



Fixing the Big Issues for Disabled People in Buckinghamshire

Charity No 1102511

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Protection of Children

Policy and Procedures

Reviewed and updated – June 2024

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Date of next review – July 2026

Introduction and Definitions

1. By child, we mean anyone under the age of 16. This policy does not apply to people over 16, who are regarded as young adults or adults for safeguarding purposes.
2. BuDS strongly believes that everyone from BuDS who comes into contact with children has to be trustworthy, responsible and able to do everything they can to keep children safe from abuse, neglect or exploitation. The purpose of this policy is to protect from abuse, neglect or exploitation all children with whom BuDS comes into contact.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. All trustees, volunteers and staff who have access to Teams has been through an Enhanced DBS check.

Policy Statement

6. BuDS recognises and accepts that it has a responsibility to:
 - a) Safeguard and promote the interests and well-being of children 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 children from harm, discrimination, or degrading treatment.
 - c) Develop awareness of the issues which can lead to harm or exploitation of children
 - d) Respect the rights, wishes and feelings of children.
 - e) Respect the needs of the child as paramount, even when this conflicts with the needs of carers or family members.
 - f) Recognise the need for sensitivity, confidentiality and sharing of information on a need to know basis.
 - g) Recognise the roles of families and carers in the lives of children.
 - h) Recognise the importance of working in partnership with professional protection agencies such as the Independent Safeguarding Authority, local authority safeguarding teams and the police.

- i) Report concerns following the procedure below.
7. BuDS will work to safeguard children 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 child 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, children, families, and carers appropriately.
 - f) Carefully following our procedures for safe recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers.
 - g) Making sure all staff and volunteers are aware of our Child 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 Child Protection Policies and Code of Practice at regular intervals.

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

8. Concerns may arise because of things you see and hear when meeting a child 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.
9. If you have suspicions but no firm evidence of abuse, neglect or exploitation involving a child, 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.
10. 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 Officers(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.

11. If a child tells you about abuse, neglect or exploitation, this is called a 'disclosure'. Every disclosure should be taken extremely seriously. The child 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 child 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 children 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 child. 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 child 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 child 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 child making the disclosure, you should make a full written statement recording everything that the child 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 child's actual words as they said them as much as possible, so 'I wasn't happy at what the man did' rather than 'the child was unhappy'. Use the terms and words that the child 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 child 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 a child has made a disclosure of abuse, neglect or exploitation to you.
12. If you see that a child 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 First Response Team - 01296 383962 (0800 999767 out of

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.

13. 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)

14. 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 children. 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
Andrew Clark	Chair of Trustees	07811 142935 andrewc@buds.org.uk
Janneke Elford	HR & Project Manager	07703 770879 janneke@buds.org.uk

15. 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 children, 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 children.
- 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 child safeguarding training at least once a year.

BuDS Safeguarding Code of Behaviour

- 16. This Code of Behaviour is divided into two parts, Part One about safeguarding children that you meet personally (face-to-face) in the course of BuDS activities and Part Two about safeguarding children online, by phone, videocall, or by e-mail or messaging system.
- 17. 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.

Part One – Offline Activity

- 18. When acting in your BuDS capacity, you must **not**:
 - a) Seek to have or have face-to-face contact on behalf of BuDS with any child, or access or seek to access the child'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 children. Meetings or activities with children should take place within sight of others.
 - c) Make unnecessary physical contact with children. 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 child.
 - d) Take children alone in a car, however short the journey.
 - e) In your personal capacity, make contact with children 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 children whom you know in your personal capacity outside of your professional contact through BuDS, eg the children of friends who become 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 children.
 - ii) Allow the use of inappropriate language to go unchallenged.
 - iii) Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves.
 - iv) Allow any disclosures made by a child 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.

19. 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 child makes a disclosure to you, or if a child 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 children feel comfortable enough to report attitudes or behaviour they do not like.
- g) In your BuDS work, ensure children know that they can safely report abuse, neglect or exploitation to Childline – www.childline.org.uk or 0800 1111. 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 a child seems to be showing you inappropriate affection or attention.

Part Two: Safeguarding Children Online

20. This part of the Code of Practice is about safeguarding children 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.

21. When acting in your BuDS capacity, you must **not**:

- i) Seek to have or have online contact on behalf of BuDS with any child, or access or seek to access the child'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 children. If you are meeting a child 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 a child, 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 child, 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 a child 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 child. 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 children 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 children whom you know in your personal capacity outside of your professional contact through BuDS, eg the children of friends who 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 children online.
 - ii) Allow the use of inappropriate language online to go unchallenged.
 - iii) Allow any online disclosures made by a child 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.
22. When acting in your BuDS capacity online, you **must** still follow the same rules set out in para 19 above.

Your Personal Life

23. If you are the subject of a child-related 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 child safeguarding enquires.
24. If you are arrested, charged or convicted of any offence relating to children, or if you accept a police caution for an offence relating to children, 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.
25. 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 children. This could be, for example, having friends who are connected to the abuse, neglect or exploitation of children, being a member of a group which is connected to the abuse of children, or stating views which do not value children and their protection from neglect, abuse or exploitation. BuDS reserves the right to take disciplinary action in these circumstances.

Safe Recruitment and Selection

26. 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

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