



Fixing the big issues for disabled people in Buckinghamshire
Charity No 1102511

www.buds.org.uk | 07811 142935 | info@buds.org.uk
Postal Address (no callers): BuDS, c/o Aylesbury Foodbank,
44 Rabans Close, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP19 8RS
Registered Address (no callers): BuDS, c/o B P Collins LLP, Collins House,
32-38 Station Road, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, SL9 8EL



Protection of Adults who are Vulnerable: Policy and Procedures

Introduction and Definitions

1. Many local authorities and safeguarding agencies have a rule of thumb which classes all disabled people as 'vulnerable'. Buckinghamshire Disability Service (BuDS) believes in self-reliance and equality for disabled people and does not accept as a point of principle that the mere fact of disability or impairment automatically or necessarily makes an adult any more 'vulnerable' than any other non-disabled adult in the same circumstances.
2. From a practical point of view also, as an organisation whose Trustees and volunteers are disabled, and which seeks to employ disabled people, it makes no sense for BuDS to regard everyone who is disabled as 'vulnerable' within the meaning of this policy, as this would prevent normal business activities and belittle all concerned.
3. BuDS accepts, of course, that some disabled adults (those 18 or over) do need additional help and support to protect themselves against harm or exploitation, particularly in cases of learning disability or mental health issues. **In this policy, therefore, the phrase 'adult who is vulnerable' refers specifically to such disabled people who do need additional help and support to protect themselves, and not automatically to all disabled people. Additionally, a person may be regarded as vulnerable in some circumstances and not in others – a person meeting a BuDS Trustee is not vulnerable whereas the same person helping at a BuDS event might be vulnerable.**
4. BuDS employees and Trustees should not be regarded as 'adults who are vulnerable' within the meaning of this policy unless, exceptionally, the Safeguarding Officer(s) agree that this is necessary in the case of a specific incident or individual.
5. BuDS strongly believes that everyone from BuDS who comes into contact with adults who are vulnerable has to be trustworthy, responsible and able to do everything they can to keep adults who are vulnerable safe from abuse, neglect or exploitation. The purpose of this policy is to protect from abuse, neglect or exploitation all adults who are vulnerable with whom BuDS comes into contact.
6. All BuDS staff, Trustees and volunteers must follow this policy when they are acting in their BuDS capacity. We may require BuDS partners to follow this policy too. Breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action against employees, including summary dismissal, or the expulsion of volunteers and Trustees.

7. You are acting in your BuDS capacity if you represent yourself as being part of BuDS or could be reasonably seen by others to be part of BuDS or if you are acting on behalf of BuDS or in connection with your BuDS role. If you are using a BuDS account (eg BuDS e-mail), posting in an online group controlled by BuDS, or if you are using BuDS technology such as a laptop or tablet, you will be regarded as acting in a BuDS capacity even if you say you are acting in your personal capacity.

Policy Statement

8. BuDS recognises and accepts that it has a responsibility to:
- a) Safeguard and promote the interests and well-being of adults who are vulnerable with whom it is working whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief or sexual identity.
 - b) Take all reasonable practical steps to protect adults who are vulnerable from harm, discrimination, or degrading treatment.
 - c) Develop awareness of the issues which can lead to harm or exploitation of adults who are vulnerable .
 - d) Respect the rights, wishes and feelings of adults who are vulnerable.
 - e) Recognise the need for sensitivity, confidentiality and sharing of information on a need to know basis.
 - f) Recognise the roles of families and carers in the lives of some adults who are vulnerable while respecting their status as legal adults.
 - g) Recognise the importance of working in partnership with professional protection agencies such as the Independent Safeguarding Authority, local authority safeguarding teams and the police.
 - h) Report concerns following the procedure below.
9. BuDS will work to safeguard adults who are vulnerable by:
- a) Having and implementing an effective policy about DBS checks (see BuDS' DBS Policy for details).
 - b) Requiring all Trustees, staff and volunteers to attend mandatory annual safeguarding training.
 - c) Recognising that safeguarding is about both preventing abuse, neglect and exploitation, and promoting good practice.
 - d) Adopting adult that is vulnerable protection procedures and a code of behaviour for all who work on behalf of the organisation.
 - e) Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving, adults who are vulnerable, families and carers appropriately.
 - f) Following carefully our procedures for safe recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers.
 - g) Making sure all staff and volunteers are aware of our Adult that is vulnerable Protection Procedures and Policy.
 - h) Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through support and training.
 - i) Taking seriously and responding quickly to all suspicions and disclosures about abuse, neglect or exploitation.

- j) Appointing a Safeguarding Officer(s) to enable any concerns to be reported in accordance with our procedures.
- k) Reviewing its Adult that is vulnerable Protection Policies and Code of Practice at regular intervals.

What to do if you have concerns about abuse, neglect or exploitation

10. Concerns may arise because of things you see and hear when meeting an adult that is vulnerable face-to-face, or because of something that you observe or read online or hear or see on the phone or in a videocall. The guidance below applies in all those circumstances.
11. If you have suspicions but no firm evidence of abuse, neglect or exploitation involving a adult that is vulnerable, you should take advice from the Safeguarding Officers straightaway. Straightaway means within 3 days of you first starting to have suspicion or concerns. The Safeguarding Officers will work with you to help resolve the situation. Please always speak to or message a Safeguarding Officer even if you only have vague or uncertain concerns or suspicions. BuDS will never criticise or take action against someone who reports honest concerns about abuse, neglect or exploitation.
12. If you have direct or obvious evidence of abuse, neglect or exploitation, for example you observe something which makes you concerned or someone tells you about the inappropriate conduct of a person associated with BuDS, you must report your concerns immediately to the BuDS Safeguarding Officer(s). Immediately means on the same day or within 24 hours. You should make a written note of what you have observed or been told and send that to the Safeguarding Officer(s). The Safeguarding Officers will work with you to help resolve the situation or take over the issue for investigation.
13. If an adult that is vulnerable tells you about abuse, neglect or exploitation, this is called a 'disclosure'. Every disclosure should be taken extremely seriously. The adult that is vulnerable may make the disclosure face-to-face or in a phone call or video-chat, or by message or another online way of communicating. The guidance below applies in all these circumstances.
 - a) You should listen calmly to the adult that is vulnerable and allow them to tell you what is happening in their own words. If you need to ask questions, they should be open questions like 'what happened next' or 'how did that make you feel' rather than closed or leading questions like 'did you feel angry' or 'did they hit you'. Talking to adults who are vulnerable about abuse, neglect or exploitation is something best done by expert, trained people, so please do not try to fully investigate the issue yourself or 'interrogate' the adult that is vulnerable. Your role is just to listen and record what is said so that an investigation can start. Try not to get emotional if you can.
 - b) Do not make promises to the adult that is vulnerable of any sort, and especially that you will not tell anyone else about what they have disclosed or that you personally can sort out the situation. You should reassure the adult that is vulnerable that you will take action on what they have said and that they will not get into trouble for saying it if that seems appropriate.
 - c) As soon as possible, and ideally within an hour of the adult that is vulnerable making the disclosure, you should make a full written statement recording everything that the adult that is vulnerable said and what you said in response. If the contact was online, you should try to

take screenshots or copy the messages. If writing a statement, you should record the adult that is vulnerable's actual words as they said them as much as possible, so 'I wasn't happy at what the man did' rather than 'the adult that is vulnerable was unhappy'. Use the terms and words that the adult that is vulnerable uses – do not try to correct their wording or use of words. Try not to add ideas or thoughts of your own – stick to what the adult that is vulnerable said and what you said in reply. If you need help with writing the statement, phone or e-mail a Safeguarding Officer.

- d) You should send the statement or record of the contact to the Safeguarding Officer(s) as soon as possible, and certainly within 24 hours, highlighting that an adult that is vulnerable has made a disclosure of abuse, neglect or exploitation to you.

14. If you see that an adult that is vulnerable is at immediate risk of harm, you should always take immediate action, whether this occurs face-to-face or online. This could be calling the police using 999 or the Bucks Council Safeguarding Adults Team, which is 0800 137915 (0800 9997677 out of office hours). You can also make a report about online abuse at www.ceop.police.uk. Always report to the Safeguarding Officers that you have done this.

15. After you have told the Safeguarding Officer(s), your role in the investigation is finished unless and until you are asked to do something more. You should not start up a safeguarding investigation of your own or question anyone further. Neither should you tell colleagues, friends, Trustees or anyone else about your concerns – you must maintain confidentiality. In the unlikely event that you have concerns about how the safeguarding officer(s) are dealing with the concern which you have raised, you should speak immediately to a member of the BuDS Trustee Board who is not a safeguarding officer, such as the designated 'Whistleblowing' Trustee.

Role and Responsibilities of the Safeguarding Officer(s)

16. The Board of Trustees of Buckinghamshire Disability Service has appointed the following as joint Safeguarding Officers. They are jointly responsible on behalf of BuDS for dealing with concerns about the protection of adults who are vulnerable. If you have a concern which may relate to one of the designated people, make sure you speak only to one of the other persons.

Person	Role	Contact Details
Ann Hedges	Trustee	07936 875248 annah@buds.org.uk
Janneke Elford	HR & Project Manager	07703 770879 jannekee@BuDS.org.uk
Andrew Clark	Chair of Trustees	07811 142935 andrewc@BuDS.org.uk

17. The role of the Safeguarding Officers is to:

- a) Individually keep themselves up-to-date and trained about the best practice and law relating to safeguarding of adults who are vulnerable, eg the need to make a referral to the DBS or contact an adult safeguarding agency.

- b) Jointly ensure that appropriate confidentiality about safeguarding issues is maintained within BuDS and ensure that any person against whom allegations are made is excluded from decision-making regarding that allegation.
- c) Jointly reach a view about whether a formal referral to any statutory agency is necessary in any case; ensure that appropriate information and substantiation is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing under confidential cover. If the Safeguarding Officers cannot agree on a course of action, the matter should be referred to the full BuDS Trustee Board or other committee formed by Trustees for the purpose.
- d) Jointly keep the BuDS Trustee Board informed about any action taken and any further action required for example, disciplinary action against a member of staff.
- e) Jointly ensure that any safeguarding concerns or issues brought to their attention are kept safely and in confidence.
- f) Jointly provide information, advice and give advice about training needs within Buckinghamshire Disability Service on safeguarding issues relating to adults who are vulnerable.
- g) Jointly review at least annually the BuDS Safeguarding Policies and Procedures and recommend any changes to the BuDS Board of Trustees.
- h) Ensure that all BuDS staff and volunteers receive mandatory adult that is vulnerable safeguarding training at least once a year.

BuDS Safeguarding Code of Behaviour

18. This Code of Behaviour is divided into two parts, Part One about safeguarding adults who are vulnerable that you meet personally (face-to-face) in the course of BuDS activities and Part Two about safeguarding adults who are vulnerable online, by phone, videocall, or by e-mail or messaging system.
19. Unless excepted by a Safeguarding Officer, all BuDS staff, Trustees and volunteers must follow this Code of Behaviour when they are acting in their BuDS capacity. Breach of this Code may lead to disciplinary action against employees, including summary dismissal, or the expulsion of volunteers and Trustees.
20. Because adults may be vulnerable in some circumstances but not in others, the Code of Behaviour allows a Safeguarding Officer to make exceptions to it. If you think you should be excepted from the Code of Behaviour, please ask a Safeguarding Officer first.

Part One – Offline Activity

21. When acting in your BuDS capacity, without the prior agreement of a Safeguarding Officer (paras a – e only), you must **not**:
 - a) Seek to have or have face-to-face contact on behalf of BuDS with any adult that is vulnerable, or access or seek to access the adult that is vulnerable's sensitive personal data, until you have specific clearance by BuDS to do so. BuDS will not give such clearance until after BuDS has satisfactorily concluded appropriate safeguarding including a DBS check where appropriate.

- b) Spend any significant amount of time alone with adults who are vulnerable. Meetings or activities with adults who are vulnerable should take place within sight of others.
- c) Make unnecessary physical contact with adults who are vulnerable. This should not exclude all physical contact, for example providing comfort at times of distress, but in such exceptional circumstances contact should be appropriate and only take place with the clear consent of the adult that is vulnerable.
- d) Take adults who are vulnerable alone in a car, however short the journey.
- e) In your personal capacity, make contact with adults who are vulnerable who you met professionally through BuDS or with whom you have only professional contact through BuDS (except after consulting a Safeguarding Officer). This does not apply to adults who are vulnerable under 18 whom you know in your personal capacity outside of your professional contact through BuDS, eg adults who are vulnerable who were already friends before they became BuDS volunteers.
- f) Do anything which could put you at risk of allegations or bring BuDS into disrepute.
- g) Start up a safeguarding investigation or question anyone after a disclosure or concern has been raised and reported to the Safeguarding Officers.
- h) Never:
 - i) Initiate or engage in sexually provocative conversations or activity with adults who are vulnerable.
 - ii) Allow the use of inappropriate language to go unchallenged.
 - iii) Do things of a personal nature for adults who are vulnerable that they can do themselves.
 - iv) Allow any disclosures made by a adult that is vulnerable to go unreported.
 - v) Trivialise or exaggerate safeguarding issues.
 - vi) Gossip about safeguarding issues or concerns.
 - vii) Make promises to keep any disclosure confidential from relevant authorities

22. When acting in your BuDS capacity, you **must**:

- a) Attend and participate in your annual safeguarding training update.
- b) Take the appropriate action, as explained in this policy, if you have suspicions or evidence of neglect, abuse or exploitations, or if a adult that is vulnerable makes a disclosure to you, or if a adult that is vulnerable is at immediate risk of harm.
- c) Be aware of this policy and the procedures for reporting concerns or incidents.
- d) Know who the Safeguarding Officers are and how to contact them.
- e) Maintain confidentiality about everything relating to safeguarding.
- f) Try to always create an environment where adults who are vulnerable feel comfortable enough to report attitudes or behaviour they do not like.
- g) In your BuDS work, ensure adults who are vulnerable know that they can safely report abuse, neglect or exploitation to The Samaritans – www.samaritans.org or 116 123. This might be by putting up a poster at an event or by including a link on a webpage, or by putting a message into a chat.
- h) Tell your manager or a Safeguarding Officer immediately if an adult that is vulnerable seems to be showing you inappropriate affection or attention.

Part Two: Safeguarding Adults who are vulnerable Online

23. This part of the Code of Practice is about safeguarding adults who are vulnerable that you are in contact with online, by phone, videocall, or by e-mail or messaging system. When we say online contact, we mean contact over the Internet, by phone, videocall, or by e-mail or messaging system.
24. When acting in your BuDS capacity, without the prior agreement of a Safeguarding Officer, you must **not**:
- i) Seek to have or have online contact on behalf of BuDS with any adult that is vulnerable under 18, or access or seek to access the adult that is vulnerable's sensitive personal data, until you have specific clearance by BuDS to do so. BuDS will not give such clearance until after BuDS has satisfactorily concluded appropriate safeguarding including a DBS check where appropriate.
 - j) Spend any significant amount of time alone online with adults who are vulnerable. If you are meeting a adult that is vulnerable online by any means, including talking to them on the phone, either someone else should be involved in the call or contact or someone else should be able to observe and listen to you while the contact is taking place. This may mean adding someone to a call or conversation – you should explain this by saying that the person is there 'for safeguarding reasons'.
 - k) If you are having an e-mail or online message conversation with an adult that is vulnerable, you should add another person to the conversation by copying the e-mails to them or adding them to the messenger chat. You should explain this to the adult that is vulnerable if necessary by saying that the other person is there 'for safeguarding reasons'.
 - l) If you know or you have reasonable grounds to think that an adult that is vulnerable is involved in an online group conversation, such as an e-mail or WhatsApp group or chatroom or Facebook group, you should treat the whole group conversation as if it was with a adult that is vulnerable. This may involve changing how you communicate, what you talk about, or asking another BuDS person to join the group chat for safeguarding reasons.
 - m) In your personal capacity, make contact with adults who are vulnerable under 18 who you met professionally through BuDS or with whom you have only professional contact through BuDS (except in exceptional circumstances with the prior consent of BuDS). This does not apply to adults who are vulnerable whom you know in your personal capacity outside of your professional contact through BuDS, eg adults who are vulnerable who were friends before they become BuDS volunteers.
 - n) Do anything which could put you at risk of allegations or bring BuDS into disrepute.
 - o) Start up a safeguarding investigation or question anyone after a disclosure or concern has been raised and reported to the Safeguarding Officers.
 - p) Never:
 - i) Initiate or engage in sexually provocative conversations or activity with adults who are vulnerable online.
 - ii) Allow the use of inappropriate language online to go unchallenged.
 - iii) Allow any online disclosures made by a adult that is vulnerable to go unreported.
 - iv) Trivialise or exaggerate safeguarding issues online.
 - v) Gossip about safeguarding issues or concerns online.

vi) Make promises to keep any disclosure confidential from relevant authorities.

25. When acting in your BuDS capacity online, you **must** still follow the same rules set out in para 22 above.

Your Personal Life

26. If you are the subject of adult safeguarding or police investigation in your personal or non-BuDS professional life, you must inform the Safeguarding Officer (s) within 7 days. Being the subject of an investigation means accusations have been made about you or there are concerns about something you may have done. Failure to inform the Safeguarding Officer(s) may mean that disciplinary action is taken against you. This does not apply if you are only a witness in an investigation or if you are a professional involved in an adult safeguarding enquiry.

27. If you are arrested, charged or convicted of any offence relating to adults who are vulnerable, or if you accept a police caution for an offence relating to adults who are vulnerable, you must inform the Safeguarding Officer (s) within 7 days. Failure to inform the Safeguarding Officer(s) may mean that disciplinary action is taken against you.

28. Even when you are acting in your personal capacity, you must not do anything which brings BuDS' reputation into disrepute with regard to the safeguarding of adults who are vulnerable. This could be, for example, having friends who are connected to the abuse, neglect or exploitation of adults who are vulnerable, being a member of a group which is connected to the abuse of adults who are vulnerable, or stating views which do not value adults who are vulnerable and their protection from neglect, abuse or exploitation. BuDS reserves the right to take disciplinary action in these circumstances.

Safe Recruitment and Selection

29. As set out in the Recruitment Policy, Buckinghamshire Disability Service will assess each role, whether paid or voluntary, to determine the appropriate safeguarding recruitment and selection appropriate for it. These will be clearly stated in the job or role description and may include:

- a) Equal opportunity recruiting including interview
- b) Obtaining positive confirmation of the identity of the applicant
- c) Taking up written professional, work and/or character references
- d) Requiring documentary evidence of qualifications and training
- e) Formal DBS check process – see DBS Policy

Review

30. This policy will be reviewed by the Safeguarding Officers at least annually and referred to the Trustee Board if any amendments are required.

Agreed by Trustees: September 2021

Updated: August 2023

Review Date: August 2025