

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS AT RISK POLICY

Updated: December 2021


BUCKS
STUDENTS' UNION

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS AT RISK

Executive summary:

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers, and others representing Bucks Students' Union (BSU) who have contact with children, young people and adults at risk. BSU values and encourages the involvement of staff and volunteers with children, young people and adults at risk in its activities and is committed to protecting their physical and mental health, safety and general welfare.

Policy:

Central to our mission is the importance of being student led and having a positive impact for our members. We provide a range of services such as student activities, advice, events, representation and volunteering. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and others representing BSU, who have contact with children, young people and adults at risk.

Children, young people and adults at risk affected:

For the purpose of this policy, the term child or children means any child or young person under the age of 16.

A young person is anyone between 16 and 18.

An adult at risk is a person aged 18 or over who needs community care services because of a learning or physical disability, a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs or a reduction in physical or mental capacity.

Guiding principles:

When dealing with children, young people and adults at risk, BSU aims to:

- promote their general welfare
- consider the mental health and wellbeing of everyone involved in all activities and events
- recognise their rights as individuals and treat them with dignity and respect
- consistently apply fair and objective methods of selecting staff and volunteers
- plan activities involving children, young people and adults at risk with care to minimise risks to their health and safety
- raise awareness of the dangers to which children, young people and adults at risk may be susceptible
- develop appropriate procedures for responding to accidents, incidents and alleged or suspected harm
- address all safeguarding issues immediately and as a priority over other work.

Selection of staff and volunteers:

It should be noted that anyone who applies to work or volunteer with BSU may have the potential to cause harm, whether they are a member of staff or a volunteer.

BSU will take appropriate steps (interview process, taking up references, conducting DBS checks where staff and volunteers will be regularly working with children and vulnerable adults) to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children, young people or adults at risk. The selection procedures for positions, both paid and unpaid, will be the responsibility of the BSU HR and Development Manager.

Opportunity profiles:

An opportunity profile will be drawn up for all staff and volunteer positions within BSU.

For the majority of projects, BSU will work with the host organisation's policies. BSU will also, on every occasion, ask the organisation for a risk assessment and copy of their public liability insurance.

Disclosure and barring service (DBS):

BSU staff and volunteers who will have substantial, unsupervised access to children, young people or adults at risk should be DBS checked to the appropriate level. The DBS check searches your details against criminal records and other sources, including the Police National Computer.

All individuals should be made aware that any appointment, whether paid or voluntary, is subject to satisfactory checks. Information gathered through this process should be treated in the strictest confidence and in accordance with the DBS Code of Practice and the Data Protection Act 1998.

The Union and its partners will make volunteer recruitment decisions on a case by case basis and in line with relevant policies and procedures. When the project is external, the charity or organisation will be responsible for providing the application and covering the cost. These applications can take from between ten days and four weeks to go through. When working with the Students' Union or the University, Human Resources (HR) will provide the application and the department that is organising the project, will provide the payment.

Mentoring:

BSU is committed to supporting its members through an informal mentoring programme. Each volunteer will be given the opportunity to have regular meetings, each academic year, with a member of Union staff to discuss objectives, progress and the support that they are receiving. All BSU staff and volunteers working with children, young people and adults at risk will be offered this support by the BSU HR and Development Manager.

Risk assessments and general considerations:

Any BSU staff member or volunteer with a safeguarding concern of any kind should report it to the BSU HR & Development Manager.

Where there is a safeguarding or mental health concern regarding a current Bucks student, the Directorate for Student Services will be notified and BSU staff will follow the University safeguarding procedures.

Health and safety requirements must be carefully considered when planning and carrying out activities involving children, young people and adults at risk. BSU's Health and Safety Policy applies to volunteers as well as employees.

All staff and volunteers should carry out thorough risk assessments prior to undertaking events/activities with children, young people or adults at risk. Please see the BSU Health and Safety Policy for more information.

BSU's commitment to the Student Minds Mental Health framework requires all staff and volunteers to appropriately signpost any individual they identify as experiencing poor mental health. The signposting procedures provide full information on this process.

Planning and supervision:

Whenever an employee or volunteer works with children, young people or adults at risk (whether or not carers remain ultimately responsible), BSU's guidelines on appropriate planning and supervision need to be observed to reduce the risk of harm.

- Activities involving children, young people or adults at risk should be carefully planned to ensure that maximum protection is provided at all times
- Those who are involved in an activity organised by BSU should be supervised and supported wherever possible, ensuring that the appropriate ratio of employees is present. This will depend on the nature of the activity, the number and age range of the people involved and whether anyone involved has any special needs
- Wherever possible both female and male employees/volunteers should be present.

Code of conduct:

Some actions, no matter how well intentioned, may be misinterpreted and leave all parties vulnerable. The following is a quick reference guide (although the lists are not exhaustive) to appropriate behaviour when working with children, young people and adults at risk.

BSU staff and volunteers should:

- remember they are a role model and provide an example for those they work with to follow
- be alert to any potential harm or inappropriate behaviour by children, young people and adults at risk
- aim for separate sleeping accommodation for males and females during residential activities
- ensure they have adequate training if supervising sports or games
- respect individuals' rights to privacy
- provide access for children, young people and adults at risk to discuss any concerns they may have
- speak to the appropriate person if they have concerns about an individual's safety
- maintain a professional relationship at all times
- give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- ensure all children, young people and adults at risk, regardless of any protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, are treated with respect and dignity and provided with the same equality of opportunity.
- follow all relevant BSU policies and procedures as well as those of any host organisation

BSU staff and volunteers should not:

- be left alone for substantial periods of time with children, young people and adults at risk. Where one to one work is necessary they should inform another staff member where they are going, with whom and for how long
- permit abusive behaviour by others or engage in it themselves (eg ridiculing and bullying)
- show favouritism to, or become too closely associated with an individual. Nor should they get drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviour
- allow or engage in suggestive remarks, inappropriate language, gestures or touching of any kind, which could be misunderstood
- jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- hesitate to share concerns on any of these matters with the appropriate person
- share a bedroom with a child, young person or adult at risk
- take on responsibility for any tasks for which they are not properly trained
- give or receive gifts from a child, young person or adult at risk
- allow allegations to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.

Raising awareness of dangers

Abuse:

There are five main forms of abuse: neglect, emotional, physical, sexual and bullying.

Generally it can be described as inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm.

Informing:

By issuing this policy, BSU is keen to ensure that all relevant employees and volunteers:

- know the types of harm to which children, young people and adults at risk are susceptible
- are alert to behaviour, which suggests something may be wrong
- are able to talk to someone if they become aware of anything, which causes them to feel uncomfortable
- know how to deal with alleged or suspected harm.

Responding to accidents/incidents:

In the event of an accident to an individual, first aid, by a qualified first-aider should be administered and the situation managed to ensure the welfare of the individual and the safety of others. The Emergency Services should be called for where appropriate.

An Accident/Incident Report Form should be completed with the University Health and Safety department. Where appropriate the circumstances of the accident should be investigated to establish the cause and to identify what remedial action should be taken to minimise the possibility of a recurrence. A comparison with the risk assessment for the activity should also be made to establish if the correct controls/actions have been in place/followed when the incident occurred.

Fatal accidents, major injuries and dangerous occurrences should be notified without delay by telephone to the BSU HR and Development Manager, after alerting the appropriate authorities.

Where an accident/incident involving young people has been narrowly avoided employees and volunteers should detail its nature and pass the information on to the BSU HR and Development Manager, who will ensure it is reported in line with BSU and University procedures.

Responding to a mental health concern:

Where an individual is deemed 'in crisis' emergency services should be called immediately.

'In crisis' is when an individual is in danger of harming themselves or others.

Should a BSU staff member or volunteer have a concern with regards to the mental health of a child, young person or adult at risk, they should report this to the BSU HR and Development manager who will advise an appropriate action.

Dealing with alleged or suspected abuse:

If a child, young person or adult at risk wants to talk about abuse, it is essential that the employee or volunteer:

- listens carefully to what the person says, keeping calm and looking at them directly
- lets them know that to help them someone else must be told
- reassures them that they are not to blame
- is aware that they may have been threatened
- does not push them for information
- reassures them that they are right to talk about it and what they say is accepted
- informs them of what will happen next and undertakes to let them know the outcome.

If a young person or other person who may be vulnerable has talked about abuse, or abuse is suspected from common sense alarm bells, the BSU employee or volunteer must do two things:

1. Notify the BSU HR and Development Manager
2. Write down accurately what the individual has said.

Employees and volunteers should note it is not their responsibility to resolve the issues but to report them as quickly as possible.

Where the BSU HR and Development Manager is unavailable and the individual is considered to be in imminent danger employees or volunteers should contact the relevant authorities themselves (noted on the final page of this document). They should then inform the BSU HR and Development Manager as soon as possible on their return.

Where it is suspected that an employee or volunteer may be involved in the abuse, employees and volunteers should inform the BSU HR and Development Manager as soon as possible. The employee/volunteer should be immediately removed from access to children, young people and adults at risk, but be assured that no presumptions have been made and that the allegation will be fully investigated by the relevant authorities.

If gross misconduct is reasonably suspected, it may be appropriate to ask them not to attend the office or property at all while the matter is under investigation (suspended on full pay if an employee). Once the relevant authorities enquiry has concluded, the BSU HR and Development Manager should decide what further action is appropriate in conjunction with BSU's other relevant policies (for example policies on Discipline and Complaints for employees and volunteers).

Dealing with incidents of abuse is difficult for any individual so employees and volunteers should not:

- act alone
- start to investigate; or
- make any assumptions of guilt or innocence.

Full and accurate notes must be written as soon as possible, recording the date and time of the alleged incident or disclosure, the parties involved, what was alleged and action taken. Records should be as accurate as possible as they may be invaluable to the investigation and used as evidence in court. The BSU HR and Development Manager should keep a copy.

Any employee or volunteer who is involved in a disclosure of any kind may feel that they need to speak to a professional to reassure themselves that they have done the right thing. The NSPCC operate a 24-hour help line for anyone concerned about a child or young person. It can be used anonymously: **0800 800 5000**. For any concerns about adults, these should be directed to the appropriate councils helplines detailed on the final page of this document.

Incidents that must be reported or recorded:

- if a child, young person or adult at risk reports an allegation of abuse involving anyone at all. This may be a family member, an employee or volunteer, an external organisation representative or anyone else
- if a child, young person or adult at risk has an accident
- if you accidentally hurt a child, young person or adult at risk
- if you are concerned that a relationship is developing that could represent an abuse of trust
- if a child, young person or adult at risk seriously misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done
- if you have had to use reasonable physical restraint to prevent a child, young person or adult at risk from harming themselves, or another, or from causing significant damage to property.

Confidentiality and sensitivity:

When dealing with personal and emotive details of this nature, confidentiality must be maintained wherever possible since the allegations or suspicions may prove to be unfounded. Notes and records should be kept in a secure place and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.

The employee should not give assurances of confidentiality which cannot be kept but should reassure the child, young person or adult at risk that the information will only be shared with those who need to know.

No assumptions of guilt should be made unless and until an actual conviction has been obtained in the proceedings. The BSU HR and Development Manager will maintain impartial throughout all elements of this process.

BUCKS STUDENTS' UNION POLICY DOCUMENT



Useful contacts:

Bucks Students' Union Contact

Sarah Jackson:

Tel: **01494 601 600**

Email: **sarah.jackson@bucks.ac.uk**

BNU Principal Safeguarding Officer

Abida Umarji

Tel: **01494 522 141 Ext. 3444**

Email: **abida.umarji@bucks.ac.uk**
safeguarding@bucks.ac.uk

BNU Deputy Safeguarding Officers

Justin Bootland

Tel: **01494 522 141 Ext. 4110**

Email: **justin.bootland@bucks.ac.uk**

Jill Austen

Tel: **01494 603 020 Ext. 4250**

Email: **jill.austen@bucks.ac.uk**

Buckinghamshire Council (for Wycombe referrals)

Children Safeguarding:

Tel (Office Hours): **01296 383962**

Email: **bscp@buckinghamshire.gov.uk**

Evening, weekends or public holidays: **0800 999 7677**

Adult Safeguarding:

Tel (Office Hours): **0800 137 915**

Evening, weekends or public holidays: **0800 999 7677**

(notice this is the same number as for children)

Email: **ascfirstresponse@buckinghamshire.gov.uk**

Hillingdon Council (for Uxbridge referrals)

Children Safeguarding:

Telephone: **01895 556 006**

Email: **safeguardingpartnership@hillingdon.gov.uk**

Adult Safeguarding:

Telephone: **01895 556 633**

Email: **safeguardingpartnership@hillingdon.gov.uk**

For more information or details of other policies, please email **union@bucks.ac.uk**.