

Bridekirk Parish Council

Safeguarding children and adults at risk of abuse policy

OCTOBER 25 V3

1. Policy Statement

The policy exists to ensure that Bridekirk PC implements appropriate arrangements, systems and procedures to ensure that the organisation has the right skills, means and resources to protect and safeguard vulnerable adults and children of all backgrounds and identities when participating in our organised events and activities.

Bridekirk PC recognises safeguarding means protecting an adult and a child's right to live in safety, free from abuse, neglect, harm, fear and exploitation.

The purpose of this policy statement is:

- To create a safe space at events organised by Bridekirk PC by protecting the safety and well being of children, young people and adults.
- To provide Parish Councillors, as well as children, young people, adults and their families, with the principles that guide our approach to child protection and the safeguarding of adults.

2. Aims

Children and young people are defined as those persons aged less than 18 years old.

"Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children" is defined in Working Together 2018 as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health and development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

The aims of adult safeguarding are to:

- Stop abuse or neglect wherever possible;
- Prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect to adults with care and support needs;
- Safeguard adults in a way that supports them in making choices and having control about how they want to live;
- Promote an approach that concentrates on improving life for the adults concerned;
- Raise public awareness so that communities as a whole, alongside professionals, play their part in preventing, identifying and responding to abuse and neglect;
- Provide information and support in accessible ways to help people understand the different types of abuse, how to stay safe and what to do to raise a concern about the safety or wellbeing of an adult;

- Address what has caused the abuse or neglect

We will seek to keep children, young people and adults safe by:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting them;
- Appointing an adequately trained lead member for safeguarding;
- Having child protection and safeguarding procedures in place which reflect best practice;
- Ensuring all Parish Councillors know about and follow our policies and procedures;
- Using our safeguarding and child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with other agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately where we believe that someone is at risk from harm or abuse;
- Ensuring that we provide a safe environment for our children, young people, adults and Parish Councillors, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and statutory guidance and to provide a safe digital environment for our Parish Councillors.

3. Legislation - The Care Act 2014

The Care Act 2014 provides a definition and framework for Safeguarding Adults.

Safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action. This must recognise that adults sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear or unrealistic about their personal circumstances.

Safeguarding Duties

The Care Act 2014 introduced statutory safeguarding duties. The safeguarding duties apply to an adult who:

- a) Has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs);
- b) Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- c) As a result of those needs is unable to protect him or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

4. Key Principles for safeguarding

In the safeguarding of children and adults, Bridekirk PC are guided by the 6 key principles of:

- **Empowerment** – People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.
- **Prevention** – It is better to take action before harm occurs.
- **Proportionality** – The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- **Protection** – Support and representation for those in greatest need.
- **Partnerships** – Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
- **Accountability** – Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

5. Recognising the signs of abuse

Parish Councillors may be particularly well placed to spot abuse and neglect. The signs of child abuse are not always obvious and a child might not feel able to tell anyone what is happening to them. Sometimes children don't even realise that what is happening to them is abuse. Some common signs that there **may** be something concerning happening in a child's life include: unexplained changes in behaviour or personality; becoming withdrawn; seeming anxious; becoming uncharacteristically

aggressive; lacks social skills, has few or no friends; poor bond or relationship with parent / carer; knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age; running away or going missing; always choosing clothes which cover their body.

The adult may say or do things that hint that all is not well. It may come in the form of a complaint, or an expression of concern.

Everyone within Bridekirk PC should understand what to do, and where to go locally to get help, support and advice. It is vital that everyone within Bridekirk PC is vigilant on behalf of those unable to protect themselves, including:

- Knowing about different types of abuse and neglect and their signs;
- Supporting adults to keep safe;
- Knowing who to tell about suspected abuse or neglect;
- Supporting adults to think and weigh up the risks and benefits of different options when exercising choice and control.

The Care Act 2014 defines the following areas of abuse and neglect; they are not exhaustive but are a guide to behaviour that may lead to a safeguarding enquiry. This includes:

- **Physical abuse**

The physical mistreatment of one person by another which may or may not result in physical injury, this may include slapping, burning, punching, unreasonable confinement, and pinching, force-feeding, misuse of medication, shaking, inappropriate moving and handling.

Signs and indicators

Over or under use of medication, burns in unusual places; hands, soles of feet, sudden incontinence, bruising at various healing stages, bite marks, disclosure, bruising in the shape of objects, unexplained injuries or those that go untreated, reluctance to uncover parts of the body.

- **Sexual abuse including sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation**

Any form of sexual activity that the child / adult does not want and or have not considered, a sexual relationship instigated by those in a position of trust, rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the child /adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Signs and indicators

Signs of being abused may include recoiling from physical contact, genital discharge, fear of males or female, inappropriate sexual behaviour in presence of others, bruising to thighs, disclosure, and pregnancy. Abusers may take longer with personal care tasks, use offensive language, work alone with clients, or show favouritism to clients.

- **Grooming**

Grooming is when someone builds a relationship with a child so they can sexually abuse, exploit or traffic them. Children, young people can be groomed online or face to face by a stranger or by someone they know.

If you are worried a child is being groomed online you should **report it online to CEOP** (Child exploitation and online protection centre).

- **On line abuse**

Any type of abuse that happens on the Internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web like mobile phones, tablets and computers. It can happen anywhere including:

Social Media
Text messages and messaging Apps
Emails
Online chats
Online gaming
Live streaming sites

Different types of online bullying include:

Cyber bullying
Emotional abuse
Grooming
Sexting
Sexual abuse
Sexual exploitation

Signs and indicators

A child, young person or adult experiencing abuse online might: Spend a lot more or a lot less time than usual online

Seem distant, upset or angry after using the Internet or texting

Be secretive about who they are talking to and what they are doing online or on their mobile phone

Have lots of new phone numbers, messages or email addresses on their mobile phone, laptop or tablet.

- **Financial or material abuse**

Financial or material abuse – including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits

Signs and indicators

This may include not allowing a person to access to their money, not spending allocated allowance on the individual, denying access to their money, theft from the individual, theft of property, misuse of benefits. There may be an over protection of money, money not available, forged signatures, disclosure, inability to pay bills, lack of money after payments of benefits or other, unexplained withdrawals. An abuser may be evasive when discussing finances, goods purchased may be in the possession of the abuser, there may be an over keenness in participating in activities involving individuals' money.

- **Psychological and/or Emotional abuse**

This abuse may involve the use of intimidation, indifference, hostility, rejection, threats of harm or abandonment, humiliation, verbal abuse such as shouting, swearing or the use of discriminatory and or oppressive language. A deprivation of contact, blaming, controlling, coercion, harassment, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks. There may be a restriction of freedom, access to personal hygiene restricted, name calling, threat to withdraw care or support, threat of institutional care, use of bribes or threats or choice being neglected.

Signs and indicators

Stress and or anxiety in response to certain people, disclosure, compulsive behaviour, reduction in skills and concentration, lack of trust, lack of self-esteem, someone may be frightened of other individuals, there may be changes in sleep patterns.

- **Neglect and acts of omission**

Behaviour by carers that results in the persistent or severe failure to meet the physical and or psychological needs of an individual in their care. This may include ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health-care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating, wilful failure to intervene or failing to consider the implications of non-intervention in behaviours which are dangerous to them or others, failure to use agreed risk management procedures, inadequate care in residential setting, withholding affection or communication, denying access to services,

Signs and indicators

There may be disclosure. Someone being abused may have low self-esteem, deterioration, depression, isolation, continence problems, sleep disturbances, pressure ulcers. There may be seemingly uncertain attitude and cold detachment from a carer, denying individuals request, lack of consideration to the individuals request, denying others access to the individual health care professionals

- **Self-neglect**

This covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

- **Discriminatory abuse**

This includes forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, and religion or health status and may be the motivating factor in other forms of abuse. It can be personal, a hate crime or institutional.

Signs and indicators

There may be a withdrawal or rejection of culturally inappropriate services e.g. food, mixed gender groups or activities. Individual may simply agree with the abuser for an easier life, there may be disclosure, or someone may display low self-esteem. An abuser may react by saying, "I treat everyone the same", have inappropriate nick names, be uncooperative, use derogatory language, or deny someone social and cultural contact.

- **Institutional or Organisational Abuse**

Neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Signs and indicators

This may include a system that condones poor practice, deprived environment, lack of procedures for staff, one commode used for a number of people, no or little evidence of training, lack of staff support/supervision, lack of privacy or personal care, repeated unaddressed incidents of poor practice, lack of homely environment, manager implicated in poor practice. There may be a lack of personal clothing, no support plan, lack of stimulation, repeated falls, repeated infections, unexplained bruises/burns, pressure ulcers, unauthorised deprivation of liberty. Abusers may have a lack of understanding of a person's disability,

misuse medication, use illegal controls and restraints, display undue/inappropriate physical intervention, and inappropriately use power/control.

- **Domestic abuse**

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is: any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- Psychological
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

A new offence of coercive and controlling behaviour in intimate and familial relationships was introduced into the Serious Crime Act 2015. The offence will impose a maximum 5 years imprisonment, a fine or both.

Signs and indicators

May include many of those indicators listed under previous categories in this document, including unexplained bruising, withdrawal from activities, work or volunteering, not being in control of finances, or decision making.

- **Modern slavery and trafficking**

Encompasses slavery, human trafficking, and forced labour and domestic servitude. Many children and young people are trafficked into the UK from other countries. Children are also trafficked around the UK. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

Signs and indicators

There may be signs of physical or psychological abuse, victims may look malnourished or unkempt, or appear withdrawn. Victims may rarely be allowed to travel on their own, seem under the control, influence of others, rarely interact or appear unfamiliar with their neighbourhood or where they work. They may be living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation, and/or living and working at the same address. Victims may have no identification documents, have few personal possessions and always wear the same clothes day in day out. What clothes they do wear may not be suitable for their work. People may have little opportunity to move freely and may have had their travel documents retained, e.g. passports. They may be dropped off/collected for work on a regular basis either very early or late at night. Victims may avoid eye contact, appear frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers and fear law enforcers for many reasons, such as not knowing who to trust or where to get help, fear of deportation, fear of violence to them or their family.

- **Radicalisation to terrorism**

The Government through its PREVENT programme has highlighted how some adults may be vulnerable to radicalisation and involvement in terrorism. This can include the exploitation of vulnerable people and involve them in extremist activity. Radicalisation can be described as a process, by which a person to an increasing extent accepts the use of undemocratic or violent means, including terrorism, in an attempt to reach a specific political/ideological objective. Vulnerable individuals being targeted for radicalisation/recruitment into violent extremism is viewed as a safeguarding issue.

Signs and indicators

May include being in contact with extremist recruiters; articulating support for violent extremist causes or leaders; accessing violent extremist websites, especially those with a social networking element; possessing violent extremist literature; using extremist narratives to explain personal disadvantage; justifying the use of violence to solve societal issues; joining extremist organisations; and significant changes to appearance and/or behaviour.

More information about the types of child and adult abuse can be found from the **NSPCC** and **Ann Craft Trust**.

6. Who might abuse?

Abuse of children, young people and adults at risk, may be perpetrated by a wide range of people including relatives, family members, professional staff, paid care workers, volunteers, other service users, neighbours, friends and associates, people who deliberately exploit vulnerable people and strangers.

Incidents of abuse may be one-off or multiple, and affect one person or more. Professionals and others should look beyond single incidents or individuals to identify patterns of harm. Patterns of abuse vary and include:

- Serial abusing in which the perpetrator seeks out and 'grooms' individuals. Sexual abuse sometimes falls into this pattern as do some forms of financial abuse;
- Long-term abuse in the context of an ongoing family relationship such as domestic violence between spouses or generations or persistent psychological abuse;
- Or opportunistic abuse such as theft occurring because money or jewellery has been left lying around.

If undertaking a regulatory activity or if their post is eligible, Parish Councillors must consent to a **Disclosure and Barring Service check** and sign up to the update service and agree to Bridekirk Parish Council requesting an annual update. Bridekirk Parish Council understands that:

- A person who is barred from working with children or vulnerable adults is breaking the law if they work or volunteer, or try to work or volunteer with these groups;
- An organisation which knowingly employs someone who is barred to work with those groups will also be breaking the law;
- If our organisation dismisses a member of staff or volunteer because they have harmed a child or vulnerable adult, or would have done so if they had not left, we must make referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service/about>).

7. Management & Support of Parish Councillors

Bridekirk PC has the following items in place for managing its Parish Councillors:

- All Parish Councillors to receive a copy of Bridekirk PC Safeguarding policies and procedures and awareness training that enables them to:
- Understand what safeguarding is and their role in safeguarding adults and children;
- Recognise an adult or child potentially in need of safeguarding and take action;
- Understand the procedures for making a safeguarding alert; • Understand dignity and respect when working with individuals;
- Have knowledge of policy, procedures and legislation that supports safeguarding adults and children activity.

8. Reporting procedures

The following procedure refers to abuse or suspicion of abuse that Parish Councillors become aware of during their work with Bridekirk PC.

Any Parish Councillor who becomes aware that an adult or child is at risk of being abused or has safeguarding needs should raise the matter immediately with the designated safeguarding lead.

Early sharing of information is the key to providing an effective response where there are emerging concerns. To ensure effective safeguarding arrangements no Parish Councillor should assume that someone else will pass on information which they think may be critical to the safety and wellbeing of the adult or child.

Where an adult is of concern Bridekirk PC will:

- Inform the adult of the action we propose to take;
- Seek their agreement for any referral;
- Ensure that they are kept informed about what will happen next, so they can be reassured about what to expect;
- Endeavour to ensure that they are safe and supported before proceeding with any other action;
- Inform the adult if Bridekirk PC are planning to seek advice from or report concerns to an external agency.
- Complete a written report including details of any actions taken.

Child Protection

If at any time you become concerned that a Child might be at risk you need to follow the Child Protection Procedure outlined in Bridekirk PC Protection/Safeguarding Policy.

Where a child or young person under 18 is of concern Bridekirk PC will:

- Contact the designated safeguarding lead or, if they cannot be contacted, go straight to the Cumberland Safeguarding Hub telephone: 0333 240 1727.
- Complete a written report including details of any actions taken.
- **Or if a child is in immediate danger of significant harm the police should be called on 999.**

9. Recording

- A written record must be kept in regard to any safeguarding concern. This must include details of the person involved, the nature of the concern and the actions taken.
- The recordings must be signed and dated. All records must be securely and confidentially filed i.e. on a device that is password protected and shared with only those who need to view it. Alternatively, stored away in a locked cupboard with access restricted.

10. Reporting

If I have concerns about a child you must use the following guidance:

From 1 April 2023 the current Cumbria-wide Safeguarding Hub was replaced by Cumberland Safeguarding

Hub and Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Hub.

If you are concerned about a child in Allerdale, Carlisle or Copeland you will contact the Cumberland Safeguarding Hub.

If you are concerned about a child in Barrow, Eden or South Lakeland you will contact the Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Hub.

Information on how to make a referral will continue to be accessed via the current page on the CSCP website, the changes went live on 1 April 2023:

<https://www.cumbriasafeguardingchildren.co.uk/professionals/hub/whattodoifyouhaveconcernsabouta child.asp>

Each new hub has its own single contact form, phone number and email address:

Cumberland Safeguarding Hub

- Telephone Number - 0333 240 1727
- Email Address – safeguarding.hub@cumberland.gov.uk

Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Hub

- Telephone Number - 0300 373 2724
- Email Address – safeguarding.hub@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

Local Authority Designated Officer - LADO

Cumbria LADO service continues to cover both local authority footprints - Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness.

If you have concerns regarding someone who works with a child including foster carers and volunteers these should be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). This applies to all paid, unpaid, volunteers, casual, agency employees or anyone working in a self-employed capacity.

Information on LADO including how to contact and the referral form will still be accessed via the CSCP website :<https://www.cumbriasafeguardingchildren.co.uk/professionals/lado.asp>

There are some cases that require an urgent response

- If you suspect a serious criminal act has taken place, telephone 999. Tell them if you think it might be child /adult abuse.
- If the individual is injured seek immediate medical treatment. Tell the ambulance personnel or A&E staff that this is a potential child / adult abuse situation.

11. Training

Should Parish Councillors require training in respect of Safeguarding this will be sourced through appropriate training organisations appropriate for the need of the individual and may be through either online or face to face provision. The current provision will be through the Cumberland Council Online Training Portal. Any changes to training provider will be shown in any further iterations of this Policy Document.

12. Designated Safeguarding Lead

Name: Deborah Cosgrove

Contact details: 07540 274737

Deputy Safeguarding Lead

Name: Roy Stenson

Contact details: 07803034045

11. Revision history

Reviewed October 2025

This policy will be monitored by the Bridekirk PC on a regular basis and will be reviewed every 12 months.

Signed _____

Date _____

The next review date is October 20026