

Safeguarding Children and Young People

Policy, Procedures and Process

Management information

Policy Reference	Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, Procedures and Process
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Owner	Julia Hall , Head of Services
Approval	Board of Trustees

Last approved	<i>Interim review March 2025 – approved by CEO</i>
Frequency of review	Annual
Due for next review	ASAP

Version control

Date amended	Amended by	Summary of amends
2 nd February 2016	Teresa Doyle	Redraft of existing Policy
27 th February 2017	Teresa Doyle	Reviewed – inclusion Code of Conduct and Children and Social Care Act 2017
21 st August 2018	Teresa Doyle	Reviewed – inclusion anti bullying
18 th December 2019	Teresa Doyle	Reviewed - Working together 2018 updates considered in policy rewrite Additions to categories of abuse
26 th April 2022	Salome Williams	Review frequency changed from three years to one year as per MQM action plan. Next review set at August 2022
11 th March 2025	Julia Hall	Updated personnel and terminology and approved as interim document by Stephen Robinson Deputy CEO

Safeguarding Children and Young People

This Policy provides an overarching statement of policy and related procedures which form Bucks Mind's approach to safeguarding and keeping **Children** and **Young People** safe from all types of harm. All our Safeguarding policies and procedures cover all of Buckinghamshire Mind's work including digital, online and phone support.

This policy, set of procedures and processes ensure that:

- The welfare of the child or young person is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989/2004
- All Children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm and abuse.
- We will work in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other relevant agencies to promote the welfare of all children and young people at all times.
- We will value, listen and respect children and young people.

Part A. POLICY

Safeguarding is Buckinghamshire Mind's top priority. It is our policy to protect every child and young persons' right to be safe in addition to preventing or stopping abuse.

We will provide safe services to all children and young people that encourage relationships of trust in which children and young people are able to talk openly; allowing our staff to make effective assessments as to whether they are at risk of harm. Buckinghamshire Mind works with children and families as part of its activities. These include: Peer Support in Schools Services and Young Persons Counselling Service.

We will maintain positive working relationships with Children and Young People Social Care, Buckinghamshire Children's Safeguarding Board (BCSB) and other relevant agencies that support our children and young people; seeking advice and sharing information where appropriate and always acting in the best interests of the child or young person. We will work with relevant agencies to share information about a child if we believe that there is, or may be, a risk of serious harm to them or to another child or young person, with consent wherever possible.

Our *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures* is fully consistent with the current legal, professional and good practice frameworks around confidentiality and safeguarding children and young people.

- Children Act 1989 (Reviewed 2005)
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children Act 2004
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018
- Protection of Freedoms act 2012
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (updates)

Our policy and approach is firmly grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991. This policy and associated processes guides our safeguarding approach and in doing so supports Article 34 – the right to protection from sexual abuse; Article 39 – the right to special help for children who have been abused; Article 16 – the right to privacy, and throughout all of our work, Article 12 – the right to be involved in decisions that affect them.

We comply with all relevant legislation, regulation and guidance, and adopt relevant industry codes and recommended good practice.

This Policy and Procedures should be read in conjunction with Bucks Mind's:

- Data Protection Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Data and Barring Policy
- Consent Policy
- Full Privacy Policy
- Professional Boundaries Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Records Retention Schedule
- Staff Support and Development Policy

Buckinghamshire Mind will:

- protect children and young people by empowering and training our staff to make an effective assessment as to whether a child or young person is at risk of harm;
- follow clear procedures when we believe a child is at risk of harm, including risk assessments, escalation processes, seeking and sharing information and advice from external agencies where appropriate, and thorough record keeping;

- provide effective support to a child at risk of harm, supporting them in mitigating that risk, and communicating clearly and openly about the steps we will take to protect them from harm;
- respect young people's right to a confidential service, except in circumstances where they, or others, are at risk of serious harm;
- handle children's and young people's records securely and confidentially, and in line with GDPR legislation;
- share confidential children and young people information without the informed consent of the individual where this is considered necessary for their protection or that of a third party and is relevant and proportionate to effectively safeguard that child or young person.

Measuring effectiveness

We will review the effectiveness of this Policy, set of Procedures and Process on an annual basis against any legislation and/or best practice guidance. We ensure it is easily accessible to all interested parties. We will continually consult with service users to inform good practice and measure effectiveness.

Part B. PROCEDURES

1.1 Support and training procedure

- Staff and volunteers are required to follow this policy and set of procedures when a safeguarding concern is identified. (This process applies to safeguarding all at children and young people, not just service users.)
- Staff and volunteers are required to read and 'acknowledge understanding' of this policy and its process/procedures as part of their induction.
- Staff and volunteers are trained in understanding the implementation of this policy and procedures and can access support at all times through the designated Safeguarding Team.
- Staff and volunteers are supported to understand the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Board policies, procedures and processes in place within Buckinghamshire Council.
- All those that work directly with children and young people will do safeguarding children and young people training annually.
- All staff and volunteer's knowledge about safeguarding will be up to date and those that work directly with children and young people will have

regular opportunities to reflect on their experiences and improve their practice through regular team meetings and 1:1 supervision.

- The safeguarding Team will hold regular meetings to review its systems, processes and current cases/concerns.

1.2 Code of Conduct when working with Children and Young People

1.2.1 Responsibility

You are responsible for:

- prioritising the welfare of children and young people
- providing a safe environment for children and young people;
 - ensuring equipment is used safely and for its intended purpose
 - having good awareness of issues to do with safeguarding and child protection and acting when appropriate.
- following Bucks Mind's principles, policies and procedures, including our policies and procedures for child and young people safeguarding and whistleblowing.
- staying within the law at all times
- modelling good behaviour for children and young people to follow
- challenging all unacceptable behaviour and reporting any breaches of the behaviour code to the Head of Operations
- reporting all concerns about abusive behaviour, following our safeguarding children and young people policy and procedures.

1.2.2 Rights

You will:

- treat children and young people fairly and without prejudice or discrimination
- understand that children and young people are individuals with individual needs
- respect differences in gender, sexual orientation, culture, race, ethnicity, disability and religious belief systems, and appreciate that all participants bring something valuable and different to the group/organisation
- challenge discrimination and prejudice
- encourage young people and adults to speak out about attitudes or behaviour that makes them uncomfortable.

1.2.3 Relationships

You will:

- promote relationships that are based on openness, honesty, trust and respect
- avoid favouritism
- be patient with others
- exercise caution when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people

- ensure your contact with children and young people is appropriate and relevant to the work/service you are involved in

1.2.4 Respect

You will:

- listen to and respect children and young people at all times
- value and take children and young people's contributions seriously, actively involving them in planning and evaluating activities/services wherever possible
- respect a young person's right to personal privacy as far as possible. If you need to break confidentiality in order to follow Buckinghamshire Mind Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and procedures, it is important to explain this to the child or young person at the earliest opportunity.

1.2.5 Unacceptable behaviour when working with children and young people.

You will not:

- allow concerns or allegations to go unreported
- take unnecessary risks
- develop inappropriate relationships with children and young people
- make inappropriate promises to children and young people
- engage in behaviour that is in any way abusive; including having any form of sexual contact with a child or young person.
- let children and young people have your personal contact details (mobile number, email or postal address) or have contact with them via a personal social media account
- act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive
- patronise or belittle children and young people
- make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory or sexually suggestive comments or gestures to or in front of children and young people.

Upholding this code of behaviour

You should always follow this code of behaviour and never rely on your reputation or that of Buckinghamshire Mind to protect you. If you have behaved inappropriately you will be subject to our disciplinary procedures.

Any concern about someone's behaviour with children and young people should be reported to the Head of Operations who will decide whether a referral to Buckinghamshire Council Safeguarding should be made and offer advice and support.

If necessary, you should follow our whistleblowing policy to report concerns regarding colleagues or peers.

1.3 Anti-Bullying Procedure

The purpose of this procedure is:

- to prevent bullying from happening to or between children and young people who are a part of our organisation or take part in our activities
- to make sure bullying is stopped as soon as possible if it does happen and that those involved receive the support, they need
- to provide information to all staff, volunteers, children and their families about what we should all do to prevent and deal with bullying. This procedure applies to anyone working on behalf of Bucks Mind, including Senior Managers and the Board of Trustees, paid staff, volunteers and bank staff.

1.3.1 What is bullying?

Bullying includes a range of abusive (including online) behaviour that is

- repeated
- intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally.

1.3.2 We believe that:

- children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind
- we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

1.3.3 We recognise that:

- bullying causes real distress. It can affect a person's health and development and, at the extreme, can cause significant harm
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- everyone has a role to play in preventing all forms of bullying (including online) and putting a stop to bullying.

1.3.4 We will seek to prevent bullying by:

- adhering to our code of behaviour (*1.2 Code of Conduct when working with Children and Young People*) that sets out how everyone involved in our organisation is expected to behave, in face-to-face contact and online, and within and outside of our activities
- holding regular discussions with staff, volunteers, children, young people and families who use our organisation about bullying and how to prevent it.
- providing support and training for all staff and volunteers on dealing with all forms of bullying, including racial, sexist, homophobic and sexual bullying and can also include indirect action, like exclusion and ostracism, which are sometimes more difficult to define.

We recognise that bullying is closely related to how we respect and recognise the value of diversity.

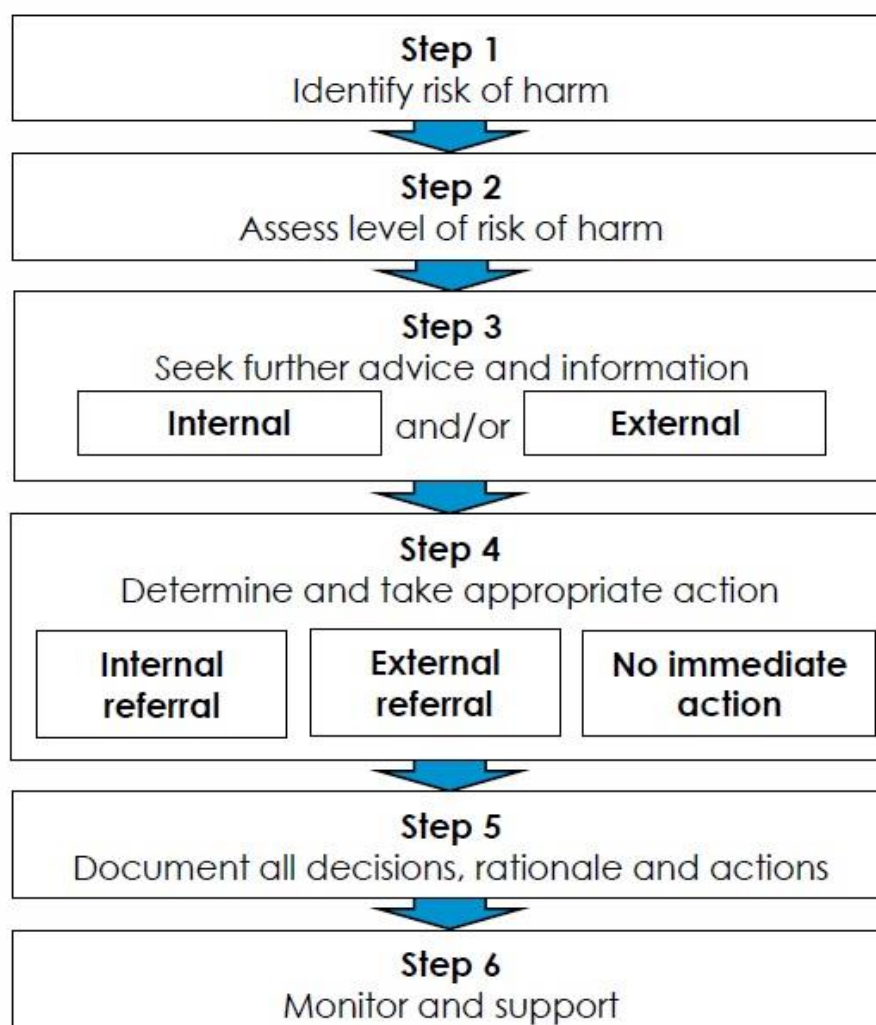
1.3.5 We will be proactive about:

- seeking opportunities to learn about and celebrate difference
- increasing diversity within our staff, volunteers, children and young people
- welcoming new members to our organisation.

Part C. PROCESS

Buckinghamshire Mind - Safeguarding Process

This sets out the six key steps in our Safeguarding Process and provides detailed guidance on each of those steps.



Step 1 – Identify risk of harm

Because of the nature of Buckinghamshire Mind's relationship with its children and young people, and the levels of trust that is built up with individual members of staff, children and young people may disclose information about abuse or harm that they, or another child, have experienced or are experiencing. Similarly, Buckinghamshire Mind staff may suspect that abuse or harm has occurred or is occurring.

1.1 Disclosure of abuse or harm

If an active disclosure is made by a child or young person Buckinghamshire Mind staff should:

- Accept the disclosure
- Listen carefully and calmly
- Not interrogate or ask potentially leading questions, but do ask clarification questions
- Reassure the child that their disclosure has been heard and that they have done the right thing in sharing the information
- Consider the young person's immediate safety

1.2 Suspected abuse or harm

All staff should understand what abuse and harm is and the risk factors for abuse and harm.

Abuse may be:

- A single act or repeated acts
- An act of neglect or a failure to act
- Multiple acts

Ultimately abuse is about the misuse of the power and control that one person has over another.

Abuse can be viewed in terms of the following categories (although this is not an exhaustive list):

- Physical
- Bullying and Cyber Bullying
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Child Trafficking

- Domestic Abuse
- Sexual
- Psychological/emotional
- Financial and material
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Grooming
- Neglect
- Online abuse
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Non-recent abuse
- Discriminatory
- Institutional

Some common signs that there may be something concerning happening in a child or young person's life include:

- unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
- becoming withdrawn
- seeming anxious
- becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
- lacks social skills and has few friends, if any
- poor bond or relationship with a parent
- knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
- running away or going missing
- always choosing to wear clothes which cover their body

These signs don't necessarily mean that a child is being abused, there could be other things happening in their life which are affecting their behaviour – but staff will use these as guidelines for spotting abuse or harm.

Where there is cause to suspect abuse or harm but no active disclosure, staff should sensitively highlight the physical or behavioural factors causing concern directly with the child. This may help them to realise that they or someone else is in danger and/or act as a stimulus to active disclosure.

1.3 Risk of harm to other people

Buckinghamshire Mind's safeguarding commitment extends to all children and young people, not just those who use our services. A child who is at risk of harm themselves may have someone they know who is also in need of support. Staff may be concerned that other children/young people may be at risk of harm through the behaviour of a child. This Safeguarding Process applies to all such cases, and the relevant information should be captured in Step 2 below.

Without directly communicating with the child at risk it can be difficult to get a clear understanding of the situation, distinguish fact from opinion, and gauge whether acting is in the best interests of that child. It may be impossible to act if you do not know the name or other key details of the child at risk. Advice should be sought from someone in the Safeguarding Team in all such situations (Step 3), and a judgement made on the appropriate course of action based on the facts available.

1.4 Child as a perpetrator

There may be cases where a child discloses that they, themselves, are harming another child, or you suspect that this may be the case. Where abuse or harm by a child is suspected staff should gently highlight the physical or behavioural factors causing concern directly with the child. This may help them to realise that what they are doing is wrong and encourage them to seek help.

The Safeguarding Process must be followed, recording the facts through the risk assessment and seeking information and advice from external agencies where appropriate. At all stages it is important to consider the best interests of both the child at risk of harm, and the child perpetrating the harm who may require support to alter their behaviour.

1.5 Sexually active young people age 13 or under

All children or young people age 13 who claim to be sexually active should be treated as potentially being at risk of harm and a risk assessment must be completed.

Discussion with Buckinghamshire Council Children and Young People's safeguarding team will be required for all service users 13 or under who are sexually active.

1.6 Next steps

Has the child made a disclosure of abuse or harm related to them or another child?	Yes	➡ If the answer to <u>any</u> of these is 'yes' proceed to step 2
Is there reason to suspect potential abuse or harm to the child or another	Yes	
Is the client aged 13 or under and claiming to be Sexually active?	Yes	
If the answer to <u>all</u> above	No	➡ Proceed with contact as usual. End of Procedure.

Step 2 – Assess level of risk of harm

If harm to a service user is disclosed or suspected, the staff member should consult Continuum of Need Incorporating Thresholds Guidance threshold and contacts document (*Appendix 2 CYP*) to ascertain Buckinghamshire Councils threshold for Safeguarding and then Buckinghamshire Mind's internal escalation route (*Appendix 3.1 (CYP)*).

Once immediate safety risks are addressed, complete the Record of Concern Form (*Appendix 1*) to assess and record the level of risk.

Information to complete the form should be sought through conversation with the child or young person at risk as much as possible, rather than as a checklist.

Staff should ask a member of the Safeguarding Team (*Appendix 3.1 CYP*) to join the consultation to support the risk assessment. This can be done either on a face to face basis or over the phone.

2.1 Active disclosures

Two important questions to consider when a disclosure of abuse/risk is made are:

- Why are they telling me?
- Why are they telling me now?

It is vital to consider what they want you to do and whether the timing of their disclosure is relevant (for example because they feel that they are at risk of more serious harm, or they believe that another child is at risk of imminent harm).

2.2 Next steps

Are you confident in the assessment of risk and the appropriate action	Yes	➡ If the answer to all of these is 'yes' you may Proceed immediately to Step 4 , informing the Safeguarding Lead at the next opportunity
Does the child agree with the proposed course of action, including the external sharing of information where this is appropriate	Yes	
Answer to any of the above questions is 'no' or you require support with the next steps	No	➡ Proceed to Step 3

Step 3 – Seek further advice and information

3.1 Internal advice

If when working through the Safeguarding Proforma there are any doubts or disagreements about the assessment or the appropriate action to take, including if the child does not consent to the action proposed, further internal advice must be taken by using the internal escalation route. (*Appendix 3.1 CYP*)

3.1.1 Safeguarding Team

The Safeguarding Lead for Buckinghamshire Mind is Julia Hall : Head of Services . She is supported by a Safeguarding Team; all members of the Safeguarding Team are named and have contact details documented in the internal escalation route document (*Appendix 3.1 CYP*)

3.1.2 Escalation route

Input should first be sought from any member of the Safeguarding Team. If there is then consensus as to the appropriate action to take this should be followed without delay. If there is not consensus another member of the Safeguarding Team should be consulted. Agreement on any next steps is a majority decision between two or more members of the Safeguarding Team in collaboration with the reporting staff member. The Safeguarding Lead should be informed at the next available opportunity.

If there is disagreement or uncertainty as to the appropriate action, further advice should be sought either from the a more senior member of the Safeguarding Team (if not already sought) or the Safeguarding Lead.

If the Safeguarding Lead is unavailable or if there is still doubt as to the appropriate course of action, such as in complex situations where there is a concern that the person may be placed at a greater risk of harm by acting, advice

should be sought via Buckinghamshire Council first response Safeguarding provision (Appendix 3.2 (CYP)). This can be done without identifying any individuals. The Safeguarding Lead should be informed of the decision made at the next available opportunity.

3.1.3 Escalation timescales

If the risk of serious harm is immediate dial **999**. If there is a clear risk of serious harm to the child then internal advice seeking should take place immediately, ideally with the child present. This may take place in person or over the phone. All staff members should have mobile phones pre-programmed with contact numbers for the Safeguarding Team on the escalation route.

If the risk of harm is not judged to be immediate, the internal advice seeking should take place the same day. In no circumstances should any safeguarding concerns be left until the following day without first getting further advice or guidance from the Safeguarding Team.

3.1.4 External advice and information

Staff should be confident in seeking advice from external agencies about a child about whom they have a safeguarding concern and relationships should be built with local teams to facilitate this. Appropriate information may need to be shared in order to receive information back which will then help to determine whether further action, such as an external referral, is required. (*Appendix 3.2.1 (CYP)*)

Whenever information is sought externally consent should first be sought from the child where possible. If consent is not granted but information seeking is in the best interests of the child, they should be informed that this information seeking will take place. If it is impossible to contact the child to seek consent or inform them of the course of action, the staff member should proceed with obtaining the external advice in the best interests of the child.

3.1.5 Children and young people who have existing social care/ MHT/ external agency involvement

If external input is required and the child has a CAMHS Worker, Social Worker or other external support, the staff member should speak directly to that team or worker to seek the information they require informing their assessment.

3.1.6 Children and young people who do not have existing MHT/social care involvement

If the staff member and Safeguarding Team member determine that external advice would be helpful, but the child does not have existing social care / MHT/external agency involvement, it may be appropriate to seek confidential advice from the Children and Young People first response team. (*Appendix 3.1*)

The staff member may request to speak to an external agency explaining the behaviours causing concern and the wishes of the child and seek the opinion of the agency as to whether the situation meets the threshold for Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board reporting and/or what action would be taken if a referral were to be made.

If the agency requests the name of the child in order to provide this advice, the staff member and Safeguarding Team member must make a judgement as to whether this action is in the best interests of the child (Step 4) before sharing this information.

3.1.7 Next Steps

Following input of the Safeguarding Team is there a clear agreement on next steps?	Yes	➡ proceed to Step 4
	No	➡ Repeat Step 3, escalating as appropriate then proceed to Step 4
Has information or advice been provided by an external agency?	Yes	➡ Record that advice in the <i>Safeguarding Proforma</i> proceed to Step 4

Step 4 – Determine and take appropriate action

The completion of the Record of Concern Form (*Appendix 1*), plus any advice and information provided through the escalation route or from external agencies, should enable a decision to be made on the appropriate course of action to best protect that child.

If you are unsure as to the appropriate action to take, consider how you might justify your decision to the child, if they asked you now, or in the future why that decision was made. All decisions must be made with a focus on the safeguarding of the child.

In all cases the staff member should support the child in realising that they are at risk of harm and encourage them to act to limit or manage that risk, supporting them throughout the process.

4.1 External referral

Where the risk assessment determines that external referral is required, a decision must be made as to which agency.

The informed consent of the child should always be sought before making the referral, and the staff member should communicate honestly and openly about what is likely to happen as a result of the referral.

If the child does not consent to the referral, the decision should be made, in consultation with the Safeguarding Team, as to whether referral without consent is in the best interests of the child. The child should be informed of what is happening as far as possible.

Referrals should be made by the original staff member who identified the concern, with the support of the Safeguarding Team as required.

When making the referral the staff member should agree with the agency how and when Buckinghamshire Mind will be informed of the outcome of the referral in line with the Safeguarding Procedures in place within the local authority.

Buckinghamshire Mind staff will be proactive in following up the outcome of all safeguarding referrals, and if Buckinghamshire Mind is not informed of the outcome within the agreed timescale the staff member or Safeguarding Lead should contact the agency for an update. The staff member, in consultation with the Safeguarding Team, should ensure that the child has appropriate follow-up support from Buckinghamshire Mind staff, and a follow up schedule should be agreed. The decision to refer must always be made in the best interests of the child.

4.1.1 No immediate action

If the outcome of the risk assessment and conversations with the Safeguarding Team / external agencies where appropriate determines that no immediate action is required, the rationale for this decision must be documented on the *Safeguarding Proforma*. This decision should be reviewed if additional information or changes in the situation, identified through future contacts with the child affects the risk assessment and therefore the appropriate course of action.

4.1.2 Next steps

Is the appropriate course of action (or no action) agreed, with clear responsibilities and timescales?	Yes	➡ Deliver agreed action, supporting the child throughout. Proceed to Step 5
	No	➡ Return to Step 3 to obtain further internal/external advice.

Step 5 – Document all decisions, rationale and actions

All cases where safeguarding concerns are identified must be fully documented, even when it is determined that no action need be taken.



The Record of Concern Form must be completed in full, including the decision made, the rationale for that decision, and the timescales for any follow-up.

Buckinghamshire Mind has a single central system within the organisation for the retention and management of all safeguarding concerns and referrals. The Safeguarding Lead is responsible for monitoring this system to ensure that all agreed actions are completed as appropriate.

Completed Record of Concern Form must be filed with appropriate security to protect confidentiality but allow for immediate access should a staff member need to locate a previous risk assessment. All confidential records are retained in line with our Records Retention Schedule and destroyed in line with our Data Protection Policy.

In all cases a note (and alert if possible) must be made in the child or young person's record to document that a risk assessment took place and the result of that assessment (including the name/organisation, date and time of any referral) to ensure that staff members who have contact with that child in the future are alerted that concerns were identified.

5.1.1 Next steps

Has a record of the assessment and decision been made in the Safeguarding Proforma and on the central system and is the Safeguarding Lead aware of the case?	yes	 Proceed to Step 6.  Seek personal support - de-brief / supervision.
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Step 6 – Monitor and support

A follow up schedule of support should be agreed with the child or young person within Step 4 – determine and take appropriate action – and this schedule should be documented on the Proforma.


The Safeguarding Lead is responsible for the ongoing monitoring of the central safeguarding system to ensure that all such agreed actions and support is delivered, including monitoring the outcome of external referrals.

While providing this ongoing support, staff should actively monitor any changes in the child or young person's situation that may affect the level of risk of harm and be prepared to take further appropriate action in line with this process where necessary.

Even when all actions have been completed and the case closed, or if it is determined that no action is required, the note or alert that a safeguarding concern was identified should remain on the child or young person's record in order that all staff who have future contact with that person can actively monitor the concern.

Seek support and personal supervision. Staff or volunteers will be supported by a line manager, or a member of the safeguarding team, to share their concerns and feeling regarding the safeguarding process. They will be given an opportunity to debrief and agree next steps for their support if appropriate.

6.1 Next Steps

Have all agreed actions been completed and the concern closely monitored throughout, and is there a note or alert on the child record to enable ongoing monitoring?	Yes	 End of Process
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SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE DECLARATION : I have read and understood Buckinghamshire Mind's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, Procedures and Process and agree to work to the expected standards.

Signature:

Date:

Print name: