.

Members

The Cabinet Member for Communities will support the process to prioritise Safeguarding actions within in AVDC. If Members become aware of child protection concerns, or are worried about a vulnerable adult they should contact the Safeguarding Lead.

5. What to do if you are concerned about a child, young person or vulnerable adult

Disclosure of abuse: If a child, young person or vulnerable adult discloses to you that abuse or inappropriate behaviour has / is taking place, you should:

- Listen to the child. Allow them to tell you what has happen in their own way, and at their own pace. Do not interrupt a child who is freely recalling significant events.
- Remain calm. Be reassuring and supportive but try not to respond emotionally.
- Do not ask leading questions. Only ask questions if you are seeking clarification about something they have said. Use TED; Tell, Explain, Describe.
- When you are able to, make an accurate record of what you have been told, taking care to note any times, dates or locations mentioned. Use the child's own words where possible. Do not substitute anatomically correct names for body part names used by the child.
 - Reassure the child that they did the right thing in telling someone and you are glad they told you. Reassure the child that they have not done anything wrong.
 - Do not promise to keep their disclosure a secret, but reassure the child that you will only share the information with the right people who will be able to help them. Explain what you will do next.
- At your earliest opportunity, speak to the Safeguarding Lead regarding the disclosure. If your Safeguarding Lead and deputy Safeguarding Lead are not available, ring First Response for advice.

To report concerns about a child

Contact Buckinghamshire Multi agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) First Response: **01296 383962 (0800 999 7677** out of hours)

Link to [Multi Agency Referral Form \(MARF\)](#)

To report concerns about a vulnerable adult

Contact Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Team **0800 137 915 (0800 999 7677** out of hours)

Link to [REFERRAL FORM](#)

Link to [REFERRAL FLOWCHART](#)

**If there is immediate risk of harm to a child young person or vulnerable adult
DO NOT DELAY, ring 999**

6. Policies and Procedures

Those services that work closely with children and young people have written guidance and/or joint protocols with other agencies on acceptable behaviour and good practice when interacting with children and young people. Good practice guidance is intended to:

- Promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- To minimise the risks of an individual being harmed,
- Reduce the opportunities for abuse taking place,
- To help prevent unfounded allegations being made.

It would not be appropriate to go into detail about standards of behaviour. Those services specifically targeted at children and young people have specific guidance and standards covering how they relate to and work with children and young people. However, the Council seeks to promote a positive culture in which children and young people are listened to, consulted and involved in service development and in which staff act as positive role models.

Similar high standards of practise should be followed in relation to vulnerable adults.

Recruitment and Selection

There is Safer Recruitment guidance within the policies are on Box which contains advice on safe recruitment and selection practices. This guidance is designed to minimise the opportunities for unsuitable people to gain access to work with children and young people. The guidance complies with the minimum standards defined by the BSCB/BSAB and can also be found on their websites. A similar approach should be followed to minimise the opportunities for unsuitable people to gain access to work with vulnerable adults. Further advice can be sought from People and Culture.

7. Allegations or concerns regarding a member of staff or volunteer

Any concerns about a member of staff must be reported to the relevant Assistant Director within 24 hours of the concerns being identified and advice must be sought from People and Culture. The appropriate Designated Senior Manager must be informed at the same time. The Senior Manager is Alison Stone, extension 5146. The BSCB/BSAB procedures for managing allegations against staff must be followed.

It is important that a referral is made to the Local Authority Designed Officer, Social Care (LADO) on 01296 382070 and the Police (if appropriate) as soon as possible so that any action does not jeopardise either an investigation or the person involved. **No action should be taken internally until this advice has been sought.** It may be necessary to complete a Multi-agency Referral Form.

A multi-agency strategy meeting may be called to consider whether the allegation should be subject to a formal enquiry. The employer will be required to attend the strategy meeting and supply all relevant details about the employee and the allegation. Where a formal enquiry has been completed or is not required, the matter will be referred back to the employer to be dealt with in accordance with normal employment procedures.

Any concerns that involve potential poor practice of a member of staff or an allegation of abuse against a member of staff should be dealt with as a potential misconduct issue in line with the Council's Disciplinary Procedure. This Procedure can be found on Connect.

Consideration will be given to temporary suspension or transfer to other duties pending an investigation. The employee should not be suspended until the LADO has been contacted. Such incidents may be investigated internally using the Council's Disciplinary Procedure. The timings and process will depend on external investigations, and care will be taken that any internal investigation does not jeopardise the outcome of an external investigation. Full records of the investigation and the outcome must be recorded and kept in accordance with BSCA.BSAB minimum procedures. Where the relevant thresholds are met, the employer has a duty to refer details of the investigation to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

Whatever the decision or action, the welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult must come first.

Access to advice and support

As part of our duty of care towards children, young people and vulnerable adults, who come into contact with us, we will ensure that all vulnerable people are directed towards appropriate advice and support.

We will ensure that staff who come across abusive situations in the course of their work know where to get advice and support.

Any employee who is the subject of an allegation relating to the protection of children or vulnerable adults will be provided with information and given access to advice and support.

8. Training

Employees and volunteers engaged in roles that have direct contact with children and young people, will be made aware of relevant policies and procedures relating to child protection and will be provided with child protection awareness information and training. All relevant staff will also be given further training according to their role profile. Staff who work with vulnerable adults will receive suitable training to ensure that staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and have the opportunity to discuss and review performance standards and development needs. Refresher training will also be regularly provided (at least every three years). All staff and volunteers working with children and young people will undertake basic safeguarding awareness training.

All employees must undertake the following mandatory E Learning modules:

Safeguarding: Your Responsibility

This course explores the different types of abuse and the indicators of abuse, information about Prevent, Modern Day Slavery and local reporting procedures. (Approx 30 minutes). This must be completed within the first week of employment within the authority.

Hate Crimes

The aim of this course is to familiarise all staff with the terminology relating to hate incidents and hate crimes and what actions should be taken if they witness or are a victim of such behaviour. (30 mins)

Other training – Workshop to Raise Awareness Around ‘Prevent’ (WRAP)

Employees receive this mandatory in-house Prevent training in accordance with the Buckinghamshire Prevent training strategy. The Prevent Duty is applicable to the local authorities in Buckinghamshire, as well as partner agencies. AVDC is a member of the Safer and Stronger Buckinghamshire Partnership Board which has the strategic oversight for the Prevent Duty in Buckinghamshire.

9. Recording and Record Retention

Records will be made of all referrals made and held in accordance with GDPR guidelines. Records will only be retained where it is necessary for the purposes of Safeguarding individuals.

Confidentiality and information sharing

If concerns around the protection of a child or vulnerable adult are raised, confidentiality must not be guaranteed. If an allegation is made that indicates that a vulnerable adult or child is being harmed or is at risk of harm, then the person making the allegation should understand that the information will be shared with the appropriate agencies on a need to know basis.

When sharing information with other agencies, that information is likely to be personal and sensitive, and AVDC must take care to meet its obligations under the data protection act. Individuals should be advised that AVDC intends to share information with another agency in order to safeguard the welfare of a child or adult, unless to do so would put a child or adult at risk of harm.

Where there is doubt about the appropriateness of sharing information with other agencies, the BSCB and BSAB Information Sharing Protocols should be followed (See Safeguarding pages on Connect)

10. Escalation, challenge and whistleblowing

The protection of children will always be an area in which there may be differences of opinion about the best course of action. It is very important that all those working with children and families feel able to air their views and constructively challenge the action of others. This includes cases where the difference of opinion is with professionals who are more senior or experienced. Similarly, agencies or professionals should not be defensive if challenged. It is important that staff feel confident that they can raise any concerns they have about actions or decisions relating to safeguarding that are made by other professionals or agencies. The Bucks Safeguarding Children's Board Escalation, Challenge and Conflict Resolution Procedure provides a clear process for concerns to be raised. Within AVDC any safeguarding issue requiring escalation should be done through the Safeguarding or Deputy Safeguarding Lead; or in their absence any member of the AVDC Safeguarding Group

- Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing occurs when an employee or worker raises a concern about a dangerous or illegal activity that they are aware of through their work that may affect others, e.g. customers, members of the public, or their employer. Concerns could cover a variety of areas, including safeguarding concerns about children and young people. Your Child Protection Policy should provide information on how staff and volunteers can access your organisation's Whistleblowing Policy (AVDC policy on this is currently being updated.)

11. E-Safety

Technology is playing an ever increasing role in the lives of children and young people. As such, it is important that staff and volunteers understand the responsibility they have to use this technology appropriately when working with children and young people

Employees should familiarise themselves with the following policies on Box;

[IT and Communication Technology Acceptable Use Policy](#)

[Mobile Devices Acceptable Use Policy](#)

[Rules for Personal use of IT Systems](#)

12. Photography and use of images of children

As confirmed in the Data Protection Act, AVDC will ensure written consent is sought from the parent or carer of any child under the age of 18 using our services before any photographs are taken. If consent is given, AVDC will make a clear agreement with the parent or carer as to how the image will be used (for example, in a school brochure or on a drama school website) and how widely (as part of a school's bulletin for all parents, on the child's individual development record etc) Due consideration will be given to the appropriateness of clothing and posture, and details such as a child's name or age will not be shared unless integral to the use of the image (such as the acceptance of an award) in particular when additional identifiers (i.e. a school or uniform logo) are being shared.

13. **Visitors**

All visitors, including contractors, to AVDC premises will be subject to the Safeguarding principles within this policy and will be signposted to it as circumstances dictate.

14. **Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually and monitored by the Safeguarding Lead, through the AVDC Safeguarding Group.