



Child Protection Policy

Date	19th January 2017
Reviewed	19th July 2018
Date of next review	19th July 2019

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The policy is part of an integrated suite of policies all aimed at ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people using Autism Bedfordshire's services.

LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CONTACT NUMBERS

AUTISM BEDFORDSHIRE

Appointed Safeguarding Officer 01234 350704

EMERGENCY SOCIAL SERVICES NUMBERS

Duty Social Services Officer Desk (08:45 – 17:20)

LUTON BOROUGH Initial Assessment Team 01582 547653

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE Intake & Assessment Team 0300 300 8585

BEDFORD BOROUGH Multi Assessment support Hub 01234 718700

OUT OF HOURS EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM:

Luton Borough, Central Bedfordshire & Bedford Borough 0300 300 8123

LOCAL POLICE STATIONS

NORTH & MID BEDFORDSHIRE 01234 841212

LUTON & SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE 01582 401212

IF IN IMMEDIATE DANGER 999

OFSTED 0300 123 1231

Supporting Guidance and Legislation

The Education Act DfE 2002

The Children's Act DfE 2004

Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006

Working Together to Safeguard Children June 2015

Keeping Children Safe in Education DfE March 2015

Guidance for Safer Working Practices 2015

Prevent Strategy

Information sharing for safeguarding practitioners March 2015

What to do if you're worried a child is being abused DfE March 2015

The Protection of Children and Young People with Autism from Violence and Abuse NAS

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Purpose

To create awareness amongst staff and volunteers of children's safeguarding issues and to outline procedures when responding to an incident, allegation or concern of abuse involving children in our care.

This policy provides an overarching view of safeguarding children and is part of a suite of Safeguarding policies, as such must be read in conjunction with the E- Safety Policy, Recruitment Policy and Staff Supervision and Management Policy.

This local policy is available on the Autism Bedfordshire website.

Autism Bedfordshire will ensure that, wherever practicable, all children and young people and where appropriate parents and carers have access to the Autism Bedfordshire Child Safeguarding procedures in a format that they can understand.

At Autism Bedfordshire we believe that the only way to effectively safeguard the wellbeing of the children and young people that use our services is to put them at the centre of a system in which they feel safe and in which they can communicate and be understood. Autism Bedfordshire provides services for children and young people on the autism spectrum. We recognise that children and young people with disabilities are at a higher risk of experiencing abuse and are an extremely vulnerable group.

Autism is a spectrum condition and all of the children and young people who use our services are individuals, however, all of them have differences in the way that they understand communication and struggle to communicate their own emotions and needs. They have difficulties in understanding social relationships and may have a rigidity and inflexibility, which may extend into every aspect of their thinking, language and behaviour. They may also have significant differences in the way that they process the information they receive through their senses.

All of our staff should be alert to the indicators of abuse, but must bear in mind that some of these indicators can also be traits of autism, such as avoiding eye-contact and being withdrawn. This makes it more difficult to identify abuse and careful exploration is required. It is important to identify any changes in behaviour and to explore what may lie behind this.

Every individual within Autism Bedfordshire will play their part in safeguarding our vulnerable service users, including in working in partnership with parents, carers and colleagues from other agencies in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015.

We will provide activities that will develop communication skills, choice making, emotional well-being, life skills. We have an ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment, which gives the children and young people a sense of being valued.

Scope

This policy applies throughout Autism Bedfordshire's Children's Services and in addition to children and young people attending our Loads of Autistic Fun (LOAF) and Wanted Fun groups it also includes children involved in other services such as Community Support, Summer Activity Schemes and extended services.

Please note that this policy refers to the Autism Bedfordshire Appointed Safeguarding Officer and this is the named person responsible for leading on Safeguarding for Autism Bedfordshire (this role may be referred to as the named person, designated lead for child protection in statutory guidance). The Appointed Safeguarding Officer may delegate duties to a number of staff trained in safeguarding.

Aims

- To provide a safe environment for children and young people with autistic spectrum conditions
- To promote welfare and safety of children and young people and ensure robust systems are in place to protect children and young people from harm
- To create a culture which recognises and understands the importance of safeguarding
- To prevent unsuitable people from working with children and young people
- To ensure appropriate systems are in place to keep children and young people safe and encourage poor practice to be challenged
- To identify instances in which there are grounds for concern about a child's welfare, and initiate or take appropriate action to keep them safe
- To report young people at risk of exploitation, grooming or radicalisation
- To provide guidance on reporting suspected abuse and ensure an appropriate systematic process for responding to an incident, allegation or concern of abuse
- To ensure that allegations of abuse are dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently
- To support victims of abuse in line with their child protection plan

Roles & Responsibilities

The Autism Bedfordshire Trustees' responsibilities

- Ratify and regularly review this policy to ensure it conforms to relevant law and guidance

- The Autism Bedfordshire board of trustees has overall responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient and appropriate measures in place to safeguard the children and young people using Autism Bedfordshire's Services.
- The chair of the board of trustees will ensure that enhanced DBS checks are undertaken for other members of the board and where such a check has been undertaken, an enhanced DBS certificate is obtained.
- Nominate a member of Autism Bedfordshire staff responsible for child protection who will liaise with the designated officers from the relevant local authorities and partner agencies in the event of allegations of abuse being made against a member Autism Bedfordshire Staff
- refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child or vulnerable adult
 - where the harm test is satisfied in respect of that individual
 - where the individual has received a caution or conviction for a relevant offence, or
 - there is reason to believe that individual has committed a listed relevant offence;
 - and that individual has been removed from working (paid or unpaid) in regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left;
- where a member of staff is dismissed or the services of a member of staff are no longer used because of serious misconduct, or might have dismissed them or ceased to use their services had they not left first, consider whether to refer the case to the Secretary of State, as required by sections 141D and 141E of the Education Act 2002;
- ensure that staff have skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep looked after children safe. Ensure appropriate staff have information they need in relation to a child's looked after legal status and contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibilities;
- ensure there is a designated member of staff to promote the educational achievement of children who are looked after and ensure that this individual has appropriate training. The designated member of staff should ensure that the Appointed Safeguarding Officer has details of the child's social worker and the name of the virtual Autism Bedfordshire head in the authority that looks after the child;
- have regard to how children may be taught about safeguarding, including online;
- Ensure any deficiencies in child protection arrangements are remedied without delay; and
- Ensure that this policy and associated procedures are reviewed annually.

Designated Person for Child Protection Responsibilities

- Attend appropriate safeguarding training every two years and refresh their knowledge and skills at least once a year.
- Ensure the local safeguarding procedures take account of guidance issued by the host Local Authority

- Ensure that the Autism Bedfordshire's designated safeguarding lead is given sufficient time to carry out their duties, including accessing training.
- Complete an annual safeguarding audit with the responsible individual
- Ensure all relevant staff are aware of this policy, receive appropriate training are aware of Autism Bedfordshire's systems to support safeguarding and follow this policy and procedures
- Ensure safe recruitment practices are always followed
- Ensure effective reporting to board of trustees.
- To ensure appropriate duty of care to employees and minimise the stress inherent in the investigation process.
- Liaise with other services and assist staff with their safeguarding duties.

Staff Responsibilities

- All staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy
- All staff are responsible for reporting any concerns about a child's well-being or safety to the Appointed Safeguarding Officer
- Members of staff are not responsible for investigating concerns or suspicions.

Autism Bedfordshire

Autism Bedfordshire acknowledges its responsibilities for safeguarding and child protection. We recognise our responsibility to protect children from maltreatment, prevent impairment of children's health or development, ensure that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and take action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Autistic children share the right of all children to protection from abuse. We know that autistic children are potentially more vulnerable, because they may find it difficult to communicate with others, struggle with social interaction or have difficulties understanding people's motives, they may be less able to report abuse and thus be more vulnerable to it. This necessitates greater vigilance among professionals in recognising, reporting and investigating potential signs of abuse as well as ensuring that safeguarding issues remain on the agenda when working with autistic children and young people.

Our policy applies to all Autism Bedfordshire staff, volunteers and trustees. It is acknowledged that the role of the trustees will be a monitoring and supporting one whereas staff will be actively involved in the management of safeguarding and child protection issues on a daily basis.

This Child Protection Policy forms part of a suite of documents and policies which relate to the safeguarding responsibilities of Autism Bedfordshire staff:

- Staff Supervision and Management Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy

- Data Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Recruitment Policy

The main elements to our policy are:

- Practising safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children
- Raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping children with the skills needed to keep them safe
- Developing and then implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse
- Supporting students who have been abused in accordance with their agreed child protection plan
- Establishing a safe environment in which children can learn and develop
- Ensuring compliance with Prevent Duty (“Prevent”) obligations.

Autism Bedfordshire recognises that because of their day to day contact with children, staff and volunteers are well placed to observe the outward signs of abuse, changes in behaviour and failure to develop. Autism Bedfordshire will therefore:

- Strive to establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to.
- To establish and maintain an environment where staff and volunteers feel safe, are encouraged to talk and are listened to when they have concerns regarding the safety and wellbeing of a child.
- Let children know that there are staff within the organisation that they can approach if they are worried.
- Provide child protection training for all staff and volunteers.

We will follow the procedures set out by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

Autism Bedfordshire will ensure that, wherever practicable, all children and young people and where appropriate parents and carers, have access to this policy in a format they can understand.

Safeguarding Legislation and guidance

The relevant statutory guidance ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’ can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/729914/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children-2018.pdf

What is Child Abuse?

Identifying safeguarding issues for autistic children and knowing what should be investigated can be complex as many traits of autism can be confused with signs of abuse and neglect. Autistic children may be especially vulnerable to abuse, including because they may have an impaired capacity to resist or avoid abuse. They may have speech, language and communication needs which may make it difficult to tell others what is happening. Children also develop and mature at different rates so what appears to be worrying for a younger child might be normal behaviour for an older child.

Parental behaviours may also indicate child abuse or neglect, so staff and volunteers should also be alert to parent-child interactions which are concerning and other parental behaviours. This could include parents who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol or if there is a sudden change in their mental health.

By understanding the warning signs, we can respond to problems as early as possible and ensure that the right support and services are provided for the child and their family. All staff should be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect. These descriptions are taken from the DfE guidance 'Keeping children safe in education'.

Abuse

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

Physical Abuse

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

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child 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 child 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 child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to 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 child, although it may occur alone. DfE advice on cyberbullying can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/374850/Cyberbullying_Advice_for_Headteachers_and_school_Staff_121114.pdf

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) 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 children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child 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.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child'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 child 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 child's basic emotional needs.

Indicators of abuse

There are a number of warning indicators which might suggest that a child may be being abused or neglected. It is recognised that warning signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect can vary from child to child and a warning sign does not automatically mean a child is being abused. Set out below are some examples of signs which may be indicators of abuse taken from Government non-statutory guidance 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (these examples are not exhaustive)

Physical Abuse:

- children with frequent injuries;
- children with unexplained or unusual fractures or broken bones; and/or
- children with unexplained bruises or butts, burns or scalds or bite marks.

Emotional Abuse:

- children who are excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong;
- parents or carers who humiliate their child, for example, by name-calling or making negative comparisons; and/or
- parents or carers blaming their problems on their child.

Sexual Abuse:

- children who display knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age;
- children who use sexual language or have sexual knowledge that you would not expect them to have; and/or
- children with physical sexual health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas, sexually transmitted infections or underage pregnancy.

Sexual Exploitation:

- children who have older boyfriends or girlfriends;
- children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions; and/or
- children who regularly miss Autism Bedfordshire or education or don't take part in education.

Neglect:

- children who do not have adequate clothing e.g. not having a winter coat;
- children who are hungry or dirty; and/or
- children who are often angry, aggressive or self-harm.

Members of staff are expected to be aware of signs of abuse and neglect so that they are able to identify cases of children who may need help or protection. All staff have a responsibility to report any concerns they may have to the relevant Appointed Safeguarding Officer or where appropriate child protection services (as set out in this policy); however they are not required or expected to investigate or decide whether a child has been abused.

Concerns under Prevent

We recognise that Autism Bedfordshire's groups and activities are intended to be safe places in which children, young people and staff can understand the risks associated with terrorism and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge extremist arguments. Autism Bedfordshire acknowledges its duty to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism".

In compliance with this duty Autism Bedfordshire where applicable will:

- carry out risk assessments in order to assess the risk of children being drawn into terrorism, including support for extremist ideas that are part of terrorist ideology (including the risk of online radicalisation);
- promote fundamental British values;
- ensure all staff undertake the online general awareness training module on Channel: http://course.ncalt.com/Channel_General_Awareness/01/index.html and are aware of when it is appropriate to make a referral to the Channel programme (Channel is a programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism); and

- ensure that there are suitable filters in place for all IT equipment and that children and young people are equipped with the knowledge to stay safe online. Every member of staff will be aware of the risks posed by the online activity of extremist and terrorist groups.

Safeguarding in specific circumstances: Female Genital Mutilation ("FGM")

If staff have concerns that FGM has taken place, as well as reporting this to the police, they should also activate local safeguarding procedures using existing and national and local protocols. Unless the member of staff has a good reason not to, they should still consider and discuss any case of FGM with the Appointed Safeguarding Officer and involve children's social care as appropriate.

Safeguarding in specific circumstances: Forced Marriage

A 'forced' marriage (as distinct from a consensual 'arranged' marriage) is defined as one conducted without the valid consent of at least one of the parties and where duress is a factor. Duress cannot be justified on religious or cultural grounds. Forced marriages of children may involve non-consensual and/or underage sex, emotional and possibly physical abuse and should be regarded as a child protection issue and referred to Children's Social Care. Forced marriage is primarily, but not exclusively, an issue of abuse against girls and young women, however there is evidence to suggest that 15% of victims are male.

Safeguarding Children in Specific Circumstances: Peer on Peer abuse

Autism Bedfordshire recognises that children can abuse other children and such behaviours are never viewed simply as 'banter' or as part of growing up. We recognise that peer on peer abuse can take many different forms such as:

Cyber-bullying

Sending or posting sexually suggestive images including nude or semi-nude photographs via mobiles or over the internet by persons aged under 18 (referred to as Youth Produced Sexual Imagery)

Sexual assault

Sexually harmful or problematic behaviour

Gang initiation or hazing type violence

Safeguarding Children in Specific Circumstances: Sexualised behaviours

Where children display sexualised behaviours, the behaviours will be considered in accordance with the children's developmental understanding, age and impact on the alleged victim. Tools such as Brook Traffic Light Tool will be used to assist in determining whether the behaviour is developmental or a cause for concern. This will assist in ensuring the child/ren receive the right support at the right time either via an Early Help response or referral to Children's Social Care

In all cases of peer on peer abuse Autism Bedfordshire will consider the vulnerability of all children including those alleged to have caused the harm and those alleged to be victims and provide a safeguarding response consistent with the LSCB Thresholds Framework.

Where necessary, Autism Bedfordshire behaviour policies will be invoked and any sanctions applied will be consistent with these procedures.

Where issues indicate that a criminal offence may have been committed a report will be made to Bedfordshire police.

Safeguarding Children in Specific Circumstances: Gang related violence

Autism Bedfordshire recognises the risks posed to children in relation to involvement in gang related activity which may be street gang, peer group or organised crime. Young people who are involved in gangs are more likely to suffer harm themselves, through retaliatory violence, displaced retaliation, territorial violence with other gangs or other harm suffered whilst committing a crime. In addition children may experience violence as part of an initiation or hazing practices.

Autism Bedfordshire understands that Early Help can be crucial in the early identification of children who may need additional support due to gang related activity and as such will provide an early help response when concerns are raised about indicators of gang activity. If, however information suggests a child may be at risk of significant harm due to gang related activity, a referral will be made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub within Children's Social Care.

Where there are concerns that a child or young person may be, or is at risk of becoming involved in gang related activity, a referral will be made to the MAG panel in accordance with Local procedures as part of the safeguarding response. See Appendix 13 for more information.

Safeguarding Children in Specific Circumstances: Youth Generated Sexualised imagery

Autism Bedfordshire recognises the impact of online social communication and the issue of sending or posting sexually suggestive images including nude or semi-nude photographs via mobiles or over the internet. We pay due regard to the Guidance issued by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety in relation to how we respond to incidents.

In all cases where an incident of youth produced sexual imagery is reported the following actions will be undertaken:

- The incident should be reported to the Designated Person for Child Protection as soon as possible.
- Designated Person for Child Protection should hold an initial review discussion or meeting with appropriate staff.
- There should be subsequent interviews with the young people involved (if appropriate).
- Parents should be informed at an early stage and involved in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents would put the young person at risk of harm.

At any point in the process if there is a concern a young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm a referral should be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately.

An immediate referral will be made to the Police and Social care in the following circumstances:

- The incident involves an adult
- There is reason to believe that a young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed, or if there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example, owing to special educational needs)
- the imagery suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent
- The imagery involves sexual acts and any pupil in the imagery is under 13
- There is reason to believe a young person is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of the imagery, for example, the young person is presenting as suicidal or self-harming

If none of the above applies Autism Bedfordshire may choose to deal with the incident without involving the police or social care. This will usually be the case where the Designated Person for Child Protection is confident that they have enough information to assess the risks to the children involved and the risks can be managed within Autism Bedfordshire's support and disciplinary framework. All decisions and rationale for decision making will be recorded. All decisions will be based on the best interests of the child/ren .

Autism Bedfordshire will pay due regard to the Department for Education guidance: Searching, Screening and Confiscation advice.

Adult staff and volunteers will not view youth produced sexual imagery unless there is a good and clear reason to do so. Wherever possible the Designated Person for Child Protection will respond to an incident based on what they have been told about the imagery.

All incidents will be recorded. More information is available in Appendix 12.

Safeguarding Children in specific circumstances: Child Sexual Exploitation

The sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities.

Child sexual exploitation can occur through use of technology without the child's immediate recognition, for example the persuasion to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones with no immediate payment or gain. In all cases those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability

Autism Bedfordshire recognises that both boys and girls can be vulnerable to Child Sexual Exploitation and as such ensure staff are alert to signs and indicators

Autism Bedfordshire recognises that there are various 'models' of CSE which include but not limited to: Gangs and groups Boyfriend/Girlfriend model Peer on Peer Familial Online Abuse of authority.

Where concerns are identified in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation the LSCB thresholds framework will be consulted in order to ensure the child receives support at the earliest possible opportunity.

An Early Help multi agency response may be initiated by completing an Early Help Assessment form and engaging with the Early Help Hub or Stronger family's team. Where parental consent cannot be obtained, advice will be sought from the Early Help Hub

If a child is thought to be at risk of significant harm through child sexual exploitation a referral will be made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub within children's social care.

In all cases intelligence will be shared with Bedfordshire Police using the intelligence form which will also be copied to the Single Point Of Contact for CSE within the relevant local authority.

Working with Parents and Carers

Autism Bedfordshire is committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to promote the well-being and safety of children and young people using our services. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 states "Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later on".

A copy of our Safeguarding Policy will be provided to parents at induction and will also be published on our website. Parents and carers will be informed of our legal duty to promote the welfare of children and young people using our services and to report concerns to statutory agencies should it be necessary. However Autism Bedfordshire will normally seek to sensitively discuss any concerns about a child with their parents/carers.

We respect the right of parents and carers to privacy and confidentiality and will not share sensitive information unless we have permission or it is necessary to do so in order to safeguard a child from harm.

Children with Additional Needs - including English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Autism Bedfordshire's recruitment is targeted to match the primary languages and/or have a communication history with the child and we use symbols to communicate.

We recognise that disabled children are at an increased risk of being abused compared with their non-disabled peers. They are also less likely to receive the protection and support they need when they have been abused.

Factors that increase risk and lessen protection for disabled children include:

- attitudes and assumptions – e.g. a reluctance to believe disabled children are abused; minimising the impact of abuse; and attributing indicators of abuse to the child's impairment
- barriers to the disabled child and their family accessing support services
- issues related to a child's specific impairment – e.g. dependency on a number of carers for personal or intimate care; impaired capacity to resist/avoid abuse, difficulties in communicating; and an inability to understand what is happening or to seek help.
- limited opportunities for disabled children to seek help from someone else
- a lack of professional skills, expertise and confidence in identifying child protection concerns and the lack of an effective child protection response.

Research shows that:

- disabled children are at a greater risk of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect than non-disabled children
- disabled children at greatest risk of abuse are those with behaviour/conduct disorders. Other high-risk groups include children with learning difficulties/disabilities, children with speech and language difficulties, children with health-related conditions and deaf children.
- disabled children in residential care face particular risks
- bullying is a feature in the lives of many disabled children.

Wherever possible we aim to include activities that promote:

- personal safety skills activities, including sex and relationships education, that raise disabled children's awareness of abuse and ability to seek help
- peer support, which can have a beneficial effect on reducing bullying and enabling children to explore issues and make decisions.
- creative therapies, which can provide children with opportunities to express themselves through indirect and non-verbal means.

We understand and are committed to the need to share existing knowledge and good practice and work towards ensuring equal protection for disabled children. We aim to do this by:

- raising awareness about the abuse of disabled children and challenging attitudes and assumptions that act as barriers to protection
- raising disabled children's awareness of abuse and ability to seek help including access to personal safety skills training
- building on good practice and measures already in place that help ensure the effective delivery of child protection for disabled children.

Broader Aspects of Care

Safeguarding is not just about protecting children, learners and vulnerable adults from deliberate harm, neglect and failure to act. It relates to broader aspects of care and education, including:

- children's health and safety and well-being, including their mental health

- meeting the needs of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the use of reasonable force
- meeting the needs of children and learners with medical conditions
- providing first aid
- intimate care and emotional well-being
- online safety and associated issues
- appropriate arrangements to ensure children's safety and security.

Recruitment, Induction and Training of Staff

Recruitment

Autism Bedfordshire has written recruitment and selection policies and procedures in place and these will be followed at all times.

For all candidates:

- written information about previous employment history must be provided;
- checks need to be carried out to ensure that the information is not contradictory or incomplete; and
- before interview all shortlisted candidates' references will be sought (including internal ones).

Any information about past disciplinary action or allegations must be considered carefully when assessing an applicant's suitability for the post.

Any offer of employment is conditional (and it shall be made clear to the successful candidate that this is the case) on satisfactory completion of the necessary pre-employment checks. These checks include:

- verification of candidates' identity;
- obtaining a certificate for an enhanced DBS check which will include barred list information, for those who will be engaging in regulated activity;
- verification of the person's right to work in the UK;
- where the individual has worked outside the UK any other checks Autism Bedfordshire considers appropriate have been carried out; and
- where Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009 applies the candidate will be required to provide Autism Bedfordshire with information requested to enable Autism Bedfordshire to comply with its obligations under the Regulations. Staff must advise the Appointed Safeguarding Officer of any changes to the information provided. The candidate will be made aware of the provisions of the Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009, including the fact that they may be disqualified 'by association' under regulation where they live in the same household as a disqualified person or in a household in which a disqualified person is employed.

Induction

Staff induction will include an explanation of the systems within Autism Bedfordshire which support safeguarding and the child protection policy and the staff Code of Conduct

On induction all staff will receive a copy of the following documents which the individual must read and become familiar with:

- a copy of this Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- the Staff Code of Conduct;
- where providing education, childcare or supervised activity during Autism Bedfordshire hours to children under reception age, or outside of Autism Bedfordshire hours for children above reception age and under eight staff will read the DfE statutory guidance Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 and any Ofsted guidance referenced in the statutory guidance.

Staff will be notified as to the names of the Appointed Safeguarding Officer responsible for child protection and their role. The induction will make clear that all staff should refer to the Appointed Safeguarding Officer if they have any concerns or that in emergencies or where a member of staff have a genuine concern that appropriate action has not been taken, staff members can speak directly to children's social care.

Where the individual holding the post of Appointed Safeguarding Officer changes, this change will be notified to all staff and trustees as soon as practicable.

Autism Bedfordshire will keep a single central record – covering all staff (including volunteers) and record whether the following checks have been carried out or certificates obtained, and the date on which each check was completed /certificate obtained:

- an identity check;
- a barred list check;
- an enhanced DBS check/certificate;
- a prohibition from teaching check;
- a prohibition from management check;
- further checks on people living or working outside the UK;
- a check of professional qualifications;
- a check to establish the person's right to work in the UK;
- where checks are carried out on volunteers, this should also be recorded on the single central record.

Training

Upon induction and regularly thereafter, Autism Bedfordshire will make sure that all staff receive adequate training in child protection and are aware of systems which support safeguarding.

All new members of staff will receive training in safeguarding vulnerable children including potential signs of abuse and how to report it as part of their initial induction. Staff will also have refresher training every year focusing on:

- working alone with a child safely
- preventing abuse
- recognising abuse
- reporting suspicions of abuse

Staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in Autism Bedfordshire's safeguarding regime. Appropriate whistleblowing procedures, which are suitably reflected in staff training and staff behaviour policies, are in place for such concerns to be raised with the Autism Bedfordshire's management team.

Volunteers and Contractors

Autism Bedfordshire will ensure all volunteers receive a copy of this policy and are aware who the Appointed Safeguarding Officer is and their role, and know to refer to them if they have any safeguarding concerns.

The appropriate level of DBS check will be undertaken for all volunteers and contractors. Where a volunteer or contractor will be engaging in regulated activity a certificate for an enhanced DBS check including barred list information must be obtained. If a volunteer will not be engaging in regulated activity, but will have the opportunity to come into contact with children on a regular basis a DBS certificate will be obtained.

All contractors and their staff's identity will be checked upon arrival at Autism Bedfordshire.

Visitors

All visitors to Autism Bedfordshire activities will sign in and wear a visitor's badge. They will be appropriately accompanied around the venue.

Online Child Protection Guidance

Many groups and projects involve internet access and IT equipment. Where internet access is made available to children and young people then the Online Child Protection Guidance must be observed by all staff.

The areas of risk are:-

- Child sex offenders – the Internet is an ideal medium for sex offenders. It provides them a forum to access children without letting their identity be known, access to child porn and contact to share information regarding children with other offenders. Children can be 'groomed' through chat rooms – sex offenders often talk to children pretending they are other children so they can organise to meet children at a later date. Children must be informed of the dangers of chat rooms.

- Unsuitable material for children – children can be exposed to pictures or written material which is pornographic, upsetting or offensive. Sometimes inoffensive materials is circulated which seems perfectly innocent such as pictures of children taking part in sports activities – children may wish to send pictures of themselves. Sex offenders do download this information and can locate a child through the club or project who has put the pictures on their website.

Use of computers should be supervised at all times. Having a computer hidden in the corner is inadvisable and should be avoided. A firewall must be installed and filters set up so that children and young people cannot access inappropriate sites. The cost of a firewall should be included in the application for funding.

Help Young People Surf in Safety

- Place the computer a place where others can see it rather than out of sight.
- Search out positive and fun sites.
- Talk with young people to agree the kind of sites they can visit. Check to make sure they stay within agreed limits.
- Filtering software is available to screen out some inappropriate sites but often sites and users can get around them so stay involved.
- Tell young people not to give out personal details, including their name, address, telephone number, Autism Bedfordshire or clubs they may attend to anyone over the net. If they arrange meetings make sure a parent or carer goes with them. Make sure they do not receive any gifts (electronic or otherwise) from strangers.
- Chat sites are open to misuse, make sure young people are cautious of strangers on-line as they are in the world outside. If they receive threats, obscene or threatening messages they should not respond. They should let you know and you can contact the service provider if appropriate.

Kids' Rules for Online Safety

The following rules should be given to children and young people before they use the internet:-

- 1) I will not give out personal information such as my address, telephone number, parents' work address/telephone number, or the name and location of my Autism Bedfordshire without my parent/ carer's permission.
- 2) I will tell my parent/ carer right away if I come across any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.
- 3) I will never agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parent/ carer. If my parents agree to the meeting, I will be sure that it is in a public place and bring my parent/ carer along.
- 4) I will never send a person my picture or anything else without first checking with my parent/ carer.

- 5) I will not respond to any messages that are mean or in any way make me feel uncomfortable. It is not my fault if I get a message like that. If I do I will tell my parent/ carer right away so that they can contact the service provider.
- 6) I will talk with my parent/ carer so that we can set up rules for going online. We will decide upon the time of day that I can be online, the length of time I can be online and appropriate areas for me to visit. I will not access other areas or break these rules without their permission.
- 7) I will not give out my internet password to anyone (even my best friends) other than my parent/ carer.
- 8) I will be a good online citizen and not do anything that hurts other people or is against the law.

Rules one through six are adapted from the brochure

'Child Safety on the Information Highway' by SafeKids.com

SafeKids.Com where you'll find tips, advice and suggestions to make your family's online experience fun and productive! <http://www.safekids.com>

What should I do if you come across child pornography on the online?

If you come across any disturbing or obscene material on the net involving children you can report this to the Internet Watch Foundation. This is the watchdog organisation for the UK internet industry to get child pornography removed from the internet. Internet Watch Foundation Hotline: 08456 008844 or alternatively contact the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline 0808 800 5000.

Managing Disclosures

All members of staff, volunteers and governors will know how to respond to a child or young person who discloses abuse, or where others raise concerns about them and will be familiar with procedures to be followed.

It is important to remember that the children and young people attending Autism Bedfordshire activities are on the autism spectrum. Many of them are pre-verbal or non-verbal and even those who are able to use spoken language may not have the words they need to disclose abuse. Disclosure may therefore not be verbal but may be demonstrated through behaviour. Staff should therefore always be alert to even small changes in behaviour, which should always be taken seriously, recorded and passed on to the Designated Person for Child Protection.

If you are responding to a child making an allegation of abuse:

- Stay calm
- Listen carefully to what is being said

- Give reassuring nods and words of comfort.
- Do not be afraid of silences; remember how difficult this will be for the child
- Allow the child to continue
- Ask questions for clarification only and at all times avoid asking questions that may suggest a particular answer
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared
- Record in writing what was said using the child's own words, as soon as possible – note the date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure that the form is signed and dated. Use a child at risk of harm form as detailed below
- The Designated Person for Child Protection will be immediately informed, unless the disclosure has been made to her.
- In an emergency take the action necessary to help the child, for example dial 999
- Remember information should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis – do not discuss the issues with colleagues, friends or family

It is important that everyone at Autism Bedfordshire is aware that the person who first encounters alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not the abuse has occurred. This is a task for the professional child protection agencies following referral to them. Anyone can make a referral.

Recording and Reporting Concerns

When concerned about the welfare or safety of a child, staff should always act in the best interests of the child and have a responsibility to take action as outlined in this policy.

Any concerns staff have should be raised, as concerns may accumulate over a period of time and may only be evidenced by building up a picture of harm over time. This is particularly the case in regard to emotional abuse or neglect. Concerns such as these should be recorded and reported on a Logging Concerns About A Child's Safety And Welfare form (Appendix 2).

Staff should ensure that forms are filled in fully with sufficient detail. Care should be taken to record factually and indicate where professional judgements have been made. Forms should be completed in a timely manner in order that appropriate action can be taken, if necessary by staff/Appointed Safeguarding Officer. It is important that the member of staff reporting the Welfare Concern records any action they have taken, for example phoning the parent for more information, asking a question in the home-scheme book etc.

Forms should be signed and dated and then emailed and placed in the filing tray on the Designated Person for Child Protection's desk (marked 'private and confidential'). The Designated Person for Child Protection will read forms each day, decide any appropriate action. Forms will be filed in the individual child's file.

Staff will take responsibility for alerting the Designated Person for Child Protection should the number of concerns rise or increase in risk, in their professional judgement. This can be done by completing a Child at Risk of Harm form (see below).

Children with autism often lack awareness of danger and may therefore be vulnerable to injury.

Also children may express anxiety and other emotions through behaviours which may include self-injury. Regardless of this all signs of physical injury must be recorded and reported, even if the cause seems explainable.

At no time should a member of staff be asked to or consider taking photographic evidence of any injuries or marks to a child's person, this type of behaviour could lead to the staff member being taken into managing allegations procedures. Instead the appropriate body map should be completed in accordance with recording and reporting guidance as above.

Any concerns should be reported without delay. If the child's case is already open with social care or if they are a Looked After Child, information should also be sent to their named social worker.

Any concerns that a child is at risk of harm should be passed to the Designated Person for Child Protection without delay using the Logging Concerns About A Child's Safety And Welfare form (Appendix 2).

All records should be detailed, factual and evidence based. They should also include an accurate recording of any actions taken. Where information is provided in the child's own words this should be made clear. They should include the appropriate personal information of the child and be signed and dated. Any reporting forms should be followed up with supplementary evidence as appropriate – emails, home/scheme book entries etc. Where a child is at risk of harm it is crucial that completed forms are handed to the Designated Person for Child Protection without delay. It is important to remember that the child may need a Child Protection Medical or a visit by a social worker/police.

Where Child at Risk of Harm concerns are raised by staff, completed forms will be kept in a separate Concerns File, which will be stored securely and confidentially away from the main child file. The child's black file will have a red dot on the spine to indicate that a separate file exists. The contents of this file will only be shared with those that need to know.

It is the responsibility of the member of the safeguarding team leading on each case to ensure a front sheet containing information relating to the child is placed at the front of the file. It is essential that they also keep an on-going Safeguarding concerns chronology of actions, conversations, emails, telephone calls etc, logging dates and times so that another member of

the safeguarding team can take over the case in their absence. Emails/copies of referral forms and other documentation should be added to the case notes in the file.

Contact with social care teams and LADO should be made in a timely manner and recorded in the chronology. Telephone referrals should be followed up in writing within 24 hours of the initial contact.

It is not the responsibility of staff to investigate welfare or child protection concerns.

If at any point there is a serious risk of serious harm to a child an immediate referral should be made to the social care duty team in the local authority in which the child lives. Alternatively dial 999 and report the matter to the police. Anyone can make a referral.

Child Protection information will only be shared on a 'need to know' basis.

Information will be shared in the interests of the child and on the understanding that it remains in the strictest confidence.

Confidentiality, Records and Information Sharing

We recognise that all matters relating to child protection are sensitive; however, a member of staff must never guarantee confidentiality to a child.

Regardless of a duty of confidentiality, where there is a child protection concern it will be passed immediately to the Designated Person for Child Protection and/or to Children's Social Care.

The manager or Designated Person for Child Protection will disclose personal information about a child to other members of staff, including the level of involvement of other agencies, only on a 'need to know' basis.

All staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children.

Files will be available for external scrutiny for example by a regulatory agency or because of a serious case review or audit. They will also be audited by our Quality Assurance Manager.

Safer Working Practices

Everyone who comes into contact with the children and young people using Autism Bedfordshire's services has a duty of care to safeguard and promote their welfare. Autism Bedfordshire takes very seriously the legal duty upon us to ensure that all adults who work with the children are competent, confident and safe to do so.

All staff, volunteers and visitors will undertake an enhanced DBS check and will be asked to sign up to the electronic update service at their next renewal. Where there are criminal convictions, a thorough risk assessment will be undertaken using an Autism Bedfordshire 'Authorisation to

Confirm/Withdraw Provisional Offer of Employment in the Event of positive Disclosure' form with the support of HR.

Staff are provided with guidance on safer working practices and professional codes of conduct through the employee handbook and staff training. All staff and volunteers are expected to carry out their duties in accordance with this guidance and failure to do so could lead to disciplinary action.

If staff are working alone with a child, they should wherever possible be visible to another member of staff. They will be expected to inform other staff of their whereabouts in Autism Bedfordshire, who they are with and for how long.

The following steps have been adopted by Autism Bedfordshire to ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities. Any member of staff who does not adhere to these will be subject to disciplinary procedures:

- All staff will sign to say they have read and agree to the contents of this policy
- All staff will sign to say that they agree to work with the framework laid out in our critical policies and procedures.
- All staff will sign to say that they have read and agree to the contents of the Autism Bedfordshire Whistle Blowing Policy. This supports our ethos that children can talk freely to staff about concerns knowing that they will listen and take appropriate action
- Personal mobile phones will not be used during activities.

Autism Bedfordshire have a range of mechanisms in place to enable the children to feel comfortable in expressing concerns to adults. These include:

- Small groups
- Regular emotional well-being support
- Access to systems to support communication (PECs, Ipads, signing etc)
- Regular class meetings
- An emphasis on Person Centred Planning

If you have Concerns about a Colleague

Staff who are concerned about the conduct of a colleague are undoubtedly placed in a very difficult situation. They may worry they have misunderstood the situation and will wonder whether a report could jeopardise the colleague's career. **All staff must remember that the welfare of the child is paramount.** The Autism Bedfordshire Whistleblowing Policy enables staff to raise concerns or allegations in confidence and for a sensitive enquiry to take place. All concerns about poor practice or concerns about a child's welfare due to the behaviour of a colleague should be reported to the Designated Person for Child Protection. Complaints about the Designated Person for Child Protection should be reported to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Managing Allegations

Our procedure for managing allegations is taken from Keeping Children Safe in Education 2015: Part 4. All allegations against staff should be reported to the Designated Person for Child Protection. If it relates to Designated Person for Child Protection, the Chair of the Board of Trustees should be informed without delay.

All complaints or allegations made by a child should be taken seriously and the appropriate procedures followed. It is essential that any allegation of abuse made against a member of staff at Autism Bedfordshire is dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently in a way that provides effective protection for the child and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.

Reporting Concerns

Listening to children

When a child approaches a member of staff or other adult about a child protection issue that adult must follow these rules:

- Do not promise complete confidentiality. Explain you might have to tell other people to help keep the child or other children safe.
- Listen positively and reassure the child that speaking to you is the right thing to do.
- Do not jump to conclusions, put words in the child's mouth, or ask questions that point towards a particular answer.
- Write a record of the conversation as soon as possible, including rough diagrams of any visible injury, and noting any action taken – these dated and timed notes must be handed to the relevant DSL and preserved.
- Do not try to investigate or take any action beyond the agreed procedures.
- Always act in the best interests of the child.

Taking Action

If staff members have concerns about a child they should raise these with the Designated Person for Child Protection as a matter of urgency and provide him/her with a referral form. The Designated Person for Child Protection will decide whether to make a referral to children's social care – however it is important that all staff are aware that any staff member may refer to children's social care directly. Where it is considered that a child would benefit from coordinated support from more than one agency there should be an inter-agency assessment for early help.

If there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child a referral should be made immediately to children's social care.

If staff members have concerns about another staff member or volunteer having:

- Behaved in a way that has, or may have, harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against/related to a child.
- Behaved toward a child in a way which indicated he/she is unsuitable to work with children.

this should be reported immediately to a manager.

Where there are concerns about the Designated Person for Child Protection this should be referred to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Recording

Where a report of a child protection related matter is received, a written record of what happened and what action was taken must be made. All records on child protection are to be kept separate from routine records, with restricted access. On the child's file a note will be placed to indicate the existence of a separate child protection file for that child.

Any minutes from a child protection conference should be kept in the separate child protection file.

Ongoing Support

We recognise that children who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. Their behaviour may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. Autism Bedfordshire will endeavour to support the child or young person through:

- Promoting a positive, supportive and secure environment and gives children and young people a sense of being valued.
- The Autism Bedfordshire Behaviour Management policy, which is aimed at supporting vulnerable service users. Autism Bedfordshire will ensure that the child or young person knows that some behaviour is unacceptable but they are valued and not to be blamed for any abuse which has occurred.
- Liaison with other agencies that support the child or young person such as social services, child and adult mental health service, education welfare service and educational psychology service.

Disqualification from providing childcare or registration, including 'by association'

All staff are required to notify Autism Bedfordshire immediately if they are any reasons why they should not be working with children. This includes any staff who are disqualified from childcare or registration including 'by association' i.e. they live in the same household (or someone is employed in their household) as someone who has unspent cautions or convictions for a relevant offence (please see a list of the relevant offences set out here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/384712/DBS_referrals_guide_-_relevant_offences_v2.4.pdf).

The 'by association' requirement also applies if you live in the same household as or someone is employed in your household who has been disqualified from working with children under the Childcare Act 2006.

The Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009 apply to those providing early years childcare or later years childcare, including before Autism Bedfordshire and after Autism Bedfordshire clubs, to children who have not attained the age of 8 AND to those who are directly concerned in the management of that childcare.

Autism Bedfordshire takes its responsibility to safeguard children very seriously and any staff member who is aware of anything that may affect his/her suitability to work with children must notify Autism Bedfordshire immediately. This will include notification of any convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands or warnings he/she may receive. He/she must also notify Autism Bedfordshire immediately if he/she is living in a household where anyone lives or works who has been disqualified from working with children or from registration for the provision of childcare.

Staff who are disqualified from childcare or registration, including 'by association', may apply to Ofsted for a waiver of disqualification. Such staff may not be employed in the areas from which they are disqualified, or involved in the management of those settings, unless and until such waiver is confirmed.

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Policy

A nominated Safeguarding and Child Protection Governor will monitor and evaluate on an annual basis the effectiveness of child protection work carried out by Autism Bedfordshire and report back to the full board. This policy will be reviewed annually.