



CHILD & VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY

WRITTEN BY:

Mrs Sarah Haydon, Chief Officer

REVIEWED:

September 2023

APPROVAL DATE:

Finance Strategy and Management Committee – 26 September 2023

Town Council – 10 October 2023

REVIEW DATE:

September 2025

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Biddulph Town Council recognises that the protection and safety of children and vulnerable adults is paramount. There is a moral and legal obligation for any Councillor, Council Officer, volunteer or third party conducting works for, or in partnership with, the Council at any given time to ensure the highest possible standard of care for children and vulnerable adults.

This policy establishes the roles and responsibilities of Councillors, staff and volunteers in relation to the protection of children and/or vulnerable adults, with whom they come into contact through their work for the Council, ensuring they are well informed, supported and enabled to provide the best possible practice.

1.2 Children, young people and vulnerable adults 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 vulnerable adults.

1.3 It is not the role of Biddulph Town Council to investigate allegations of abuse. However, all members, employees, volunteers and contracted service providers have a responsibility to take action when they suspect or recognise that a child or vulnerable adult may be a victim of significant harm or abuse.

The phrase '**children, young people and vulnerable adults**' refers to:

- a) anyone under the age of 18 years,
- b) someone who is over the age of 18 who is, or may be in need of community care services by reasons of mental health or other disability, age or illness and is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

When the term '**parents**' is used, it is used in the broadest sense to include parents, carers and guardians.

OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

2.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that children and vulnerable adults are protected and kept safe from harm whilst they are engaged in any activity associated with the Council.

The Council will achieve this by:

- i. Ensuring that its staff and volunteers are carefully selected, trained and supervised.
- ii. Ensuring that its councillors, staff and volunteers, that work directly with children or vulnerable adults, undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, where permitted by law.
- iii. Sharing information about child and vulnerable adult protection and good practice with partner organisations, councillors, employees, volunteers, parents and carers.
- iv. Ensuring processes are in place to ensure the safety and protection of children and vulnerable adults by groups or organisations the Council works with, including those that apply for financial grants from the Council, work in partnership with the Council or enter in to a lease or agreement with the Council, for example.
- v. Ensuring that the Council's Risk Assessments carried out give consideration to child and vulnerable adult protection and arrangements where individuals are required to work alongside

children or vulnerable adults e.g. Biddulph Christmas Lights Switch On and similar events, during work experience placements, etc.

PROVISIONS

3.1 Definitions of Abuse:

Abuse covers any form of physical, emotional, mental and sexual abuse including bullying, including lack of care that leads to injury or harm. For vulnerable adults abuse may also be financial.

Neglect is where people fail to meet a child's or vulnerable person's basic physical / psychological needs and is likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development, e.g. failure to ensure that a child is protected from unnecessary risk of injury, or exposing them to undue cold.

Physical Abuse is where physical pain or injury is caused, e.g. hitting, shaking, biting, etc.

Sexual Abuse is where children or vulnerable adults knowingly or unknowingly take part in an activity that meets the sexual needs of the other person or persons involved. This includes inappropriate photography or videoing.

Emotional / Mental Abuse is where there is persistent emotional ill treatment that causes severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's or vulnerable person's emotional status e.g. bullying (including cyber and text bullying), constant criticism and unrealistic pressure to perform.

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 vulnerable adults irrespective of their age, gender, race or ethnicity, religion, disability or sexual preference.

3.2 Processes

On joining the Council, all Councillors, staff and volunteers of the Council will be made aware of the **Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy** and its contents.

Decisions on which employees/volunteers will be DBS checked will be taken by the Chief Officer, in compliance with relevant legislation. Decisions on which

Councillors will be DBS checked will be taken by the Chief Officer in consultation with the Councillor and the Mayor.

Councillors, staff and volunteers will avoid any situations where they and an individual child or vulnerable adult are spending time alone or completely unobserved; an open environment should be encouraged, where others can see the interaction taking place.

Councillors, staff and volunteers should not offer or take a child or vulnerable adult alone on car journeys, however short. If exceptionally any situations of this nature are expected to occur, this should be enacted with the prior knowledge and approval of the parent/guardian or carer.

Where possible, children or vulnerable adults should not be left unattended, however this will depend on age and circumstances.

Where there are mixed groups of children or vulnerable adults, supervision, where possible, should be by a male and female member of staff.

The rights, dignity and worth of every person or child must be respected equally and all treated fairly.

Permission shall be sought from the child's parent/guardian before the publication of any photograph or video where the child can be clearly identified.

Any concerns regarding the safety or protection of a child/children or vulnerable adult/s, should be raised immediately with the Chief Officer or in their absence, an alternative senior manager, who will investigate accordingly.

3.3 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 the Chief Officer. If

the Chief Officer is implicated, refer directly to the Police. 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 Social Services Department at Staffordshire County Council. Ask for a duty officer and indicate that you wish to discuss a matter of child / vulnerable person protection. Ask for the name of the person with whom you are speaking. Do not filter out or withhold any information. Ask if there is anyone else who should be informed.
- 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.
- Stored information in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection legislation.
- Follow the advice from Social Services; take no other action unless advised to do so by Social Services.

If in doubt about the advice you have received at any stage refer to Social Services for guidance.

3.4 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 the Chief Officer. The Chief Officer 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, dirty or 'smelly'
- 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

3.5 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 shared with the Chief Officer so that appropriate risk assessments may be undertaken.

3.6 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 members, employees and volunteers who are required to carry out duties that involve working with children or vulnerable adults or whose roles mean they come directly into contact with children or vulnerable adults will be checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service and/or appropriate safeguarding

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

3.7 Training

The council will make the **Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy** available to all members, staff and volunteers. The Chief Officer will encourage good practice and identify any training needs required through the Council's Appraisal System. Members will be offered appropriate training on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

All members and employees will be expected to read this policy and sign the Declaration at the end of the document.

3.8 Work Experience

Biddulph Town Council may offer work experience placements. The Council will ensure that employees working with children or vulnerable adults are aware of the **Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy**. The Chief Officer is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of work experience students who under law are regarded as employees.

3.9 Leisure services/room hire

Independent sports clubs and private individuals who regularly use the facilities operated by Biddulph Town Council should have appropriate child protection and vulnerable adult policies in place, commensurate with the level of contact they have. Furthermore, their employees or volunteers who have significant and regular unsupervised contact with children and vulnerable adults should have satisfactory DBS checks.

The Council will state on its Booking Forms that it is the Council's expectation that groups will follow good practice procedures in relation to Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding.

3.10 Use of Contractors

Biddulph Town 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 vulnerable adults, should have its own equivalent Child Protection and vulnerable adult 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.

3.11 First Aid

The administration of first aid to children, young people and vulnerable adults 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, members and 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 members and employees 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.

3.12 Special Events - Photography

It is an unfortunate fact that some people have used children and young people's events as opportunities to take inappropriate photographs or footage of children, every attempt should be made to ensure that this does not happen. Members, employees, volunteers and contracted service providers should be vigilant at all times. Anyone using cameras or film recorders for or on behalf of the Council should obtain consent from the parents of children being photographed or filmed 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.

3.13 Misuse of procedure

Malicious complaints about a member or an employee(s) and/or serious and/or persistent abuse of these safeguarding policies and procedures will not be tolerated and will be dealt with through Biddulph Town Council's disciplinary process.

3.14 Prevent and Anti-Radicalisation

Biddulph Town Council is aware that there can be elements within our communities that seek to cause disquiet within our town. Through our awareness of this, the Council will seek to support local and national initiatives.

Radicalisation is a process by which an individual or group adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice.

Radicalism can be both violent and nonviolent, but more focus is on radicalisation turning into violent extremism.

Radicalisation can originate from opposing progressive changes in society or being against the British Values which include democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Actively promoting British Values means challenging opinions or behaviours which are contrary to those fundamental values.

The more common focuses of radicalisation and extremism are towards ISIL, Al Qa'ida, the far right, neo-Nazis, white supremacist ideology, Irish Nationalist and Loyalist paramilitary groups, and extremist animal rights (which is not an exhaustive list).

There are many pathways to radicalisation, which can be independent but are usually mutually reinforcing. The use of social media and the internet as tools to radicalise young people cannot be underestimated. Often those who are already vulnerable in some way are targeted by others seeking to recruit people to follow extremist ideology and that exposure to extreme views can make young people vulnerable to further manipulation and exploitation.

Indicators for possible radicalisation can include:

- Spending increasing time in the company of other suspected extremists
- Changing their style of dress and appearance in accordance with the group or culture
- Their day-to-day behaviour becoming increasingly centred around an extremist ideology, group or cause
- Loss of interest in other friends and activities not associated with the extremist ideology, group or cause
- Possession of material or symbols associated with the extremist cause (e.g. the swastika for far-right groups)
- Attempts to recruit others to the group/cause/ideology

- Communications with others that suggest identification with a group/cause/ideology
- Clearly identifying another group as threatening what they stand for and blaming that group for all social or political ills
- Using insulting or derogatory names or labels for another group
- Speaking about the imminence of harm from the other group and the importance of action now
- Expressing attitudes that justify offending on behalf of the group, cause or ideology
- Condoning or supporting violence or harm towards others
- Plotting or conspiring with others.

The Prevent strategy under Counter Terrorism law is designed to help stop people moving from extremist groups or from extremism into terrorist activity and has 3 specific strategic objectives:

- Respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat faced from those who promote it
- Prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure they are given appropriate advice and support
- Work with sectors and institutions where there is a risk of radicalisation that needs to be addressed

3.15 FGM

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) includes procedures that intentionally alter or injure female genital organs for nonmedical reasons. FGM is internationally recognised as a violation of the human rights of girls and women and is illegal in the UK and Europe. It is estimated that 130 million girls and women alive today have been cut in the 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East where FGM is concentrated.

UK communities that are most at risk of FGM include but are not exclusive to Kenyans, Somalis, Sudanese, Sierra Leoneans, Egyptians, Nigerians and Eritreans. However, women from non-African communities that are at risk of FGM include Yemeni, Kurdish, Indonesian and Pakistani women.

FGM is carried out on children between the ages of 0–15, depending on the community in which they live. It is extremely harmful and has short and long-term effects on physical and psychological health. The procedure is often carried out in non-sterile environments without anaesthetic where the girl is the pinned down and the procedure is carried out.

Suspicions may arise in a number of ways that a child or young girl is being prepared for FGM to take place abroad. These include knowing that the family belongs to a community in which FGM is practised, there is knowledge that an older sibling or the mother has undergone FGM, the family are making preparations for the child to take a holiday, arranging vaccinations or planning absence from school/college or programme. The child may also talk about a 'special procedure/ceremony' that is going to take place or talks about being prepared for marriage.

Indicators that FGM may already have occurred include prolonged absence from school or programme, noticeable behaviour change on return and long periods away from classes or other normal activities, finding it difficult to sit still and appears to be experiencing discomfort or pain and possibly have bladder or menstrual problems and talk about pain between their legs.

If employees have concerns that a girl or young women may be taken overseas for FGM or even being prepared for the procedure to happen in the UK despite it being against the law, they must escalate this immediately following the report a concern procedure. If time is critical and the young person is leaving programme with no indication of returning, they must raise this with the relevant authority i.e. Police or Children's Social Care as a priority. Where possible try to speak to a line manager / Head of / Senior Head of or a member of the safeguarding team beforehand and fill the relevant Record a Concern Form in as soon as possible afterwards.

3.16 Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence

Forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used. Forced marriage is recognised in the UK as a form of violence against women and men, domestic/child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights. The pressure put on people to marry against their will can be physical (including threats, actual physical violence and sexual violence) or emotional and psychological (for example, when someone is made to feel like they're bringing shame on their family). Financial abuse (e.g. taking someone's wages and not giving any money back) can also be a factor.

It is important that staff are sensitive to differing family patterns and lifestyles and to child-rearing patterns that vary across different racial, ethnic and cultural groups. At the same time, they must be clear that child abuse cannot be condoned for religious or cultural reasons, therefore forced marriage must

be responded to as a protection and safeguarding issue. In cases of forced marriage, discussion with the family or any involvement of the family or local community members will often place the child or young person at greater risk of harm. Families should not be approached if forced marriage is suspected.

There is no specific offence of 'forcing someone to marry'; criminal offences may nevertheless be committed. Perpetrators, usually parents or family members, could be prosecuted for offences including threatening behaviour, assault, kidnap, abduction, threats to kill, imprisonment and murder. Sexual intercourse without consent is rape, regardless of whether this occurs within a marriage or not.

Forced marriage is automatically handled as a safeguarding issue and staff should share information quickly when a child or young person is at risk. Staff should follow the process outlined in the Responding to Safeguarding Concerns procedure and cases will be referred to the Home Office based Forced Marriage Unit. In the event of needing to get assistance for someone dealing with possible forced marriage and there is no time to go through the normal escalation channels, contact the Police or the Forced Marriage Unit on:

Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7008 0151 Email: fm@fco.gov.uk

The responding to safeguarding concerns process should then be followed as soon as possible

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

4.1 Relevant legislation includes:

- Care Act 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- The Children's Act 2004 and 2007
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 as amended by the Serious Crime Act 2015
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (Sexual Harm Prevention Orders, Sexual Risk Orders and forced Marriage)
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)