



Cheltenham Borough Council Safeguarding Policy

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Responsible officer

- Tracy Brown Safeguarding and Partnerships Manager

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Consultees

Internal

- Leadership Team
- Relevant Heads of Service and Service Managers

External

- District Safeguarding Network

Distribution

All staff and Council website

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Introduction and purpose of the policy

Safeguarding is primarily about protecting vulnerable adults, young people or children from harm, abuse, or neglect. However, it also has a wider remit around early prevention, health, wellbeing, and human rights.

Aims and scope of the policy

The council has a longstanding commitment to reducing inequalities within the borough and therefore has a strong commitment to safeguarding. It also has a statutory responsibility and a duty of care, to cooperate and report issues relating to safeguarding to the appropriate authorities and partner agencies.

Safeguarding is not a practice that operates in isolation; its importance cuts across every service and function that the council undertakes and as such, needs to be embedded within the organisation.

The policy has therefore been produced to ensure there is a consistent and thorough approach to safeguarding across the organisation and that all employees, elected members, volunteers, contractors and commissioned providers delivering services on the Council's behalf are aware of their obligations to safeguard children, young people, and vulnerable adults.



The safeguarding of children and young people and the safeguarding of vulnerable adults encompasses the following types of harm:

- Child Abuse (physical, sexual, emotional and neglect)
- Vulnerable adult abuse (physical, sexual abuse, psychological, financial, neglect and acts of omission, discriminatory, institutional abuse)
- Domestic Abuse (including coercive control)
- Stalking
- Sexual Violence
- Child Exploitation (sexual and criminal)
- Modern Slavery
- Honour Based Violence
- Forced Marriage
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Cybercrime including cyber bullying
- Radicalisation
- Self-neglect (including hoarding)

The aims of the policy are to:

- Raise overall awareness of safeguarding, the signs of abuse and information on what to do if any form of abuse is identified or suspected.
- Protect children and vulnerable adults from harm while using services that the Council is responsible for (both directly provided and commissioned) by ensuring services have safe working practices in place.
- Ensure that employees, casual workers, volunteers, and elected members associated with Cheltenham Borough Council are able to report any safeguarding concerns appropriately.
- Ensure employees, casual workers, volunteers, and elected members have effective training and support to allow them to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.



Safeguarding Children

Local Authorities have a duty under the Children Act 2004 to ensure that they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their functions.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

The council's role for safeguarding vulnerable adults is governed by the Care Act 2014 and the responsibilities apply to adults who:

- Have care and support needs.
- Are experiencing or are at risk of abuse or neglect.
- Are unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

Wider community safeguarding responsibilities

The Council is a member of various countywide partnerships that support the safeguarding of children, vulnerable adults, and the prevention of crime. Crime and Disorder Act 1998 including Safer Gloucestershire and its subgroups.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 makes the Council along with other named organisations responsible for Domestic Homicide Reviews. This covers both the commissioning, publication, and implementation of the reviews.

Under the Police, Crime, Sentencing, and Courts Act 2022 the Council is a specified authority with a duty to prevent and reduce serious violence. This includes youth violence and criminal exploitation.



Definitions and Types of Abuse

Children and Young People

In accordance with guidance provided by Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and based on the Children Act (1989) and (2004) the terms children, child, young person or young people shall for the purposes of this policy be deemed to mean:

“Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that they have reached 16 years of age; are living independently or in further education; are a member of the armed forces; in hospital or in custody in the secure estate for children and young people, does not change his or her status or entitlement to services or protection under the Acts and this policy”.

A child may be at risk of abuse in many ways:

TYPE	DEFINITION	SOME POTENTIAL INDICATORS
Emotional	The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child’s emotional development.	Conveying to children that they are worthless or inadequate; imposing age or developmentally inappropriate expectations, serious bullying, exploitation, isolation, segregation
Sexual	Forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware what is happening, including use of images through social media or other IT.	Inappropriate sexual behaviour, use of language, fear of adults, recoiling from physical contact.
Neglect	The persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development.	Inadequate food, clothing, or shelter. Inadequate access to appropriate medical care or treatment, isolation, truanting, lateness
Physical	May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.	Unexplained bruising, burns, fractures, weight gain or loss, repeat illness.



Exploitation of Children

Child exploitation is the act of using a child for profit, labour, sexual gratification, or some other personal or financial advantage. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion, and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

It is important to always treat children who are being exploited as victims of abuse even though their behaviour may be challenging, or they appear to be making choices. Children often do not understand they are being exploited due to the manipulation of the abuser.

Exploitation takes two main forms criminal exploitation and sexual exploitation although there is often overlap between the types.

Criminal Exploitation

There is now a growing understanding of the issue of criminal exploitation of children, and it is defined in the Government's Serious Violence Strategy as:

“Where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.”

Criminal exploitation is one of the main methods used by County Lines gangs.

Sexual Exploitation

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

Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example, being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain.



Vulnerable Adults

A vulnerable adult is any person aged 18 or over, who:

- Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs and:
- Is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect and
- As a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect A vulnerable adult may be at risk of abuse in many ways:

TYPE	DEFINITION	POTENTIAL INDICATORS
Physical	The non-accidental use of physical force that results (or could result) in bodily injury, pain or impairment including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication and restraint.	Unexplained bruising, cowering or flinching, bruising consistent with being hit, unexplained burns, unexplained fractures.
Sexual	Direct or indirect involvement in sexual activity without consent.	Incontinence, difficulty/discomfort in walking, excessive washing, sexually transmitted diseases, bruising/bleeding in genital areas, bruising, urinary infections
Emotional/ Psychological	Acts or behaviour which impinge on the emotional health of, or which causes distress or anguish to individuals.	Disturbed sleep, anxiety, confusion, extreme submissiveness or dependency, sharp changes in behaviour, loss of confidence or appetite.
Neglect & Acts of Omission	Ignoring or withholding physical or medical care needs which result in a situation or environment detrimental to the individual.	Ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs (incl. dressing), failure to provide access to appropriate health care, withholding medication, adequate nutrition and heating.



Financial & Material Abuse	Unauthorised, fraudulent obtaining and improper use of funds, property or any resources of an adult at risk. Scamming and coercion in relation to an adult’s financial affairs.	Unexplained or sudden inability to pay bills, unexplained withdrawals of money from accounts, personal possessions going missing, unusual interest by a friend/relative/neighbour in financial matters.
Discriminatory	When values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies mainstream opportunities to some groups or individuals. This includes discrimination on the grounds of race, faith or religion, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation and political views, along with racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist comments or jokes, or comments and jokes based on a person’s disability or any other form of harassment, slur or similar treatment.	Inciting others to commit abusive acts, lack of effective communication, bullying.
Institutional/ Organisational	Where the culture of the organisations places the emphasis on the running of the establishment above the needs and care of the person.	Lack of care plans, contact with the outside world not encouraged, no flexibility or lack of choice.
Self-neglect	Neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.	A deterioration in physical appearance, lack of grooming, rapid weight gain/loss.

There are a number of specific acts that constitute abuse which could affect both adults and children;

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is a collective term used for illegal procedures, such as female circumcision, which include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs, or injury to the female genital organs for a cultural or non-therapeutic reason.

Honour Based Violence (HBV)



HBV is abuse, covering a variety of behaviours (including crimes), mainly but not exclusively against females, where the person is being punished by their family and/or community for a perceived transgression against the 'honour' of the family or community, or is required to undergo certain activities or procedures in 'honour' of the family.

It is a form of domestic abuse which relates to a victim who does not abide by the 'rules' of an honour code. This will have been set at the discretion of relatives or community; the victims are punished for bringing shame on the family or community.

Forced Marriage

In a forced marriage a person is coerced into marrying someone against their will. They may be physically threatened or emotionally blackmailed to do so. It is an abuse of human rights and cannot be justified on any religious or cultural basis.

It is not the same as an arranged marriage where they have a choice as to whether to accept the arrangement or not. The tradition of arranged marriages has operated successfully within many communities and countries for a very long time.

Stalking

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 defines "stalking" as an offence. However, there is no legal definition, but examples include: following or spying on a person or forcing contact with the victim through any means including social media. Any of these examples carried out repeatedly or persistently can cause significant alarm or distress.

Radicalisation

Prevent is a government strategy which aims to raise awareness and resilience to radicalisation. It recognises that children and vulnerable adults can be susceptible to extremist views and coerced into criminal behaviour.

Modern Slavery

There are many different characteristics that distinguish slavery from other human rights violations, however only one needs to be present for slavery to exist. It involves people being forced to work through mental or physical threat, owned or controlled by an 'employer' usually through mental or physical abuse or the threat of abuse, dehumanised and being treated as a commodity or bought and sold as 'property'.



Human Trafficking

Takes place when a victim is moved from one place to another for the purpose of exploitation, this could be through sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, forced labour, forced criminality or organ harvesting. The trafficker is able to control and exploit through violence, coercion or deception.

Cyber Crime

Cyber-crime is defined as criminal activity carried out by means of computers or the internet. Criminals are increasingly exploiting the speed, convenience, and anonymity of the internet to commit a diverse range of criminal activities without physical or virtual borders.

These crimes can cause serious harm and pose significant threats to vulnerable adults and children. Cyber-crime may take the form of cyber bullying. Cyber-bullying is the process of using the internet, mobile phones or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.

Victims of cyberbullying may not know the identity of their bully, or why the bully is targeting them. The harassment can have wide-reaching effects on the victim, as the content used to harass the victim can be spread and shared easily among many people and often remains accessible for a long time after the initial incident.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is unfortunately very common with an estimated 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men experiencing domestic abuse in their lifetime. It is defined as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between people over 16 who are or have been an intimate partner or family member regardless of gender or sexuality.

Some of the signs of domestic abuse may include; unexplained bruising, cowering, or flinching, isolation from friends and family, emotional abuse, with holding finances.

Domestic Abuse can result in serious injury or death so should always be treated serious and appropriate advice sort.

Harassment

On occasions staff or elected members may experience harassment that does not fall into the category of either stalking or domestic abuse. If a member of staff or elected member experiences harassment, they should report the issue to the Designated Safeguarding Officer or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer who will support them to create a

safety plan in partnership with the Public Health and Safety Advisor and any external partners deemed appropriate.





Responsibilities

All staff and elected members must ensure that they are aware of the safeguarding procedures in place within the authority and those staff and members who have a specific responsibility for safeguarding issues. All staff and elected members will receive safeguarding information at induction.

Designated Senior Leaders

Cheltenham Borough Council has two Senior Leaders (one officer and one cabinet member) responsible for safeguarding.

They are overall responsible for ensuring that the Council fulfils its safeguarding responsibilities:

Senior Officer Lead – Tracey Birkinshaw, Director of Communities & Economic Development

Cabinet Member Lead – Councillor Flo Clucas, Cabinet Member for Communities and Safety

Designated Safeguarding Officer

Their role is to support staff & elected members and provide guidance and advice to aid implementation of this policy and in making a referral. They will also support the Safeguarding Champions and Leadership team to fulfil their roles.

Designated Safeguarding Officer – Tracy Brown, Safeguarding and Partnerships Manager

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer – Shona Corbett, HR Business Partner

Elected Member Safeguarding Champions

Elected member safeguarding champions are responsible for championing the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. They are nominated by full council and are normally cross-party.

Safeguarding Champions – Councillor Chelin and Councillor Harman

Leadership Team

Cheltenham Borough Council's Leadership Team will ensure that:

1. The Council meets its legal obligations.



2. Where applicable, the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults is considered in strategies, plans and services.
3. The best safeguarding practices are embedded and maintained across all services to ensure continuous improvement and compliance with national and local policies.
4. All safeguarding matters relating to safeguarding are expedited in a timely manner and treated seriously.
5. Support staff and members on all aspects of safeguarding and ensure procedures are adhered to.
6. Appropriate training is facilitated, in particular for frontline employees

Service Managers

Cheltenham Borough Council's service managers will ensure that:

1. The safeguarding policy is adhered to across the organisation.
2. They and their staff complete and implement the appropriate safeguarding training and that this is reinforced through team meetings 121s etc.
3. Staff handling safeguarding issues are fully supported.
4. They take responsibility for the quality of safeguarding children, young people, and vulnerable adults in their service area.
5. All staff and volunteers working with children, young people and vulnerable adults are subject to the Disclosure and Barring checks appropriate to their role and legislative requirements.
6. Report any concerns as per the policy.

Human Resources

Human Resources will ensure that:

1. The relevant policies are in place e.g., Safer Recruitment and Disciplinary Procedures
2. Managers are supported in the use of these policies directly and indirectly associated with safeguarding
3. Provide support with the pre-employment checks (including through the Disclosure and Barring Service).



4. All staff are issued with safeguarding information at induction and support ongoing safeguarding training for all staff.
5. When the safeguarding policy is updated, ensure this is communicated to all staff

Staff

Cheltenham Borough Council's Staff will:

1. Treat all safeguarding matters seriously.
2. Report any concerns as per the policy.
3. Be aware of and adhere to the safeguarding policy and referenced policies
4. Complete safeguarding training relevant to their role covering children, adults and domestic abuse.

Elected Members

Elected members are uniquely placed to support the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults within their community. They can also provide effective leadership to ensure that the council is fulfilling its corporate responsibility. Elected members should always:

1. Report their concerns about a child or vulnerable adult's welfare or someone else's behaviour regarding a child or vulnerable adult as outlined in this policy.
2. Adopt good practice in terms of safeguarding at all times when carrying out their council duties.
3. Seek support or raise concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Officer when necessary.
4. Undertake safeguarding awareness training covering children, adults and domestic abuse.



Who Does the Safeguarding Policy Affect?

In addition to employees and elected Members of the Council, this policy shall also apply to the following areas:

Contractors

The Council will ensure that:

1. All contractors providing services directly related to children, young people and vulnerable adults have a safeguarding policy and practices which complement the council's requirements related to safeguarding.
2. Contractors providing a service to the council (such as maintenance work at a council property) will be made aware of the council's procedures and policies.
3. Council staff will ensure that relevant safeguarding practices are adopted by the contractor.

Commissioned Services

When the Council commissions services to be delivered on its behalf it still retains a duty to ensure that those services comply with relevant statutory safeguarding responsibilities. The Cheltenham Borough Council lead commissioner for the individual contract will be responsible with the support of the designated safeguarding officer and One Legal to ensure compliance with safeguarding regulations at all stages of the commissioning process. Leadership Team will keep an overview of all contracts to ensure that the aims of this safeguarding policy are embedded at all times.

Procurement

Any relevant contracts awarded with external agencies for the provision of goods and services must make specific reference to safeguarding and the duties imposed on staff. Steps must be taken to ensure the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults is commensurate with the type of service being provided on behalf of, or in partnership with the Council. It is the responsibility of the Cheltenham Borough Council officer responsible for the contract to ensure this is included.

Partners

All partners working with the council must have regard to safeguarding. For joint projects, where involving members of the public it would be good practice for partner agencies to pass a copy of their safeguarding policy to the council to ensure it aligns with the council's



safeguarding requirements or alternatively, where no such policy exists, the partner will be required to adopt this policy for the duration of the project.

Volunteers

All supervisors must ensure that volunteers are aware of and have received appropriate training in the Council's Safeguarding Policy.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks will be carried out on any volunteer who in the course of their activity has regular, unsupervised, contact with the same group of children or young people. A DBS check will also need to be carried out on volunteers who care for or deal with the personal affairs of any adult. Further guidance can be found in the Council's Safeguarding Policy.

Apprentices, Work Experience and Workers under the age of 18

Staff will need to be aware that the above child safeguarding duty will apply to their interaction with work experience and modern apprentice workers under the age of 18. Such workers would still be deemed as children under this policy, whilst also themselves being responsible under the duty imposed by Section 11 of the Children Act (2004). It will be necessary to consider the impact of this in all risk assessments carried out in relation to this member of staff.

If a work experience placement involves working with a member of staff off site or working with a member of staff on their own for longer than half a day, the student's parents or guardians should be informed prior to the work experience placement. In addition, when the student goes off-site the employee must advise a manager where they are going, the reason for the visit and how long the visit will take.

Licensing

Safeguarding is central to everything done in licensing. The council's policies, procedures and regulation across the board seeks to safeguard children and vulnerable people from the potential harms caused by gambling, alcohol, unsafe transport services, criminal activities associated licensable activities and restricting access to adult only services and products within the powers attributed to the council.

The council has a wide range of powers and discretion to refuse, revoke and/or suspend licences where, for example, safeguarding concerns arise. More proactively, we impose a mandatory safeguarding training regime for taxi and private hire licence holders.



More information can be found [here](#).

Safety Advisory Group

The Safety Advisory Group's purpose is to bring together statutory partners to review event safety including safeguarding people attending events and those impacted by events taking place in the vicinity of where they live, work or travel. Specific aspects the SAGs responsibility include an overview of security and counter-terrorism arrangements, policies, and procedures for safeguarding children and those considered vulnerable and other arrangements to ensure public safety standards are maintained. The SAG's terms of reference can be found on the council's [website](#).

Council owned buildings

A number of Council assets are/may be occupied by organisations who will provide services or activities for children, young people or vulnerable adults. To ensure due diligence on the Council's behalf in these circumstances, the organisation will be expected to demonstrate as a condition of use that it has a safeguarding policy in place that adheres to the principles of the GSCP and GSAB. The Council will also make clear in all occupancy agreements both the terms of use for the property and seek assurances that the organisations have robust protocols in place to mitigate any specific safeguarding concerns i.e. how they would mitigate the risk of other users if they do not have sole use of a building



Safeguarding Practices

Safer Recruitment

Safer recruitment is a set of practices to help make sure staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Cheltenham Borough Council operates safer recruitment processes which are followed for all staff appointments during the recruitment process, including:

- Advertising job vacancies
- Job descriptions and person specifications
- Submitting an application
- Shortlisting
- Disability
- Selection process
- Offer of employment and pre-employment checks

Training

Service managers are responsible for identifying that members of staff in relevant posts have the appropriate level of training for their role. All staff and volunteers working with children, young people and vulnerable adults must attend safeguarding training appropriate to their role. However, as a minimum all staff must undertake the following online safeguarding modules: safeguarding children, safeguarding adults under the care act. All staff will also receive information about safeguarding during induction.

Safeguarding Allegations against a Member of Staff, Volunteer or Elected Member

The Council takes seriously any allegations or complaints about the conduct of staff and volunteers in respect of their contact with children, young people, and vulnerable adults. All allegations or complaints received by the Council will be discussed with appropriate safeguarding agencies for advice before action is taken. At the appropriate time all allegations will be investigated fully by the Council, and where applicable action will be taken against the member of staff via the disciplinary procedure. If deemed necessary, the member of staff will be suspended whilst the investigation takes place.

Full procedure



Support for Staff/Volunteers

Support will be provided for any member of staff or volunteer subject to an allegation as indicated in the Council's disciplinary procedure.

The Council assures all staff and volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith (without malicious intent) reports his or her concerns about a colleague's practice or the possibility that a child or vulnerable adults may be being abused or bullied.

The person who receives information concerning a suspected case of abuse by another member of staff or volunteer should make a full record of what has been said as soon as possible and pass the information on to their Line Manager or Service Manager or Director.

Information Sharing

The Council takes its data protection responsibilities seriously and ensures that personal data is always dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection Principles. Practitioners must have due regard to the relevant data protection principles that allow them to share personal information.

The GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 place greater significance on the need for organisations to be transparent and accountable in relation to their use of data. All organisations handling personal data must ensure that they have in place comprehensive and proportionate arrangements for collecting, storing and sharing information. This also includes arrangements on informing service users about the information that they will collect and how this may be shared.

The GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 does not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children and young people safe.

To effectively share information:

- All practitioners should be confident of the processing conditions that allow them to store and share the information that they need to carry out their safeguarding role. Information that is relevant to safeguarding will often be data which is considered to be "special category personal data", meaning that it is sensitive and personal.
- Where practitioners need to share special category personal data, they should be aware that the Data Protection Act 2018 includes 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as one of conditions that allows practitioners to share information with others without consent.
- Information can be shared legally without consent, if a practitioner is unable to, or cannot be reasonably expected to gain consent from the individual, or if to gain consent could place a child at risk.



- Relevant personal information can also be shared lawfully if it is to keep a child or individual at risk safe from neglect or physical, emotional, or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental, or emotional wellbeing.

Practitioners looking to share information without consent should consider which processing condition in the Data Protection Act 2018 is most appropriate in the particular circumstances of the case. This may be the safeguarding processing condition or another relevant provision.

The Borough Council will use personal data for a limited number of purposes and always within the rules set out in the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018. The Authority will process data to protect individuals from harm or injury. Further information is available in our privacy notice:

https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/81/how_we_use_your_data/1371/environment_and_communities_privacy_data/17



Safeguarding Procedure

This section outlines the key protocols for how we will deal with safeguarding issues.

Listening to Children and Vulnerable Adults

As adults with trust and influence, council staff and elected members are in a powerful position to recognise and receive information about abuse. However, it is not their responsibility to decide if a child or vulnerable adult is being abused; their role is to act on their concerns.

If a member of staff or elected member is told about potential or alleged abuse:

- Stay calm.
- Listen carefully to what they have to say, without making any judgement.
- Try not to ask questions, but if you have to, make sure they are open-ended questions to clarify understanding and not to probe or investigate.
- Do encourage them to talk.
- Do not give an opinion or offer advice.
- Be honest with them about what you can and cannot do.
- In the case of children or other times when you have a duty to report make sure to tell them that you are not able to keep what they have told you secret.
- Tell them that you will try to find them the help they need.
- When they have finished, make a detailed note of what they have said, using their words where possible, and date the record.
- Do not contact or confront the individual who is alleged to be responsible.
- Re-assure the child / young person / vulnerable adult that they have done the right thing.
- Maintain confidentiality, only discuss with relevant people as outlined in this policy.



What to do if you have concerns

It is not the responsibility of an employee to take individual responsibility for deciding whether abuse is taking place. However, there is a responsibility to protect children and vulnerable adults in order that appropriate agencies (e.g., local social services or the police) can then make enquiries and take any necessary action.

The council recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the potential malpractice.

In being vigilant of child and vulnerable adult protection it is crucial that all employees with responsibility for care are aware of the steps used to recognise signs of abuse. In these situations, or where concerns still exist, any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported using the appropriate procedures as soon as possible.

Once the incident/allegation has been reported following the procedure in section 8 the Council's Designated Officer should be informed so that they can offer the member of staff advice as appropriate and ensure necessary action is taken.

Dealing with Allegations Against Staff

Should an individual member of staff become aware of an allegation (against a colleague) of an incident of child abuse taking place, or having taken place, they should follow the procedure below:

- Take the allegation seriously. It is your duty to consider any allegation to be potentially dangerous to the child and therefore report it.
- As part of your report, make a written record of any details of which you are aware.
- Report the allegation to the Designated Safeguarding Officer giving details of the allegation, how you became aware of it and any other relevant details. Try not to cloud your report with your opinions or judgements.
- Do not judge or investigate. As an employee, it is important not to lose focus of your role. By reporting an allegation quickly, any necessary investigations and/or judgement can be made by trained professionals, i.e., social services and/or the police.



Maintain Confidentiality

It is extremely important that any allegations are not discussed (unless absolutely necessary) as any breaches could be damaging to the child or vulnerable adult or the alleged perpetrator and to any investigation which may follow. Any requests for information from members of the public (including parents, guardians, or carers) or the media should be directed to the customer relations or the communications team as appropriate.

Support

Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents, and members of staff may need. Use of help lines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process.

Allegations of historic abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g., by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children).

Where such an allegation is made, the person should follow the procedure as detailed above contacting the designated safeguarding officer who would then notify the police.



How do I report a safeguarding concern?

If a child or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger you should always ring 999 in the first instance.

In all other cases as soon as possible share your concerns with the designated safeguarding officer (or deputy in their absence) to clarify your thinking. Keep a written record of the facts and any actions you take.

Children

If you think a child is at immediate risk of significant harm, contact the Children's Helpdesk on 01452 426565 (Monday – Friday 9am-5pm) or when out of hours 01452 614194.

If you are not sure if you should make a formal referral, you can discuss your concern in principle by contacting the helpdesk.

Full procedure

Vulnerable Adults

If you think a vulnerable adult is at risk of harm Adult Helpdesk 01452 426868 or when out of hours, the Emergency Duty Team 01452 614758.

If you have a concern but are not sure if you should make a formal referral, you can have an in principal discussion with a social work practitioner.

Full procedure

Information for social services or the police about suspected abuse:

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern or as soon as practically possible afterwards.

Stalking

To report a stalking concern please use the Gloucestershire Constabulary procedure found [here](#)

Radicalisation

To report a concern about radicalisation please contact the prevent team at Gloucestershire Constabulary [here](#)

Modern Slavery/Human Trafficking

To report a concern about modern slavery or human trafficking use the Gloucestershire Constabulary online form that is found [here](#).

Domestic Abuse

Disclosure

It is understandably difficult to disclose domestic abuse. When you receive a disclosure of domestic abuse always try to

- Be sensitive and non-judgmental
- Find a private space and allow time
- Discuss safety
- Offer specialist support

However, it is important that you:

- Do not seek proof of the abuse
- Do not contact the abuser
- Do not adopt the role of support worker yourself
- Do not compel the person to accept specialist support

Safety

It is vital to consider the safety of the person who has disclosed. Staff and elected members should take any actions necessary to ensure the person's immediate safety if necessary. GDASS is the local support service for domestic abuse and can offer guidance on safety planning in the longer term.

Staff and elected members should always consider their own safety as well as that of other people associated with the Council or the public. Any concerns about safety can be raised with the designated safeguarding officer or the HR safeguarding lead.

Risk

Domestic abuse results in the death of around two women per week and 30 men per year. It is therefore vital in case of domestic abuse to establish the risk posed so that necessary action can be taken.

Staff and elected members should complete a [DASH form](#) to help them clarify the risk. This should wherever possible be completed with the person making the disclosure. This can help support safety planning and determine what the next steps are. As depending on the risk, it may be necessary to involve other agencies.

Support with the DASH form can be given by the designated safeguarding officer or via the GDASS helpline.

Consent

Any disclosure must be treated with strict confidentiality and only shared with consent of the individual. The only exceptions to this are:

- In the case of high-risk domestic abuse
- If there is a risk to children
- If there is risk to a vulnerable adult
- If a crime has been committed

Children and domestic abuse

Although domestic abuse is defined as between people over 16 it is important to remember that children can be affected by domestic abuse as well. This can be because they are witnessing the abuse between adults which can have long term effects on their development. Or it could be because they are experiencing the same abusive behaviour in their own intimate relationships. Concerns related to children should be reported and dealt with under the safeguarding children guidance with a mind to the risk associated with domestic abuse even in younger teenage relationships.

Once you have reported the concern

Once a member of staff or elected member has reported a safeguarding concern to an external agency, they must send a notification to safeguarding@cheltenham.gov.uk. The email should include a summary of the concern, who it was reported to, and any actions necessary. This will ensure that necessary support can be given as well as allow the Council to monitor reporting of safeguarding concerns to ensure it is fulfilling its statutory duties.



Escalation of professional disagreements

Sometimes situations will arise when staff from the Council, feel that the safeguarding decision made by a worker from another agency is not a safe decision. The safety of individual children or vulnerable adults is the paramount consideration in any professional disagreement and any unresolved issues should be addressed with due consideration to the risks that might exist for the child or vulnerable adult.

All staff should feel able to challenge decision-making and to see this as their right and responsibility in order to promote the best multi-agency safeguarding practice. Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the child or vulnerable adult is protected.

If a member of staff is concerned about a safeguarding decision, they should discuss it with the Designated Safeguarding Officer or a Deputy Designated Officer and agree how they will address it directly with the worker or their immediate supervisor in the other agency. The concern and actions taken to resolve it should be recorded.

If the concern is not resolved the member of staff should contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer who will follow the appropriate stage of the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Partnership's escalation policy or the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adult Protocol.



Useful Numbers

Organisation	Number
CBC Safeguarding and Partnership Manager (designated officer)	01242 264142
Gloucestershire County Council Children's Helpdesk	01452 426565
Gloucestershire County Council Adults Helpdesk	01452 426868
Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service	01452 726 570
Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre	01452 526770
Family Information Service	0800 542 0202
Police Non Emergency	101
NSPCC	0808 800 5000
Childline	0800 1111
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
Victim Support	01452 317444
Age UK	01452 422660
Samaritans	01452 306333
Modern Slavery National Helpline	0800 121 7000
P3	01242 576002
Change Grow Live	01452 223014



Procedure to report a safeguarding concern about an employee or elected member working with children or vulnerable adults

Concern about an employee, casual worker, volunteer, or elected member working with children or vulnerable adults

If you receive an allegation or have a concern about the behaviour of a member of staff working or volunteering with children or vulnerable adult and that concern could amount to:

- a. a member of staff or volunteer has behaved in a way that has harmed a child or vulnerable adult, or may have harmed a child or vulnerable adult; or
- b. possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or vulnerable adult; or
- c. behaved towards a child or vulnerable adult in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults.

then you should: -



Report the concerns

Report your concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Officer:

Tracy Brown, Safeguarding and Partnership Manager: 01242 264142 or [email](#)

or

HR Safeguarding Lead Shona Corbett : 01242264233 or [email](#)



Completion of written record

Complete a written record of the nature and circumstances surrounding the concern including any previous concerns held. Include where the concern came from and brief details only.



Seek advice before proceeding – Initial Discussion

The Designated Safeguarding Officer, will liaise with the below before any CBC investigation takes place:

For allegation regarding working with children –
Local Authority Designated officer (LADO) Tel: 01452 426 994

For allegations regarding working with vulnerable adults –
Police or Adult Social Care Helpdesk Tel: 01452 426868

This is because it might meet the criminal threshold and so your investigation could interfere with a police or Social Care investigation. They will offer advice on any immediate action required and will assist with employment and safeguarding issues.



Allegations Management Process

If following advice, a multi-agency meeting is convened, the Designated Safeguarding Officer and/or another appropriate manager will attend on behalf of the Council. This might result in a criminal investigation, a Social Care investigation and/or an investigation to inform whether disciplinary action is required. It may also result in no further action.

If it does not meet the criteria for multi-agency investigation or once this is concluded any further action will be taken using the Council disciplinary procedures.



Procedure to report a safeguarding concern about a child

An employee, casual worker, volunteer, or elected member at Cheltenham Borough Council has concerns about a vulnerable child

If you have a concern about the wellbeing of a child (or unborn baby), then you should: -



Consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Officer or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer

Share your concerns with the appropriate officer to help clarify the nature of your concern and what to do next.



Completion of written record

complete a written record of the nature and circumstances surrounding the concern including any previous concerns held. If no further action is necessary at this time this, it is still important to keep a secure record of your concern.



Contact social care for advice if necessary

in those cases where you have a concern but are unsure about how to proceed contact the Children's helpdesk to discuss.

Children's Help Desk Tel: 01452 426565



Contact the children's helpdesk

in those cases where you are clear an immediate social work assessment is required make a referral using

Telephone: 01452 426565

or

If the concern is less urgent, please make the referral using the

[online multi agency request for service portal](#)

The social care team will then take responsibility for managing any subsequent enquiries.



Inform the Designated Safeguarding Officer

whenever you make a referral to social care, please make the Designated Safeguarding Officer aware via email. They then have a record and can support if further action is necessary.



Resolving professional Difference

Remember to use the escalate concerns if you believe an unsafe decision has been made



Procedure to report a safeguarding concern about a vulnerable adult

An employee, casual worker, volunteer, or elected member at Cheltenham Borough Council has concerns about a vulnerable adult

If you have a concern about the wellbeing of a vulnerable adult, then you should: -



Consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Officer or tra Designated Safeguarding Officer

share their concerns with the appropriate officer to help clarify the nature of your concern and what to do next.



Completion of written record

complete a written record of the nature and circumstances surrounding the concern including any previous concerns held. If no further action is necessary at this time this, it is still important to keep a secure record of your concern.



Contact social workers for advice if necessary

in those cases where you have a concern but are unsure about how to proceed contact the Adult Helpdesk: (01452) 426868 and have an in principal discussion



Contact the adult's helpdesk

In those cases where you are clear a social work assessment is required make a referral to the:

[Via the Gloucestershire Adult Social Care Portal](#)



Inform the Designated Safeguarding Officer

whenever you make a referral to social care, please make the designated safeguarding officer aware via [email](#). They have a record and can support if further action is necessary.



Escalation

Remember to use the escalate concerns if you believe an unsafe decision has been made