

BUCKLESHAM COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**Tracey Thompson, Secretary
15 Field View, Bucklesham IP10 0EE**

Safeguarding People at Risk Of Harm Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to make clear to all Councillors, volunteers and contractors what is required in relation to the protection of children, young people and adults at risk of harm. Children, young people and adults at risk of harm have the right to participate, have fun and be safe in the services provided for them and the activities they choose, or their parents/carers choose for them. This policy will help to maintain a safe and positive environment for children and adults at risk of harm.

Bucklesham Community Council acknowledges that all Councillors, helpers and volunteers have a duty to safeguard people at risk of harm and those who may come into contact with people at risk of harm.

They should respond to any concerns they may have regarding the physical, sexual, emotional or psychological safety of people at risk of harm, or concerns relating to discriminatory or financial violation or exploitation of people at risk of harm. This policy is in place to protect all people of risk of harm regardless of gender, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, religion or faith, or disability.

People at risk of harm could include (but may not be restricted to):

- Children and young people
- Adults with learning difficulties or physical disabilities
- Older people

Policy Coverage

The welfare of people at risk of harm is paramount and is the responsibility of everyone. All people at risk of harm, without exception, have the right to protection from abuse, whether physical, sexual, bullying, exclusion or neglect. Verbal or physical abuse will not be permitted or tolerated.

This policy applies to all Councillors, volunteers and contractors working in partnership with Bucklesham Community Council.

Under the Children Act 1989 and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Bucklesham Community Council has a duty to co-operate with other agencies and authorities to promote the well-being of children and young people.

Suffolk County Council is the lead agency for the protection of adults at risk of harm. It is not the role of Bucklesham Community Council to investigate allegations of abuse.

However, all Councillors, volunteers and contracted services providers have a responsibility to take action when they suspect or recognise that a child or adult at risk of harm may be a victim of significant harm or abuse.

This policy is to be used in conjunction with the Council's Health and Safety Policies, and Equality and Diversity Policy.

The phrase 'children and young people' refers to anyone under the age of 18 years.

The phrase 'Adult at Risk' refers to someone who is over the age of 18 who (para 42.1 of the Care Act 2014 refers):

- has care and support needs.
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect.
- as a result of their care and support needs is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

If someone has care and support needs but is not currently receiving care or support from a health or care service, they may still be an adult at risk.

Bucklesham Community Council recognises that all children and adults at risk of harm have an equal right to protection from abuse. It is committed to safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm and protecting them from abuse when they are engaged in services organised and provided by, or on behalf of, the Council.

Referrals of suspicions of abuse cannot be anonymous and should be made in the knowledge that, during the course of enquiries, the agency that made that referral will be made clear. Bucklesham Community Council will not tolerate the harassment of any Councillor, volunteer, contracted service provider or child/vulnerable adult who raises concerns of abuse.

Policy Statement

Bucklesham Community Council is committed to taking all reasonable precautions to safeguard the welfare of children and adults at risk of harm that use its services and will promote a safeguarding culture and environment.

- Bucklesham Community Council will endeavour to keep children and adults at risk of harm safe from abuse.
- No Councillor, helpers or other volunteers will have unsupervised access to people at risk of harm unless they have been through the safe recruitment procedure and appropriate training.

- Bucklesham Community Council will act in the best interests of the child or adult at risk of harm at all times.
- All suspicions or allegations of abuse against people at risk of harm will be taken seriously and dealt with speedily and appropriately.
- All Councillors, helpers and volunteers need to be aware of this policy.
- There will be a named Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) to whom any suspicions or concerns should be reported. This person is Lynda Seagroatt, or in her absence Tracey Thompson.
- Bucklesham Community Council will proactively seek to promote the welfare and protection of all children and adults at risk of harm.
- Bucklesham Community Council will endeavour to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and adults at risk of harm through, as appropriate, its recruitment and selection policy and by reminding hirers of their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Bucklesham Community Council will take any safeguarding concern seriously and act in line with Suffolk safeguarding policies and procedures for reporting abuse.
- Bucklesham Community Council will endeavour to keep any area under its control safe for use by people at risk of harm. The Council recognises that a higher standard of safety is required where use is made by small children, those who cannot read safety notices, and disabled adults.
- These policies and procedures will be reviewed annually and updated as appropriate in the interim periods.

Any volunteers working for the Council and having unsupervised access to people at risk of harm (e.g. running children's entertainment) may also be required to go through these procedures.

Reporting Incidents

The DSP (Lynda Seagroatt) will have responsibility for reporting concerns that arise, as a matter of urgency, to the local authority Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult lead agency. The representative may choose to have a confidential discussion with others in order to clear up any misunderstandings or to corroborate and support any suspicions before reporting a concern to the lead agency.

The designated person will:

- Know who to contact at the local authority.
- Know who to contact in Customer First for advice and referrals.
- Know about helplines and other sources of help for children and young people and people at risk of harm.
- Ensure that there is a safe environment in which staff have the opportunity to raise concerns for people at risk of harm.

It is important to recognise that disabled children may be particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them. Dependency on others for primary needs, e.g., feeding and clothing may make a person feel powerless to report abusive treatment.

This policy is inclusive of all children, young people and adults at risk of harm, irrespective of age, gender, race or ethnicity, religion, disability or sexual preference and as per the protected characteristics for the Equalities Act 2010.

Procedures

- The Councillors, helpers and volunteers will be given information about people at risk of harm, and should attend training where possible.
- An annual review will take place at the AGM to allow for any required update of policies and/or procedures. New Councillors, helpers or volunteers must be given an induction to this policy and understand their responsibilities.
- Contractors engaged to carry out work in any area under the Council's control must not be allowed unsupervised access to people at risk of harm. Appropriate supervision will be arranged if necessary.
- A copy of the policy will be made available for the attention of all.

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Recognising Concerns - Signs and Indicators of abuse.

All Councillors, helpers and volunteers should be aware that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another.

Abuse is defined as a form of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect people at risk of harm either by inflicting harm directly or by failing to act to prevent harm. People at risk of harm may be abused in a family setting, or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by strangers. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. They may be abused by an adult/adults, or by another child/children.

The following indicators listed under the categories of abuse are not an exhaustive list:

Physical abuse: a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a person at risk of harm.

Emotional abuse: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a person at risk of harm such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the person's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a person at risk of harm that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

It may include not giving the person at risk of harm opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a individual's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the person at risk of harm from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing

the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing people at risk of harm to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a person at risk of harm.

Sexual abuse: involves forcing or enticing a person at risk of harm to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the person at risk of harm is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging people at risk of harm to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a person at risk of harm in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education.

Neglect: the persistent failure to meet a person at risk of harm's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the person's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a person at risk of harm from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a person at risk of harm's basic emotional needs.

It is important to recognise that disabled children may be particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them. Dependency on others for primary needs, e.g., feeding and clothing may make a person feel powerless to report abusive treatment.

This policy is inclusive of all children, young people and adults at risk of harm, irrespective of age, gender, race or ethnicity, religion, disability or sexual preference and as per the protected characteristics for the Equalities Act 2010.

The use of photographs and images of young people will be controlled to prevent possible misuse. In general, agreement will be sought from parents or guardians that images can be used as appropriate.

Responding to Allegations

If a person discloses abuse by someone else:

- Stay calm, take the allegation seriously.
- Allow the person to speak without interruption, accepting what is said, but DO NOT investigate.
- Only ask questions for clarification, do not ask leading questions.
- Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, while passing no judgement. Reassure them that they did the right thing by talking to you.
- Advise that you will try to offer support, but that you MUST pass the information on, do not offer to keep secrets.
- Record the facts as you know them.
- Refer the allegation immediately and directly to the appropriate person. If an employee or volunteer is implicated, refer to Lynda Seagroatt. If Lynda Seagroatt is implicated, refer to the Chair.
- All allegations must be referred, no matter how insignificant they seem to be, or when they occur.
- Try to ensure that no one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise. As soon as possible after the incident or disclosure has occurred:
- Write down notes, dates, times, facts, observations, and verbatim speech.
- Ensure the correct details are available, the young person's/vulnerable adult's name and address, and the name and address of their parent or guardian.

- Immediately contact the relevant agencies through the Suffolk Referral Process.
- Referral details can be found here: <https://suffolksp.org.uk/concerned>
- Prepare a confidential file. Record all notes, conversations and advice from Social Services. Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.
- Store information in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection legislation.
- Responding to concerns about a child's welfare where there has been no specific disclosure or allegation All members, employees, volunteers and organisations contracted to provide services on behalf of the Council are encouraged to share concerns with Lynda Seagroatt, the Council's Designated Safeguarding Person.

Lynda Seagroatt will, if appropriate, make a referral to Social Services.

Recognising abuse is not always easy. The list below provides some indicators of abuse; however, the list is not exhaustive and contains only indicators, not confirmation, of abuse:

- unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body e.g., cigarette burns, bite marks.
- bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips (from slapping or pinching).
- an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent or which has not been treated adequately.
- sudden changes in behaviour, including becoming withdrawn or becoming aggressive, severe temper outbursts.
- reluctance to get changed e.g., for swimming.
- neglected in appearance.
- constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from others.
- inappropriate dress for the conditions.
- fear of parents or carers being approached for an explanation.
- flinching when approached or touched.
- neurotic behaviour e.g., hair twisting, rocking.

- being unable to play.
- fear of making mistakes.
- self-harm.
- fear of being left with a specific person or group of people, lack of trust in adults.
- sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or development age.
- sexual drawings or language.
- saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about.
- not allowed to have friends.

Contact Details for the Suffolk Referral Process

<https://suffolksp.org.uk/concerned>

Social Services Child Protection – Suffolk County Council: 0808 800 4005

East Suffolk Council – Monitoring Officer: 0333 0162 000

Suffolk Police: 101 or in an emergency 999

Confidentiality

Members, employees, volunteers and contracted service providers must not discuss allegations of abuse, substantiated or not, with anyone other than in connection with the formal investigation.

Where it is necessary to put in procedures to prevent continuing abuse the matter should be referred to Lynda Seagroatt so that appropriate considerations can be made by the Council.

Appropriate and confidential records should be maintained and should be signed and dated.

Prevention

Recruitment

Prospective employees will be interviewed, and previous, relevant experience will be noted. Two appropriate references will be taken up for all employees. All employees will undergo a probationary period.

All Councillors, and volunteers who are required to carry out duties that involve working unsupervised with children or adults at risk of harm or whose roles mean they come directly into contact with unsupervised children or adults at risk of harm will be checked by the Government's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and/or appropriate safeguarding agency.

In line with best practice, these checks will be repeated every three years.

Training

The Council will make the Safeguarding Policy available to all members, and volunteers.

Councillors and employees will be offered appropriate training on safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm.

Reporting

The Council is committed to maintaining an open culture where Councillors, employees, volunteers, children, vulnerable persons, parents, guardians and carers feel able to express concerns both about child protection, adults at risk and issues of poor practice.

In addition to the procedures outlined in this policy, the Council's Complaints Policy is available to all Councillors, staff, volunteers, and the general public.

Codes of Practice and Behaviour

These guidelines have been devised to protect children and adults at risk of harm from abuse, as well as to protect Councillors, staff and volunteers from situations where false allegations may occur. The guidelines apply to those working with children or vulnerable persons involved in activities organised by or on behalf of Bucklesham Community Council or at services provided by Bucklesham Community Council.

Councillors and volunteers must:

- Treat everyone with respect, regardless of their age, ethnicity, social background, ability, sexual orientation, culture or religious beliefs.
- Provide an example of good conduct they wish others to follow.
- Ensure activities involve more than one other person being present, or at least which are within sight and hearing of others.
- Respect a person's right to personal privacy. • Provide access for young people to talk to others about any concerns they may have.
- Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviours they do not like.

Remember that someone else might misinterpret their actions, no matter how well intentioned.

- Recognise that special caution is required when discussing sensitive issues, such as bullying, bereavement, abuse or personal development.
- Recognise that some children or adults at risk of harm will be more vulnerable to abuse than others and may face extra barriers in getting help because of their race, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social background or culture.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspicions of abuse.
- Be identifiable at all times.

Councillors and volunteers must not:

- Engage in physical horseplay, such as wrestling or tickling.
- Have any inappropriate verbal or physical contact with children or vulnerable people, or make suggestive remarks or gestures.
- Permit abusive youth peer activities (e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing, bullying etc.).
- Play physical contact games with children or adults at risk of harm.
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts.

- Ask children or adults at risk of harm to do things that are potentially dangerous, illegal or otherwise unreasonable.
- Exaggerate or trivialise abuse issues.
- Show favouritism to any individual.
- Rely on just their good name to protect them.
- Believe it could “never happen to me”.
- Take chances when common sense, policy or practice suggest a more prudent approach.
- Allow allegations made to go unchallenged, unrecorded and not acted upon.

Bucklesham Community Council takes its responsibility very seriously. Employees who breach these guidelines will face investigation and may face disciplinary action, which could lead to a dismissal. Volunteers in breach of the above Code of Conduct will have their services terminated with immediate effect and their parent organisation (as appropriate) will be informed.

If a Councillor does not adhere to the policy, there may be grounds for reporting their behaviour to the Monitoring Officer, who may require an investigation under the Suffolk Code of Conduct. Where there is evidence of illegal activity, the member, employee or volunteer will be reported to the relevant authorities and may face a criminal investigation.

Use of Contractors

Bucklesham Community Council will take reasonable care that contractors doing work on behalf of the Council are monitored appropriately.

Any contractor or sub-contractor engaged by the Council in areas where workers are likely to come into regular contact with children, young people or adults at risk of harm, must have its own equivalent Child Protection and adult at risk of harm policies, or failing this, must comply with the terms of this policy.

This requirement will be written into the contract. If this is not met, the contractor will be deemed to be in breach of their contract.

First Aid

The administration of first aid to children, young people and adults at risk of harm can present risks.

Under ordinary circumstances, a child or young person can be administered with first aid only if their parent or guardian expressly permits this course of action.

When administering first aid, wherever possible, employees should ensure that another adult is present or is aware of the action being taken.

Parents/carers should always be informed when first aid is administered. Child welfare is of paramount importance. In certain circumstances Councillors, employees, volunteers and contracted service providers may undertake first aid as a last resort, notifying parents/carers as soon as possible, to minimise a child's or vulnerable adult's distress.

Special Events - Photography

Anyone using cameras or film recorders for or on behalf of the Council should obtain appropriate consent from parents/guardians before the activity commences.

When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to cover Council services, events and activities the Council's expectations must be made clear in relation to child protection by checking the credentials of any photographers, ensuring identification is worn and by not allowing unsupervised access to children or one to one photographic sessions.

Declaration

Bucklesham Community Council is fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of children, young people and adults at risk of harm and promoting their welfare.

Representing Bucklesham Community Council as a Councillor or working a volunteer or contracted service provider of Bucklesham Community Council it is important that you have taken the time to thoroughly read the Safeguarding Policy.

In making its volunteers, contractors, and elected Councillors aware of this policy, it is our intention to ensure that all are proactive in providing a safe and secure environment for the children and adults at risk of harm in our community.

Signed on behalf of all Trustees

David Riddleston

David Riddleston

Chair

Date 13/05/2026

To be updated at Community Council Annual Meeting

Date of Next Meeting May 2027