

Autism Bucks

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

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v4.0	10 Aug 2026	N Cary	See Appendix D - Rationale for the Updated Safeguarding Policy

This policy has two purposes:

- To explain Autism Bucks' safeguarding responsibilities.
- To provide practical guidance for anyone responding to a safeguarding concern.

If you need immediate guidance about what to do, go directly to Section 14: Responding to Safeguarding Concerns or the safeguarding flowchart in Section 27.

If you need support to understand this policy or would like it explained in a different way, please contact Autism Bucks. We will work with you to identify the most appropriate way to make the information accessible.

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1 Executive Summary

Autism Bucks is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for everyone involved with the charity. Safeguarding means protecting people's rights to live free from abuse, neglect and exploitation while promoting wellbeing, dignity, inclusion and participation.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Trustees, volunteers, members and anyone representing Autism Bucks should remain alert to concerns and help create an environment in which people feel able to speak up and ask for help.

Our approach

Autism Bucks is a community charity, not a regulated care provider or statutory safeguarding service. We do not investigate allegations of abuse. Our role is to recognise concerns, respond appropriately, record and report them, support people to access appropriate help and cooperate with statutory agencies where necessary.

Our approach is based on six safeguarding principles: Empowerment, Prevention, Proportionality, Protection, Partnership and Accountability. We aim to safeguard with people rather than to them, respecting individual wishes, autonomy and rights wherever it is safe and lawful to do so.

Autism-informed safeguarding

Autistic people have different communication styles, sensory experiences and ways of responding to situations. Behaviour that might appear unusual should not automatically be treated as evidence of abuse or neglect. Where possible, consider what is usual for the individual and approach differences with curiosity rather than assumption.

When someone raises a concern, communication should be clear and direct. Allow sufficient processing time, minimise unnecessary sensory distractions, respect preferred methods of communication and avoid assumptions based on eye contact, body language or tone of voice.

If a safeguarding concern arises

- If someone tells you about a safeguarding concern:
- Listen calmly and take the concern seriously.
- Allow the person to explain in their own words and do not investigate or ask leading questions.
- Do not promise confidentiality. Explain that information may need to be shared to help keep someone safe.
- Make a factual record as soon as possible, using the person's own words where appropriate.
- Report the concern promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- If you are unsure whether something is a safeguarding concern, seek advice rather than keeping it to yourself.
- If someone is in immediate danger or requires urgent medical attention, contact the emergency services without delay.

Safeguarding information must be handled sensitively, securely and on a need-to-know basis. Information may sometimes need to be shared without consent where this is necessary to protect someone from harm or there is another lawful reason to do so.

Responsibilities and oversight

The Designated Safeguarding Lead coordinates Autism Bucks' response to safeguarding concerns, maintains appropriate records and liaises with external agencies where required. The Board of Trustees is responsible for safeguarding governance, appropriate policies, training and oversight.

Trustees and relevant volunteers are subject to appropriate DBS checks, and safeguarding training is provided according to role. Concerns about the conduct of anyone representing Autism Bucks will be taken seriously and managed fairly, promptly and proportionately.

The Safeguarding Policy and Procedures is reviewed at least annually and safeguarding concerns, feedback and experience are used to improve our practice.

This Executive Summary should be read as an overview only. The full Autism Bucks Safeguarding Policy and Procedures remains the authoritative document. In the event of a safeguarding concern, refer particularly to Section 14 Responding to Safeguarding Concerns, Section 15 Reporting Safeguarding Concerns and Appendix B – Safeguarding Reporting Flowchart.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to help ensure that everyone involved with Autism Bucks feels safe, respected and valued.

Safeguarding is about protecting people's rights to live free from abuse, neglect and exploitation while promoting wellbeing, dignity, inclusion and participation. It is not simply about responding when something has gone wrong. It is also about creating an environment where people feel welcomed, listened to and supported, so that concerns can be raised early and appropriate action taken when needed.

Autism Bucks is a charity with autistic and non-autistic trustees and volunteers working together to support autistic adults in Buckinghamshire. We believe that safeguarding is fundamental to creating a welcoming, inclusive organisation where everyone feels safe, respected and able to participate.

This policy explains:

- Our commitment to safeguarding.
- The principles that guide our approach.
- The responsibilities of everyone involved with Autism Bucks.
- How safeguarding concerns should be recognised, responded to and reported.
- How we seek to learn and continually improve our safeguarding practice.

This policy should be read alongside our related policies, including Equality and Diversity, Health and Safety, Complaints and Data Protection.

3 Definitions

Safeguarding

Protecting people's rights to live free from abuse, neglect and exploitation while promoting wellbeing, dignity, inclusion and participation.

Abuse

Any act or failure to act that causes harm, places someone at risk of harm, or violates their rights, dignity or wellbeing. Abuse can take many forms and may occur once or repeatedly.

Disclosure

When someone shares information that causes concern about their own or another person's safety or wellbeing.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The person appointed by Autism Bucks to receive safeguarding concerns, provide safeguarding advice and coordinate the charity's safeguarding response.

4 Our Commitment

Autism Bucks recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Every trustee, volunteer, employee, member and anyone acting on behalf of Autism Bucks has a role in helping to create an environment where people feel safe, respected and included.

Although Autism Bucks is not a regulated care provider, we recognise that safeguarding concerns may arise during our activities or be shared with us by members or volunteers. We therefore have a responsibility to respond appropriately, support people to access help where needed and work with relevant agencies when safeguarding concerns are identified.

Our safeguarding approach is informed by recognised good practice, including the six safeguarding principles described in the Care Act 2014: Empowerment, Prevention, Proportionality, Protection, Partnership and Accountability.

We are committed to creating a culture where:

- Everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
- Diversity is valued and discrimination is not tolerated.
- People feel able to raise concerns without fear of being dismissed or judged.
- Safeguarding concerns are taken seriously.
- Decisions are made fairly, transparently and proportionately.
- Learning is encouraged so that we continually improve our practice.

We believe safeguarding is something we do **with** people, not **to** people.

Wherever possible, we will involve people in decisions that affect them, listen to their views and support them to express the outcomes that matter most to them. We recognise that people are the experts in their own lives and that effective safeguarding should promote autonomy, independence and human rights wherever it is safe and lawful to do so.

There may occasionally be circumstances where we have a legal or ethical responsibility to act in order to protect someone from serious harm, even where this differs from their expressed wishes. Where this happens, we will seek to explain our reasons openly, provide clear information about what will happen next wherever possible, and involve the person in decisions as far as it is safe and lawful to do so.

Autism Bucks has zero tolerance for abuse, discrimination and victimisation in any form.

5 Scope

This policy applies to everyone involved with Autism Bucks, including:

- Trustees
- Volunteers
- Members
- Employees
- Contractors

- Guest speakers
- Anyone representing Autism Bucks

This policy applies to all Autism Bucks activities and communications.

Although this policy applies to everyone involved with Autism Bucks, our safeguarding responsibilities are proportionate to our role as a community charity rather than a regulated care provider.

The role of Autism Bucks is not to investigate allegations of abuse or undertake the responsibilities of statutory safeguarding agencies.

Our role is to:

- Create an environment where people feel psychologically safe to raise concerns, ask questions, ask for help and speak up if something does not feel right.
- Create an environment that promotes safety, inclusion and respect.
- Recognise safeguarding concerns where they arise.
- Respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns.
- Support people to access appropriate help where needed.
- Cooperate with statutory agencies where appropriate.

Because Autism Bucks is a community, friendships naturally develop between members, volunteers and trustees. This sense of community is one of our strengths and contributes to the welcoming environment we aim to create.

At the same time, everyone involved with Autism Bucks shares a responsibility to contribute to a culture where people feel safe, respected and included. This includes respecting personal boundaries, treating one another with dignity, maintaining appropriate confidentiality and raising concerns where someone's safety, wellbeing or rights may be at risk.

Children

Although Autism Bucks primarily supports autistic adults, children or young people may occasionally attend events or come into contact with the charity. Any safeguarding concerns relating to a child or young person will be taken seriously and referred to the appropriate statutory children's safeguarding services where necessary.

6 Our Safeguarding Principles

Although Autism Bucks is not a regulated care provider, our safeguarding approach is informed by recognised good practice, including the six safeguarding principles described in the Care Act 2014.

Empowerment

People should be supported to make informed choices and remain involved in decisions that matter to them wherever possible. We will listen carefully to what people tell us, seek to understand their wishes, support them to express the outcomes that matter most to them, and explain what will happen next wherever possible.

Prevention

Preventing harm is essential. Creating welcoming, inclusive and psychologically safe environments helps reduce the risk of harm and encourages people to seek support at an early stage.

Proportionality

Responses should be proportionate to the level of identified risk. Not every concern requires the same response. We will carefully consider the circumstances of each situation and take action that is appropriate, lawful and balanced.

Protection

Where someone is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, we will take concerns seriously and work with the appropriate statutory agencies to help protect the person and support their safety and wellbeing.

Partnership

Effective safeguarding depends upon collaboration. Where appropriate, Autism Bucks will work with local authorities, health services, police, safeguarding boards and other organisations to help protect people from harm.

Accountability

Safeguarding decisions should be transparent, properly recorded and open to scrutiny. Everyone involved with Autism Bucks should understand their safeguarding responsibilities and know how concerns can be raised.

7 Our Safeguarding Approach

The six safeguarding principles provide an important foundation for our approach. Alongside these, Autism Bucks is committed to the following values.

Human Rights

Every person has the right to be treated with dignity, respect and equality regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other protected characteristic. Safeguarding should always seek to uphold people's rights and freedoms while taking reasonable action to protect people from harm.

Inclusion

Inclusion is an important part of safeguarding. People who feel welcomed, understood and respected are more likely to ask for help, share concerns and participate fully in community life. Conversely, inaccessible communication, unclear or unpredictable processes, environments that feel unwelcoming, or cultures where people do not feel safe to speak up can increase safeguarding risks. Autism Bucks is therefore committed to making its meetings, activities and communications as accessible, welcoming and inclusive as reasonably possible.

Psychological Safety

We want people to feel able to ask questions, seek clarification, admit mistakes, challenge poor practice and raise concerns without fear of embarrassment, criticism or retaliation. Psychological safety supports openness, encourages early reporting of concerns and strengthens safeguarding.

Learning Culture

Effective safeguarding requires organisations to learn continuously. Where safeguarding concerns arise, Autism Bucks will seek to understand what happened, identify opportunities for improvement and use learning to strengthen future practice rather than focusing solely on blame. We recognise that creating a safe organisation is an ongoing process of listening, reflecting and improving.

8 Risk Assessment

Autism Bucks is committed to creating environments that are as safe, accessible and inclusive as reasonably possible.

Safeguarding risks will be considered when planning meetings, activities, events and other charity activities. Risk assessments should be proportionate to the nature of the activity and may include consideration of:

- Accessibility and inclusion.
- Venue and environmental safety.
- Emergency arrangements.
- Online safety where relevant.
- Appropriate supervision and lone working arrangements where applicable.
- Any foreseeable safeguarding risks.

Where safeguarding risks are identified, Autism Bucks will take reasonable and proportionate steps to reduce those risks while respecting people's rights, promoting inclusion and participation, and maintaining the least restrictive approach appropriate to the circumstances.

9 Recognising Safeguarding Concerns

A safeguarding concern is any situation where there is reason to be concerned that a child or adult may be experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing, abuse, neglect, exploitation or another situation that places their safety, wellbeing or rights at risk.

Concerns may arise through something that is seen, heard, disclosed directly by the person, reported by someone else, identified through a pattern of smaller concerns over time, or because something does not feel right.

You do not need proof that abuse or neglect has occurred before sharing a safeguarding concern.

If you are unsure whether something is a safeguarding concern, seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Do not keep concerns to yourself simply because you are uncertain.

It is always better to raise a concern that turns out not to be a safeguarding issue than to remain silent when someone may need help.

10 Types of Abuse

Autism Bucks recognises the categories of abuse identified within the Care Act 2014 and other relevant safeguarding guidance.

Physical abuse

Including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, inappropriate restraint, force-feeding or any act that causes physical harm.

Domestic abuse

Including physical, psychological, sexual, financial or emotional abuse occurring between people who are personally connected. This may also include coercive or controlling behaviour.

Sexual abuse

Including rape, sexual assault, inappropriate touching, sexual harassment, indecent exposure, sexual exploitation, coercion into sexual activity or situations where a person is unable to give informed consent.

Psychological (Emotional) Abuse

Including threats, intimidation, humiliation, bullying, verbal abuse, harassment, coercion, controlling behaviour or deliberate isolation.

Financial or Material Abuse

Including theft, fraud, scams, exploitation, pressure regarding money or property, misuse of benefits or preventing someone from accessing their own finances.

Modern Slavery

Including human trafficking, forced labour, domestic servitude and exploitation.

Discriminatory Abuse

Including harassment, bullying or unfair treatment because of disability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age or another protected characteristic.

Organisational Abuse

Including poor practice, neglect, unsafe systems or organisational cultures that place people at risk of harm.

Neglect and Acts of Omission

Including failing to provide appropriate care, support, medical treatment, nutrition, personal care or access to essential services where these are required.

Self-neglect

Including situations where a person is unable or unwilling to care for their own health, wellbeing or living environment, placing themselves at significant risk.

Other Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding concerns may also include

- Bullying, including cyberbullying.
- Online abuse, exploitation or grooming.
- Stalking or harassment.
- Coercive or controlling behaviour.
- Hate incidents or hate crime.
- Mate crime and exploitation.
- Radicalisation or extremism
- Inappropriate use of social media or digital communication.
- Social isolation that increases a person's vulnerability to harm.
- Cuckooing, where a person's home is taken over or used by others for criminal or exploitative purposes.
- Any other situation where a person's safety, wellbeing, dignity or rights may be at risk.

This list is not exhaustive. Safeguarding concerns can arise in many different ways, and it is important to remain alert to situations that do not fit neatly into a particular category.

11 Possible Indicators of Abuse or Neglect

Possible indicators should always be considered in context. While a single indicator may not always suggest abuse, you should remain curious. A pattern of concerns, significant changes or a combination of indicators may suggest that further attention is needed.

Possible indicators of physical abuse:

- Unexplained injuries or bruising.
- Injuries that do not match the explanation given.
- Repeated injuries.
- Flinching or appearing fearful of physical contact.
- Untreated injuries.

Possible indicators of psychological or emotional abuse:

- Sudden loss of confidence.
- Becoming withdrawn or unusually anxious.
- Appearing fearful of a particular individual.
- Excessive apologising or self-blame.
- Significant changes in mood or behaviour.

Possible indicators of financial abuse:

- Unexplained lack of money.
- Changes in usual spending patterns or sudden inability to afford everyday items.
- Unusual financial transactions.
- Pressure to lend or give away money.
- Sudden changes in financial arrangements.

Possible indicators of sexual abuse:

- Fear of a particular person.
- Sudden changes in behaviour.
- Unexplained injuries.
- Avoiding certain people or places.
- Sexualised language or behaviour that is unusual for the individual or causes concern.

Possible indicators of neglect:

- Poor personal hygiene.
- Inadequate clothing.
- Untreated health concerns.
- Malnutrition or dehydration.
- Repeated absence because basic needs are not being met.

Possible indicators of discriminatory abuse:

- Repeated bullying or harassment linked to a protected characteristic.
- Derogatory language or hate incidents.
- Exclusion because of a protected characteristic.
- Unequal treatment because of a protected characteristic.

12 Autism-informed safeguarding

Like all people, autistic people are individuals. There is no single way of being autistic. Autistic people have diverse communication styles, sensory experiences and ways of interacting with the world.

Some of the indicators described above may simply reflect a person's usual way of being, their communication preferences and style, sensory differences or their individual preferences. For example, an autistic person may naturally prefer not to be touched, make more or less eye contact, or become overwhelmed in busy or unfamiliar environments. These are examples only and are not an exhaustive list. Wherever possible, consider what is typical for the individual before assuming that something is a safeguarding concern.

At the same time, safeguarding concerns should always be taken seriously. Consider whether there has been a significant change from what is usual for the individual and whether there are other factors that might help explain the change. If concerns remain, seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Wherever possible, approach differences with curiosity rather than assumption. Taking time to understand what may be happening can help avoid both overlooking safeguarding concerns and misinterpreting autistic differences as indicators of abuse or neglect.

When discussing or receiving a safeguarding concern, it is important to recognise that autistic people may disclose concerns in different ways and under different circumstances. Many autistic people are better able to share sensitive information when communication is adapted to meet their individual needs.

Wherever possible:

- Ask clear, direct questions and avoid ambiguous or figurative language.
- Allow enough time for the person to process information and respond. Avoid rushing, interrupting or repeatedly rephrasing questions.
- Minimise sensory distractions and, where possible, choose a calm, predictable environment.
- Take the person's preferred communication methods into account. This may include speaking, writing, using AAC or other communication supports.
- Avoid making assumptions based on eye contact, body language, tone of voice or communication style.
- Listen without judgement and avoid expressing disbelief or surprise.
- Recognise that disclosure may happen gradually over time rather than all at once.
- Wherever possible, support the person to speak with someone they know and trust, while following safeguarding procedures.
- Remember that every autistic person is different. Wherever possible, ask the person what would help them feel safe and communicate in the way that works best for them.

13 Communicating after a safeguarding concern has been raised

After a safeguarding concern has been shared, continue to communicate in ways that are accessible, respectful and adapted to the person's individual needs. Safeguarding processes can be unfamiliar and stressful, particularly where there is uncertainty or a lack of information. Reducing unnecessary uncertainty by explaining the process clearly, keeping people informed and avoiding unexpected changes can help people feel more able to engage with the safeguarding process.

Wherever possible:

- Keep the person informed about what is happening and provide updates where appropriate, even if there has been little progress.
- Agree, where possible, how the person would prefer to receive information and updates. This may include speaking, writing, using AAC or other communication supports.

- Allow time for the person to process information and ask questions. Avoid rushing conversations or expecting immediate responses.
- Check understanding rather than assuming it. Silence, delayed responses or a lack of questions should not be taken to mean that the person understands or agrees.
- Avoid unnecessary jargon, vague language or unexplained changes to plans.
- Where appropriate, ask whether any adjustments would help the person engage with the safeguarding process and communicate in the way that works best for them.
- Recognise that communication needs may change during periods of stress, anxiety or trauma, and adapt your approach accordingly.

14 Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

If someone shares a safeguarding concern with you, it is important to respond calmly, respectfully and appropriately, doing your best to help the person feel safe to share what they want to tell you. Listen carefully and take what they say seriously. If someone is in immediate danger or requires urgent medical attention, contact the emergency services without delay.

When responding to a safeguarding concern:

- Listen without interrupting wherever possible.
- Allow the person to explain in their own words.
- Avoid asking leading questions, suggesting answers or completing the person's sentences.
- Do not investigate the concern yourself.
- Reassure the person that they have done the right thing by speaking up.
- Explain that, if there are concerns about someone's safety or wellbeing, you may need to share the information with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or another appropriate person so that appropriate action can be considered.
- Avoid promising to keep the information confidential, as you may need to share it to help protect someone's safety or wellbeing.
- Explain what will happen next wherever possible. If you do not know the answer to a question about the process, say so honestly and explain that you will seek further information where appropriate.
- Make a factual record of what was said or observed as soon as possible, using the person's own words wherever possible.
- Report the concern promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, where appropriate.

If there is an immediate risk of serious harm, contact the emergency services without delay before informing the Designated Safeguarding Lead, where appropriate.

Autism Bucks is not responsible for carrying out statutory safeguarding enquiries, criminal investigations or employer disciplinary investigations.

Our role is to recognise safeguarding concerns, respond appropriately, record factual information, report concerns promptly and cooperate with any enquiries or investigations undertaken by statutory agencies, employers or other relevant organisations.

Depending on the nature of the concern, this may include safeguarding enquiries by the local authority, criminal investigations by the police, employer disciplinary procedures or other appropriate processes. Autism Bucks will cooperate with these processes where appropriate.

Where appropriate, and within the limits of confidentiality, Autism Bucks will keep the person who raised the concern informed about the progress of the matter and, where possible, let them know when appropriate action has been taken.

15 Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding concerns should be reported as soon as possible after they arise. Prompt reporting helps ensure that appropriate action can be taken to help protect people's safety and wellbeing.

When reporting a safeguarding concern:

- Report the concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as it is safe and practical to do so.
- If the Designated Safeguarding Lead is unavailable, concerns should be reported to the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead or another nominated trustee.
- If the concern involves the Designated Safeguarding Lead, report it to the Chair of Trustees;
- Concerns involving trustees should be reported to the Chair of Trustees unless the concern relates to the Chair, in which case another trustee or the relevant safeguarding authority should be contacted.
- Record factual information, clearly distinguishing between what you observed, what you were told and any personal observations or concerns;
- Include the date, time, location (where relevant), the people involved and what was seen, heard or disclosed;
- Use the person's own words wherever possible when recording a disclosure;
- Sign and date the record if completing it in writing; and
- Keep safeguarding information secure. Share it only with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, statutory agencies where appropriate, or others with a legitimate safeguarding role. Do not discuss safeguarding concerns with other members, volunteers, friends or family unless there is a safeguarding reason to do so.

If you are unsure whether something should be reported, seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead. It is usually better to discuss a concern than to leave it unreported.

16 Supporting People

Experiencing or raising a safeguarding concern can be distressing. Where appropriate, Autism Bucks will seek to support people by:

- Listening respectfully and without judgement.
- Providing clear information about the safeguarding process.
- Making reasonable adjustments to communication where appropriate.
- Signposting people to relevant support services.

- Maintaining appropriate contact while safeguarding processes are ongoing, where appropriate.

Autism Bucks is not a counselling, advocacy or statutory safeguarding service. Where people require specialist support, we will help them access appropriate organisations wherever possible.

17 Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Autism Bucks respects people's privacy and will handle safeguarding information sensitively and securely. However, safeguarding concerns cannot always be kept confidential if doing so could place someone or others at risk of harm.

Information should only be shared where there is a lawful and legitimate safeguarding reason to do so. Wherever possible, people should be told if information needs to be shared, why it is being shared and who it will be shared with, unless doing so would increase the risk of harm to themselves or others.

Wherever possible, Autism Bucks will seek a person's agreement before sharing safeguarding information. However, there may be circumstances where information needs to be shared without consent to help protect someone's safety or wellbeing, where another person may be at risk of harm, or where there is another lawful basis or legal duty to do so.

Safeguarding information should:

- Be shared only with those who have a legitimate safeguarding role.
- Be accurate, factual and relevant.
- Be shared on a need-to-know basis only.
- Be stored securely and treated as confidential; and in accordance with data protection legislation and Autism Bucks' Data Protection Policy.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for ensuring safeguarding records are stored securely, access is appropriately restricted and records are retained, reviewed, and disposed of in accordance with Autism Bucks' Data Protection Policy and any applicable legal requirements.

18 Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Everyone involved with Autism Bucks has a role to play in helping to create an environment where people feel safe, respected and valued.

All trustees, volunteers and members should:

- Help create an environment where people feel safe, respected and able to raise concerns.
- Remain alert to possible safeguarding concerns.
- Respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns or disclosures.
- Report safeguarding concerns promptly in accordance with this policy.
- Respect people's privacy and handle safeguarding information appropriately.

- Complete any safeguarding training appropriate to their role.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will:
- Act as the main point of contact for safeguarding concerns.
- Receive, record and respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns.
- Seek advice from statutory agencies where appropriate.
- Make referrals to external agencies where required.
- Maintain appropriate safeguarding records.
- Support trustees and volunteers with safeguarding advice.
- Promote good safeguarding practice across Autism Bucks.
- Review safeguarding concerns to identify opportunities for learning and improvement.

The Board of Trustees will:

- Ensure Autism Bucks has appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures
- Appoint and support a suitably trained Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Ensure appropriate safeguarding training is available for trustees and volunteers, where relevant.
- Ensure appropriate governance, support and oversight are in place to maintain effective safeguarding arrangements and promote continual improvement.
- Review safeguarding arrangements regularly.
- Promote a culture where safeguarding is taken seriously and concerns can be raised openly.

19 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

All trustees must have an appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. Volunteers who will be interacting with members without direct trustee supervision must also have an appropriate DBS check. Volunteers who are always supervised by a trustee will not normally require a DBS check. The Board of Trustees will regularly review DBS requirements to ensure they remain appropriate and comply with current legislation and national guidance.

20 Training

Autism Bucks is committed to ensuring that trustees, volunteers and employees receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will receive appropriate safeguarding training to carry out their responsibilities effectively and will keep their knowledge up to date.

Trustees, volunteers and employees will receive refresher safeguarding training at appropriate intervals and whenever significant changes are made to safeguarding legislation, guidance or Autism Bucks' safeguarding procedures.

Trustees will ensure that safeguarding training requirements are reviewed regularly and remain proportionate to each role.

Safeguarding awareness is an ongoing responsibility. Everyone involved with Autism Bucks is encouraged to seek advice whenever they are unsure about a safeguarding concern rather than making assumptions or attempting to manage the situation alone.

21 Whistleblowing

Autism Bucks encourages everyone involved with the charity to raise concerns about safeguarding, unsafe practice or other serious wrongdoing.

Concerns should normally be raised with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or another trustee.

If the concern involves the Designated Safeguarding Lead or another senior representative, it should be reported to the Chair of Trustees or, where appropriate, to the relevant safeguarding authority or another appropriate external body.

Anyone raising a concern in good faith will be treated fairly and respectfully. Autism Bucks will not tolerate retaliation, victimisation or unfair treatment because someone has raised a genuine concern.

Where appropriate, the person raising the concern will be informed that their concern has been received and, where possible, that appropriate action has been taken.

22 Managing Safeguarding Allegations

Autism Bucks takes concerns or allegations relating to the conduct of trustees, volunteers, employees or anyone acting on behalf of the charity seriously.

If a safeguarding concern or allegation relates to the conduct of someone representing Autism Bucks, appropriate steps will be taken to ensure the concern is managed fairly, promptly and proportionately. Where appropriate, advice will be sought from, or referrals made to, the relevant statutory authorities.

The safety and wellbeing of anyone affected will remain the primary consideration while ensuring that anyone who is the subject of an allegation is treated fairly and in accordance with appropriate procedures.

23 Policy Review and Monitoring

Autism Bucks is committed to continually improving its safeguarding practice.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if required because of changes in legislation, national guidance, local safeguarding procedures, organisational learning or significant safeguarding incidents.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for approving this policy and ensuring that appropriate safeguarding arrangements remain in place.

Safeguarding concerns, feedback and learning from experience will be used to help review and improve safeguarding practice wherever appropriate.

The Board of Trustees will also periodically review safeguarding themes, trends, learning and any recommendations arising from safeguarding concerns or near misses to help strengthen safeguarding arrangements, improve practice and reduce future risk.

24 Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside other relevant Autism Bucks policies and procedures, including:

- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Data Protection and Privacy Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Volunteering Policy.

And any other policies or procedures relating to safeguarding, inclusion or member wellbeing.

Where a complaint includes, or gives rise to, a safeguarding concern, the safeguarding concern will be managed in accordance with this policy. Safeguarding concerns will always take priority where there is a risk of harm.

25 Relevant Legislation and Guidance

This policy is informed by relevant legislation and national guidance, including:

Care Act 2014

- Establishes the legal framework for adult safeguarding, requiring local authorities to promote wellbeing and prevent abuse and neglect.
- Defines six key principles of safeguarding: empowerment, prevention, proportionality, protection, partnership and accountability.

Children Act 1989 and 2004

- Provides the legislative foundation for the care and protection of children in England.
- Introduces the concept of significant harm and the duty of local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

- Introduced the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with children and adults at risk.

Equality Act 2010

- Prohibits discrimination, harassment and victimisation, ensuring equal treatment and protection for all individuals, including disabled people.

Human Rights Act 1998

- Protects the fundamental rights and freedoms of all individuals, including the right to live free from inhuman or degrading treatment.

Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR

- Governs the processing of personal data, ensuring safeguarding information is handled lawfully, transparently and securely.

Working Together to Safeguard Children

- Provides statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Emphasises multi-agency collaboration and early intervention.

Keeping Children Safe in Education

- Offers statutory guidance for schools and colleges to safeguard children, relevant when educational activities are involved.

Prevent Duty (Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015)

- Requires specified authorities to have due regard to preventing individuals from being drawn into terrorism, including adults at risk.

Charities Act 2011

- Sets out the legal duties and responsibilities of charities and trustees, including ensuring appropriate governance, acting in the charity's best interests and protecting the people who engage with the charity.

Local Safeguarding Policies

- Autism Bucks adheres to Buckinghamshire's local safeguarding board guidance and engages with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for effective safeguarding coordination.
- These policies and laws form the foundation of our safeguarding approach, helping ensure we act in compliance with statutory requirements and uphold recognised standards of safeguarding practice.

26 Appendix A – Designated Safeguarding Lead Contact Details

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

- Paulette Hunn

Alternate DSL

- Paula Strawbridge
- Madeleine Havard
- Bethany Chitty

Chair of Trustees

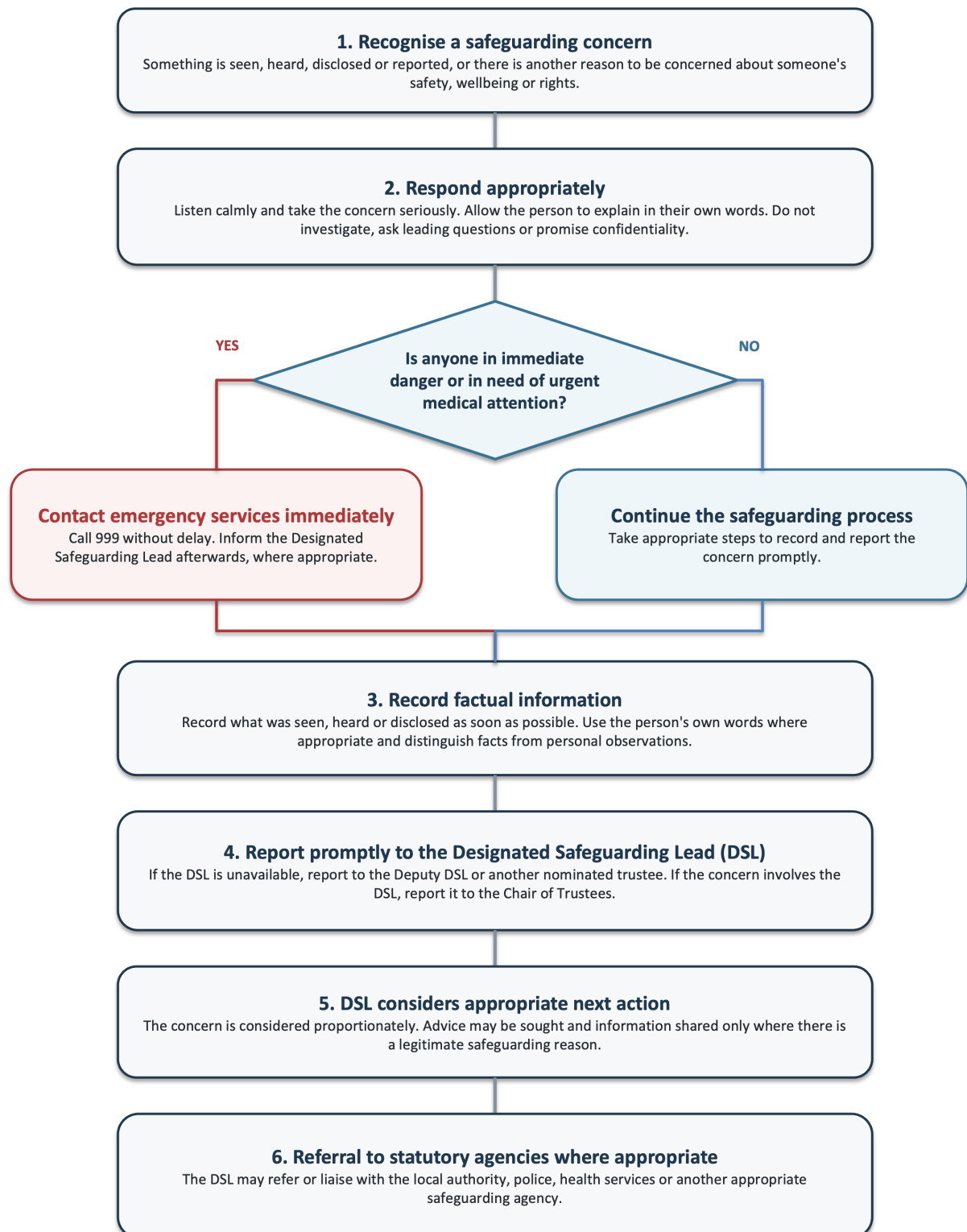
- Neil Cary

Autism Bucks uses a common email address and telephone number for all safeguarding contacts:

Email: safeguarding@autism-bucks.charity

Tel: 01296 200 035

27 Appendix B – Safeguarding Reporting Flowchart



**If you are unsure whether something should be reported, seek advice from the DSL.
It is usually better to raise a concern than leave it unreported.**

28 Appendix C – Useful Safeguarding Contacts

Police

- 999 in an emergency
- 101 for non-emergencies

Buckinghamshire Council Adult Social Care

- <https://careadvice.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/adult-social-care-services/contact-adult-social-care/>
- Phone: 01296 383 204
- Email: ascfirstresponse@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
- To contact them about an emergency out of hours, call 0300 131 6000 and select option 2 for concerns about an adult.

Buckinghamshire Council – Report Concerns about a Child

- <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/health-care-and-community/fostering-adoption-and-care-for-children/child-protection-and-safeguarding/>
- 01296 383 962 between 9am to 5:30pm Monday to Thursday, 9am to 5pm Friday.
- 0800 999 7677 before 9am, after 5:30pm (5pm on a Friday) or at weekends (Emergency Duty Team).

29 Appendix D - Rationale for the Updated Safeguarding Policy

Why the policy has been substantially revised

Autism Bucks undertook a review of its Safeguarding Policy and Procedures to ensure that it continues to reflect the organisation, current safeguarding expectations and contemporary good practice.

The previous policy provided an established safeguarding framework. It covered key responsibilities, definitions and types of abuse, risk assessment and safeguarding planning, communication and safe environments, monitoring and feedback, reporting and recording concerns, whistleblowing, complaints, confidentiality, next steps, available support and relevant legislation and guidance.

The review therefore was not about replacing a policy that lacked a safeguarding framework. Instead, it identified opportunities to substantially develop the existing framework, modernise its language and approach, and make it more appropriate to Autism Bucks as a member-led organisation with autistic and non-autistic people contributing to its community and governance.

What has been strengthened and updated

The updated policy:

- Develops the existing safeguarding framework, providing greater detail and clearer practical guidance around areas already covered in the previous policy, including risk, prevention, communication, reporting, recording, follow-up, support and organisational learning.
- Introduces a substantially more autism-informed approach to safeguarding. The previous policy included autistic people throughout its examples of abuse and risk, but the new policy goes further by considering communication preferences, disclosure, processing time, sensory and environmental factors, reasonable adjustments, distress and the importance of understanding what is usual for the individual.
- Modernises the language and framing. The previous policy uses terms such as “vulnerable adults” and “service users”, and many of its examples are framed around carers, support workers and care settings. The updated policy moves away from defining autistic people primarily through vulnerability or service provision and instead places greater emphasis on rights, autonomy, participation and individual circumstances.
- Strengthens the practical guidance for responding to concerns. The previous policy clearly required concerns to be reported, recorded and referred, but the new policy provides considerably more guidance about listening, avoiding leading questions, recording factual information, not attempting to investigate personally, communicating with the person and understanding what happens afterwards.
- Strengthens the emphasis on person-centred and rights-based safeguarding. The updated policy places greater emphasis on involving people in decisions, understanding their wishes and desired outcomes, proportionality, inclusion, human rights and supporting people to participate in safeguarding processes.
- Strengthens governance, learning and continuous improvement. The previous policy already included monitoring, feedback, governance and support; the updated version

develops these into a more explicit framework for reviewing safeguarding concerns, identifying themes and using learning to improve practice.

- Updates and expands the legislative and guidance framework, including the addition of the Charities Act 2011 and revised descriptions of relevant legislation and guidance.

Why a substantial rewrite was considered appropriate

The review identified that the required changes were not confined to individual omissions or isolated wording changes.

The previous policy already contained many of the necessary safeguarding components. However, the review identified that the language, framing, level of detail and underlying approach needed significant development in several interconnected areas.

For example, changes to the approach to communication and disclosure affect how concerns are discussed and recorded. Changes to the approach to autonomy and proportionality affect how safeguarding decisions are described. Changes to terminology affect how people are described throughout the document.

Attempting to incorporate these changes individually into the existing text risked creating repetition, inconsistency and two different approaches sitting alongside one another. A fresh draft therefore provided a clearer way to bring the existing framework up to date as one coherent policy.

This was not intended to suggest that the previous policy was fundamentally wrong. Rather, the extent and interconnected nature of the proposed changes meant that a substantial rewrite was considered more coherent than continuing to amend the existing text section by section.

Reflecting the wider development of Autism Bucks

The review also took place alongside wider work to develop how Autism Bucks communicates with its members and the wider community.

The intention is for member-facing policies and information to have a consistent identity: clear, respectful, inclusive, accessible and reflective of Autism Bucks' values.

The updated safeguarding policy therefore seeks to retain the necessary formal and legal functions of a safeguarding policy while ensuring that its language and approach are consistent with the organisation's wider commitment to inclusion, respect and collaborative, autistic-informed practice.

The intended benefit

The aim of the updated policy is not simply to produce a longer document. It is to provide Autism Bucks with a safeguarding framework that is clearer, more comprehensive, more accessible, more autism-informed, more person-centred and better aligned with the organisation's current values and future development.

The intention is that this provides a stronger and more sustainable foundation for Autism Bucks' safeguarding arrangements, while allowing the policy to be reviewed and refined as

legislation, guidance, organisational practice and the needs of the Autism Bucks community continue to develop.