

1. Policy statement and scope

Berryfields Parish Council (BPC) believes that children, young people and adults at risk have the right to live their lives to the fullest potential, to be safe, listened to, treated with dignity and respect, and protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation. We will take all reasonably practicable steps to promote safe practice in our services, venues and activities, and to safeguard those who may be at risk.

This policy applies to everyone working for or on behalf of BPC (employees, councillors, volunteers, agency workers, contractors and partners) and to all Council-run or commissioned services, events and venues.

2. Legal and local framework

BPC recognises its duties under (not exhaustive):

- **Children Act 1989 & 2004 (s.11 duty)**
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (latest)**
- **Care Act 2014 (safeguarding adults)**
- **Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR**
- **Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Abuse of Trust)**

BPC operates within the **Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP)** thresholds and procedures, and local referral pathways (First Response / LADO). Local contact details are set out in section 15.

3. Principles

- **Welfare is paramount**
- **Prevention first:** create safe environments and culture
- **Proportionality:** act on risk using the least intrusive response compatible with safety
- **Partnership:** work with statutory services and local partners
- **Accountability & transparency:** clear roles, routes and records.
- **Non-discrimination:** equal protection regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/belief, sex or sexual orientation.

4. Definitions

- **Child / young person:** under 18.
- **Adult at risk:** an adult who has care and support needs, is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and as a result is unable to protect themselves.
- **Abuse (children):** physical, emotional, sexual, neglect. Extended risks include **CSE, CCE, County Lines and Extremism/Radicalisation.**

5. Prevention

BPC will:

- Maintain safe, welcoming environments where people feel able to raise concerns
- Provide clear codes of conduct for staff, councillors, volunteers and contractors
- Embed safeguarding messaging (including e-safety) in youth-facing activity
- Ensure appropriate supervision at Council premises/events (children must be accompanied; no unsupervised 1:1 contact), in line with BPC's current practice.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Council (corporate): overall accountability for safeguarding arrangements, resources and oversight.

Clerk/Manager: day-to-day operational oversight; ensures policy implementation, training, and record-keeping.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

- **DSL:** Anthea Cass - 01296 925750
- **Deputy DSL (DDSL):** Sarah Tomlin - 01296 925750

All staff, councillors and volunteers must:

- Know signs of abuse/neglect and additional risks (CSE, CCE, County Lines, Extremism)
- Report concerns promptly via the routes in section 8 (doing nothing is not an option)
- Follow safer working practice and data handling requirements.

Contractors/Partners: must have robust safeguarding policies or agree in writing to comply with this policy.

7. Safer recruitment & suitability

- Role-appropriate DBS checks, identity, references and employment history checks for posts engaging with children/young people/adults at risk
- At least one **safer-recruitment** trained person on each recruitment process where the role involves work with vulnerable groups.
- Clear induction covering this policy, code of conduct, reporting routes and boundaries (including online conduct).
- Ongoing supervision and periodic re-checks as appropriate.

8. Responding to concerns or disclosures

If a child/young person/adult at risk is in **immediate danger, call 999**.

Otherwise:

1. **Listen & reassure.** Don't promise confidentiality; explain you must share with people who can help. Avoid leading questions; use *Tell, Explain, Describe*
2. **Record promptly** (factual, dated, signed, the person's own words)
3. **Report immediately** to the **DSL/DDSL**. If unavailable, contact **First Response** (children) directly
4. **Do not investigate** yourself or contact alleged perpetrators.

5. **Consent & thresholds:** Where a child is **at risk of significant harm**, consent is not required to share information/referrals (follow BSCP thresholds).

Adults at risk: follow the same listen-record-report steps. Consider capacity/consent under the Care Act and Mental Capacity Act; if risk of serious harm, share without consent on a need-to-know basis.

9. Allegations about staff, councillors, volunteers or contractors

- Notify the **Named Lead for Managing Allegations (Anthea Cass, anthea.cass@berryfields-pc.gov.uk)** **immediately**. If the allegation involves the Named Lead or DSL, contact the **LADO** directly
- Inform LADO within one working day of any allegation that meets the threshold (behaved in a way that has harmed or may harm a child; possibly committed a criminal offence; behaved in a way that indicates unsuitability)
- Do not interview the child or the subject of the allegation before LADO advice
- Follow disciplinary/HR processes to conclusion, even if the person leaves. Provide accurate references including outcomes where applicable.

10. Information sharing, confidentiality and recording

- Share information lawfully, proportionately and on a need-to-know basis (UK GDPR / DPA 2018)
- Store records securely with restricted access
- Retention: Concern/incident records retained for minimum 6 years; allegation records on personnel files retained until normal retirement age or 10 years after the allegation if longer, with clear outcomes
- Use BSCP guidance (e.g., Seven Golden Rules) and escalation procedures where professional disagreement arises.

11. Specific risks and indicators (children)

- **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)** – use BSCP tools and refer if at risk
- **Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) & County Lines** – heightened vigilance; refer if indicators present
- **Domestic abuse** – recognise impact on children; share MARAC notifications appropriately
- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** – treat as child protection; refer without informing parents where risk suspected
- **Forced marriage** – do **not** approach family; follow safeguarding procedures
- **Online safety** – maintain professional boundaries; no direct online contact with children; communicate via parents/carers and official channels.

12. Photography, images and media

- Obtain written parental/carer consent before taking/using images of children; state where/how they will be used
- Do not publish identifying information (e.g., name, address) with images.

13. Training and awareness

- All staff, councillors and volunteers where relevant: basic safeguarding training at induction and refresher at least every 3 years; role-specific training where relevant
- Keep training records.

14. Supervision, culture and whistleblowing

- Promote open, transparent practice (avoid lone working with children; use visible spaces; second adult present where practicable)
- Encourage early escalation of concerns; protect whistleblowers; follow the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

15. Local contacts (Buckinghamshire)

- **Immediate danger: 999**
- **First Response (Buckinghamshire Council) – concerns about a child: 01296 383962; Out of hours: 0800 999 7677**; online referral via Buckinghamshire Council website.
- **Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP)**: guidance, training, thresholds.
- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 01296 382070** (for allegations about people who work with children).
- **Police (non-emergency): 101**

(Staff based in other areas should follow the local partnership's procedures for that area.)

16. Linked policies

- Equality & Diversity
- Health & Safety
- Lone Working
- DSE
- Data Protection & Privacy
- Whistleblowing
- Complaints
- Disciplinary
- Code of Conduct.

17. Governance, monitoring and review

- The Clerk reports significant safeguarding matters to Council (confidentially and lawfully).
- The DSL provides an annual safeguarding report (training, incidents, learning).
- Policy reviewed annually or following statutory/local changes or any serious incident.

Document History

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