



Bexley Voice

Bexley Parent Carer Forum



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The aim of this policy is to ensure an understanding of how Bexley Voice, (Parent Carer Forum for Bexley, Kent) meets its responsibilities to promote the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children/young people and protect them from harm.

This policy is to provide all members of Bexley Voice and the Bexley Voice Team (made up of Management Committee, Trustees, Staff and Volunteers) with clear guidance about their role and responsibilities with regards safeguarding. Also, to advise parents and carers about the safeguarding measures that the Bexley Voice Team are expected to understand and comply with.

Whilst recognising that the Bexley Voice Team will have little direct contact with children and young people, its work with parent carers means that they may indirectly have contact with children and young people and certainly have contact with parent carers who often live in particularly challenging situations.

Whilst it is not the responsibility of Bexley Voice to determine whether or not abuse has taken place, this is undertaken in liaison with external child protection professionals, it is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns in relation to children or vulnerable adults to the relevant authority.

Please see the appendix which outlines:

- Types of abuse
- Guidance on how to respond to a disclosure of abuse
- How to deal with a safeguarding referral

This policy operates within the expectations and procedures of Bexley Local Authority and National bodies.

Safeguarding disabled children and young people

There is clear evidence that disabled children and young people have an increased vulnerability to being abused and that the presence of multiple impairments further increases their vulnerability. There are many reasons for this. It is important that all those who work with disabled children and young people have some understanding of these reasons and ensure that they offer appropriate support to any parent/carers, child or young person who discloses abuse and are constantly vigilant to any signs of possible abuse.

Legislation and guidance that underpins this policy

This Policy and Procedures have been developed in line with the principles of The Children Act 1989/2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 and with reference to the following:



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- What to Do If You're Worried a Child Is Being Abused (2006)
- Children and Families Act (2014)
- Mental Capacity Act (2005)
- The Care Act (2014)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Health & Social Care Act (2012)
- Non-Statutory Guidance on Safeguarding Disabled Children (2009)
- SEND Code of Practice age 0-25 (2014)

The principles behind this Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and protect them from harm. In today's world all agencies and individuals now share the responsibility to protect these groups from harm/risk of harm.

The application of Bexley Voice's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures is based on the following key principles:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All members of the team have a safeguarding responsibility for any children, young people and vulnerable adults they may come in contact with.

Policy Statement

Parent carers of children/young people who are members of Bexley Voice should be aware that:

- Any concerns that a child, young person or vulnerable adult has, or may be experiencing harm, which comes to the attention of the Bexley Voice Team, will be referred to the local statutory agency.
- The Bexley Voice Team will be recruited using safe recruitment practices to ensure they are suitable individuals to take on a role which puts them into contact with large numbers of parent carers.
- The Bexley Voice Team will be provided with an induction to assist them to fulfil their duties.

Reporting Procedures – DO NOT DELAY

Emergency Situations:

If emergency medical attention is required this can be secured by calling an ambulance (dial 999).



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If a child, young person or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger the police should be contacted.....Dial 999, as they alone have the power to remove a child immediately if protection is necessary, via their powers to use Police Protection.

It is vitally important that any disclosure, made in confidence, is recorded factually as soon as possible; regardless of whether or not the matter is referred to an agency or authority. An accurate account should be made of:

- Names of people who were involved and what was said or done by whom.
- Date and time of what has occurred and the time the disclosure was made.
- Any action taken by the group to gather information and refer on.
- Any further action, e.g. suspension of a worker or volunteer.
- Where relevant, reasons why there is no referral to a statutory agency.
- Names of persons reporting and to whom reported.

Any written information regarding Safeguarding issues, concerning individuals, is to be kept in a secure place. This will usually be in a secure, virtual folder, to comply with GDPR.

Allegations against Adults who work with Children

If you have information of any circumstances which suggest an adult who works with children, young people or vulnerable adults (in a paid or unpaid capacity) has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child or young person.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or may be related to, a child or young person.
- Behaved towards a child or young person in a way that indicated s/he is unsuitable to work with children or young people.

You should speak immediately with the **Bexley Voice Safeguarding Lead – Danita Hooker**. If the Safeguarding lead is not available, then raise the matter with the **Janine Wooster, Bexley Voice Vice Chair**. They will then consult with Children's Services Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and if necessary, make a referral to the LADO (Local Authority Delegated Officer) for Bexley.

Contact and Further Information

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Contact Telephone daytime 020 3045 5440
Out of hours/weekends 020 8303 7777 or 020 8303 7171

The Bexley **Local Authority Designated Officer** (LADO) manages allegations of abuse made against people who work with children and young people in any setting. The LADO process is concerned with managing allegations or concerns about the neglect, sexual, physical or emotional abuse of children. It can also be



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used to manage wider concerns about grooming or other less obvious possibly harmful behaviour.

Contact Email: LADO@bexley.gov.uk
Contact Telephone: 0203 045 3436
0203 0455645 (LADO Business Support)
0203 0455440 (MASH)

Please use Egress Switch for sending referral forms or any other sensitive information.

The **Bexley Local Offer** provides information and contacts for services in Bexley.
Website: <https://www.bexleylocaloffer.uk/Search?search=safeguarding>

If you are concerned about a child or young person's safety, you can contact the **Local Authority** by calling the numbers below:

Contact Telephone: 020 8303 7777, Mon – Thurs 9am-5pm, Fri 9am 4.30pm
Outside of these times contact the
Emergency Duty Team: 020 8303 7777 or 020 8303 7171

The Bexley Safeguarding Partnership provides information for professionals, volunteers, children & young people and their families.

Telephone: 0203 045 4320
Website: <https://bexleysafeguardingpartnership.co.uk/>
Email: shield@bexley.gov.uk

NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) provides information and a helpline for parents, carers and children.

Telephone: 0808 800 5000
Email: help@nspcc.org.uk
Website: www.nspcc.org.uk
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/>

If you are concerned about a vulnerable adult you should contact the **Bexley Care Team**;

Email: screeners@bexley.gov.uk

Bexley Contact Centre: 0203 045 5159

The Contact Centre based at the Bexley Civic Offices is open to take calls between 8.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday. Outside these hours and on Sundays and Bank Holidays, in emergency only, please contact the Out of Hours Duty Service on **0208 303 7777**.

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Next Review Date:	Feb 2025 The Bexley Voice Management Committee reserve the right to update or amend this policy at any time without notice.
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Appendix - TO BE READ WITH THE BV SAFEGUARDING POLICY IF REQUIRED

Definitions and signs of abuse

There are four recognised types of abuse and it is important that all the Bexley Voice Team know what they are and how to recognise them.

The following definitions are based on those from Working Together to Safeguard Children (DCSF 2010).

1 - Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to, a child whom they are looking after. A person might do this because they enjoy or need the attention they get through having a sick child. Physical abuse, as well as being a result of an act of commission can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

2 - Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

3 - Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual on-line images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people. This includes people from all different walks of life.



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4 - Neglect

Neglect is 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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born it may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers) or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

How to respond to a child, young person or vulnerable adult disclosing abuse:

DO:

- Treat any allegations extremely seriously and act at all times towards the young person as if you believe what they are saying.
- Tell the young person they are right to tell you and reassure they are not to blame.
- Be honest about your own position, who you have to tell and why.
- Tell the young person what you are doing and when, and keep them up to date with what is happening.
- Take further action – you may be the only person in a position to prevent future abuse – inform the Bexley Voice Safeguarding Lead immediately.
- Write down everything said and done be clear on dates and times of information.

DON'T:

- Make promises you can't keep.
- Interrogate the child – it is not your job to carry out an investigation – this will be up to the police and social care who have experience in this area.
- Cast doubt on what the child has told you, don't interrupt or change the subject
- Say anything that makes the child feel responsible for the abuse
- Do nothing – make sure you inform the Bexley Voice Safeguarding lead immediately – they will know how to follow this up and where to go for further advice.

If you have any concerns you should immediately make contact with The Bexley Voice Safeguarding Lead or if he/ she is not available then the Chair of Trustees for advice on next steps.

How to respond to a parent carer disclosing abuse:

DO:

- Clarify whether the parent / carer is disclosing information about abuse which has happened to them or whether this is in relation to their own child or another child.
- Inform the parent carer, as soon as possible, that you believe they have begun to disclose information which leads you to believe that a child has suffered, or may suffer harm, that you will not be able to keep this information to yourself.



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- Treat any allegations extremely seriously and act at all times towards the parent carer as if you believe what they are saying.
- Tell the parent carer they are right to tell you, advise who you have to tell and why.
- Support them if necessary – If a safeguarding referral needs to be made, encourage the parent carer to make the referral themselves. If they won't do this, be clear you will have to refer yourself. Inform the parent carer what you are doing and when and keep them up to date with what is happening.
- Make sure you are clear (if possible) where the child / young person / vulnerable adult is at the current time and consider their immediate safety.
- Write down everything that was said and what was done.

DON'T:

- Make promises you can't keep – e.g. advising they can speak to you in confidence
- Interrogate the parent carer – it is not your job to carry out an investigation – this will be up to the police and children's social care, who have experience in this
- Do nothing – make sure you tell the Bexley Voice Safeguarding Lead immediately – they will know how to follow this up and where to go for further advice

Informing parent carers if Bexley Voice is going to make a referral

It is good practice to be as open and honest as possible with parent carers about any concerns you have. If you need to make a referral to social care, you should normally discuss this with the parent carer before you do. However, inability to inform parent carers should not prevent a referral being made. It would then be a joint decision with Children's Social Care about how and when the parents should be approached and by whom.

However, you should **NOT** discuss your concerns with parent carer in the following circumstances:

- where sexual abuse or sexual exploitation is suspected
- where organised or multiple abuse is suspected
- where Fabricated or Induced Illness is suspected
- where Female Genital Mutilation is the concern
- in cases of suspected Forced Marriage
- where contacting or discussing the referral would place a child, young person, yourself or others at risk.