

**Broxbourne Council**

**Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy**

**November 2025**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Under the Care Act 2014, all statutory agencies have a duty to safeguard adults who may be at risk of abuse or neglect. This includes ensuring their wellbeing, protecting their dignity and rights, and promoting their safety. The Council is committed to fulfilling this duty by ensuring that all its functions including any services commissioned from external providers, are delivered with full regard to the need to safeguard vulnerable adults.

In the course of delivering services or interacting with residents, the Council is in a position to positively influence the lives of vulnerable adults, helping to protect them from harm, neglect, exploitation, and abuse.

This policy outlines how the Council will meet its legal responsibilities and provides assurance to the public, service users, elected members, employees, and those working on behalf of the Council that:

- They can expect the Council to take appropriate steps to protect and safeguard vulnerable adults
- There is a clear and accessible procedure for raising concerns
- All reports of abuse or suspected abuse are taken seriously and responded to effectively
- Robust systems are in place for recording, monitoring, and reviewing safeguarding concerns

This policy replaces the Council's previous Adult Safeguarding Policy (2018) and reflects current legislation, statutory guidance, and best practice.

The Council believes that all vulnerable people have the right to be safe from harm, exploitation and neglect. As such, the Council recognises the role and responsibilities it has in safeguarding vulnerable adults, including the contribution it must make to working together with other agencies to ensure the well-being of vulnerable people in the Borough of Broxbourne.

The policy applies to all staff, volunteer workers, elected members and organisations providing services under contract with Broxbourne Borough Council.

## **1. Policy Statement**

1.1 Broxbourne Borough Council (referred to as the Council) is committed to safeguarding, all vulnerable adults involved in any way in the Council's activities and services and to treating them with courtesy and respect during their dealings with the Council.

## **2. Scope of the Policy**

2.1 This policy applies to all staff (permanent, temporary and casual) and elected members of Broxbourne Borough Council as well as all other people (including volunteers, consultants and contractors) who work on behalf of the Council.

2.2 This policy must be read in conjunction with the Hertfordshire County Council Safeguarding Adults Board's policy. Details of this can be found in section 4.1.

### **3. Legislative background to the Policy**

3.1 The Care Act 2014 sets out a clear legal framework for local authorities and other statutory agencies on how to protect adults, with care and support needs from abuse or neglect.

3.2 It encompasses the need for professionals to prevent care needs becoming more serious, informs and advises adults on making appropriate decisions about their care support, and outlines the duty on professionals to cooperate with each other to protect adults.

3.3 The Act also requires the County Council to promote greater multi agency collaboration by creating Safeguarding Adults Board with core membership including Adult Care, NHS and the Police. These Boards have the power to include other bodies and in Hertfordshire the 10 districts are represented by one district council Chief Executive.

3.4 This gives Hertfordshire County Council responsibility for:

- Promoting individual well-being
- Preventing needs for care and support
- Promoting integration of care and support within health services
- Providing information and advice
- Promoting diversity and quality in provision of services

3.5 This policy has been written to ensure adherence with Hertfordshire County Council's Safeguarding Adults Board's strategic aims and objectives and to ensure compliance with Hertfordshire County Council guidelines and procedures. Further details about the Care Act (2014) and how the Council will comply with the duty to cooperate, can be found below at section 4.

### **Disclosure and Barring Service**

3.6 Since the introduction of the Care Standards Act 2000 it is a requirement for most roles providing care or health services to be subject to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

3.7 Although this is unlikely to apply locally as the Council does not provide care services, DBS clearances are still required for all posts interacting frequently or intensively with vulnerable adults.

### **Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005**

3.8 The Mental Capacity Act (2005) provides a framework to empower and protect people who lack the capacity to make decisions for themselves. The act defines who take decisions, when they can take them and how they should go about it. The underlying aim is to empower those who lack capacity to make as many decisions for themselves as possible and to ensure any decision made on their behalf is made in their best interests. Someone who lacks capacity due to an illness or disability (such as a mental health illness, dementia or a learning disability) may have one or more of the following issues:

- Cannot understand information given to them
- Cannot retain that information long enough to be able to make the decision
- Cannot use or weigh up the information to make a decision

- Has difficulty in communicating their decision

3.9 The Mental Capacity Act 2005 sets out who is legally allowed to make decisions, when they can do so, and the appropriate process for making those decisions. This applies to both significant decisions, such as those involving finances, social care, or medical treatment and everyday choices, like what someone eats or wears.

3.10 When decisions need to be made on their behalf, these must be in their best interests and aimed at protecting them from harm.

3.11 Capacity can fluctuate depending on a person's circumstances. Some individuals may have the ability to make decisions in certain areas of their life but not in others, for example, they might be able to choose their meals and clothing but not make informed decisions about medical treatment.

3.12 Deprivations of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS) were introduced in 2009 under the auspices of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. To provide legal protection for vulnerable people in care homes or hospitals who are or may become deprived of their liberty. Sometimes when a person lacks capacity to decide about their care and support arrangements, it may be necessary for the organisation delivering that care and support to request an authorisation to legally deprive a person of their liberty.

### **The Modern Slavery Act 2015**

3.13 The Modern Slavery Act 2015 places specific duties on local authorities under sections 43 and 52 of the Act, to refer child victims or consenting adult victims through to the National Referral Mechanism, or to make a duty to notify referral to the Home Office for a Single Competent Authority assessment. The Council currently works alongside local organisation Refuge to provide expert case management support for consenting suspected modern slavery victims.

### **The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015**

3.14 Section 26 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on local authorities to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

### **Domestic Abuse legislation**

3.15 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a duty on local authorities in relation to safe accommodation, homelessness assistance and additional support services for victims of domestic abuse. Whilst most of these duties are specific to county or unitary authorities, district and borough councils have been given new housing duties in relation to domestic abuse and safer accommodation. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires Community Safety Partnerships to send final copies of any Domestic Homicide Review to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner. The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to participate in Domestic Homicide Reviews.

## **4. Hertfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (HSAB)**

4.1 HSAB has published Multi-Agency Safeguarding Adult Policy and Procedures. This can be found at: [Contents](#)

The document underpins and guides the Council's approach to safeguarding vulnerable adults and highlights several duties that require the Council to cooperate with and assist Hertfordshire County Council in discharging their responsibilities under the Care Act 2014.

4.2 The Care Act 2014 (section 6) outlines a general duty to co-operate between Hertfordshire County Council and other organisations providing care and support. This includes to ensure co-operation between its adult care and support, housing, public health and children's services.

4.3 Section 7 provides the ability to request co-operation from a relevant partner or another local authority, in relation to an individual case. The local authority or relevant partner must co-operate as requested, unless doing so would be incompatible with their own duties or have an adverse effect on the exercise of their functions.

4.4 Section 45 'supply of information duty' covers the responsibilities of others to comply with requests for the right information to be shared, with the right people at the right time.

## **5. Definitions**

### **5.1 Adults at Risk**

Under the Care Act (2014) an adult at risk is defined as someone aged 18 or over who:

- Has a need for care and support (regardless of the level of need and whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs)
- Is experiencing or is at risk of abuse and neglect
- As a result of those needs, is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it

The main groups to whom this applies are persons with one or more of the following:

- Physical Disability
- Learning Disability
- Mental Health
- Substance Misuse
- Dementia
- Sensory Impairment
- Older person (frailty)
- Terminal illness

### **5.2 Abuse**

The Care Act 2014 defines the following types of abuse:

#### **Physical abuse**

Including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.

## **Domestic abuse**

Including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; honour-based abuse and female genital mutilation.

## **Sexual abuse or exploitation**

Including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, being subjected to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting, sexual exploitation.

## **Psychological abuse**

Including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, radicalisation, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

## **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.

## **Modern slavery**

This includes slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use coercion, deception and force to trap individuals in lives of abuse, exploitation and inhumane conditions.

## **Discriminatory abuse**

Including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

## **Organisational abuse**

Including 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.

## **Neglect and acts of omission**

Including 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.

## **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.

### 5.3 County Lines and Gangs

County Lines is the name given to describe drug dealing by criminal gangs from urban areas expanding their activities into smaller towns and rural areas. It often involves the exploitation of children, as gangs use young people and those with mental health or addiction problems to transport drugs and money. These gangs establish a base in the location they are targeting, often taking over the homes of local vulnerable adults by force or coercion in a practice referred to as cuckooing. Dealers typically use a single phone line to facilitate the supply of Class A drugs to customers. The phone line is highly valuable and is protected through violence and intimidation.

Signs to look out for include:

- Individuals with multiple mobile phones or SIM cards
- Unknown or suspicious looking characters coming and going from a neighbour's house
- Young people with sums of money, expensive clothing, or accessories they cannot account for
- Suspicious smells coming from the property
- Windows covered or curtains closed all of the time
- Cars pulling up to or near to the house for a short period of time
- An increase in anti-social behaviour around the property

### 5.4 Radicalisation

Radicalisation is defined as the act or process of making a person more radical or favouring of extreme or fundamental changes in political, economic or social conditions, institutions or habits of the mind.

Extremism is defined as the holding of extreme political or religious views. There are several behaviours which may indicate an individual is at risk of being radicalised or exposed to extreme views. These include:

- Spending increasing amounts of time in the company of other suspected extremists
- Changing their style of dress or personal appearance to accord with the group.
- Day-to-day behaviour becoming increasingly centred on an extremist ideology, group or cause
- Loss of interest in other friends and activities not associated with the extremist ideology, group or cause
- Possession of materials or symbols associated with an extremist cause.
- Attempts to recruit others to the group/cause
- Communications with others that suggests identification with a group, cause or ideolog
- Using insulting or derogatory names for another group
- Increase in prejudice-related incidents committed by that person including physical or verbal assault, provocative behaviour, damage to property, derogatory name calling, possession of prejudice-related materials, prejudice related ridicule or name calling, refusal to co-operate, attempts to recruit to prejudice-related organisations and condoning or supporting violence towards others

## **5.5 Where and how does abuse happen**

Abuse and harm can be experienced in any setting in a person's home (including in supported housing schemes, nursing and care homes), in hospital, at work or in community areas. Adults can experience abuse by several people known to them in varying capacities. Perpetrators of abuse may include family members, friends, neighbours, paid or unpaid professionals, volunteers, other adults at risk and strangers who set out to deliberately exploit people. It is essential that in any case where abuse is suspected, the concern is treated seriously, and action is taken to investigate and prevent abuse from occurring.

## **6. The Aims of the Policy**

6.1 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, alongside professionals, play their part in preventing, identifying and responding to abuse and neglect
- Provide information and support in accessible ways to help adults understand the different types of abuse, how to stay safe and what to do to raise a concern about the safety or well-being of an adult
- Address what has caused the abuse

6.2 The aims of the Broxbourne policy are to:

- Ensure local practices and initiatives are compliant with and complement the strategic objectives, policies and procedures of the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (HSAB) as the lead authority for the Council
- Have clear policies and procedures in place to enable staff to identify possible safeguarding concerns to the Designated Officer with responsibility to report these concerns as they deem necessary
- Report concerns or allegations regarding the abuse of vulnerable adults in line with the HSAB guidelines
- Set out a clear framework to enable the Council to work in partnership with others to safeguard vulnerable adults
- Ensure safe and effective working practices are in place
- Support staff within the organisation when dealing with vulnerable adults
- Encourage staff to participate in any training or development opportunities offered to them to improve their knowledge or skills in this area
- Bring to the attention of the relevant contact officer any relevant criminal conviction or caution that may affect an employee's position once appointed
- Insofar as it is able, work to ensure that the welfare of adults is always paramount
- Act as a 'local champion' in the promotion of adult safeguarding within Broxbourne



## **7. Training**

7.1 It is important that staff can recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and know the correct procedures to report such observations or disclosures. All staff must be trained appropriately according to their level of contact with adults to recognise signs of abuse and neglect, as well as how to raise concerns using the internal reporting procedures. The appropriate level of training has been identified for every post.

7.2 The three levels of training are:

- Level 0- all staff receive this training which includes how to identify and report safeguarding concerns to the Safeguarding Officers. This is provided via the Council's online training portal and is part of the induction process for all new staff
- Level 1- for staff who have limited contact with vulnerable adults
- Level 2- for those staff who have regular or extensive contact with vulnerable adults

Additional training is provided by both Hertfordshire County Council and external courses for the Safeguarding Officer.

Staff and councillors are required to refresh safeguarding training every three years.

## **8. Designated Officer for Vulnerable Adults**

8.1 Pursuant to this policy the Council will appoint a Designated Officer for Vulnerable Adults (DOVA) and a Deputy. Details of the named officer can be found at appendix 1.

8.2 The role of the Designated Officer is to ensure the aims of the policy are implemented and their effectiveness monitored and reviewed. Key elements are:

- Refer concerns about individuals to Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care Service in a timely way.
- Coordinate and receive such reports from individual members of staff, elected members, and residents.
- Act as local champion for the issue and keep abreast of the issues including the Hertfordshire agenda as well as national policy initiatives.
- Develop and implement a training programme for staff working in conjunction with the Designated Child Protection Officer, Community Safety Manager and Human Resources to ensure this is effectively rolled out and monitored.
- Advise and support individual staff as and when required.
- Monitor and review this policy as and when required recommending changes where appropriate.
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## **9 Record Keeping**

9.1 It is essential that any incident raising concern is reported within 24 hours using the Council's safeguarding mailbox. Staff reporting a concern should provide a comprehensive account of the interaction between the individual and staff member, including any actions taken including offering support and guidance.

9.2 All reports must be sent to [safeguarding@broxbourne.gov.uk](mailto:safeguarding@broxbourne.gov.uk) These reports are centrally logged in a secure database, allowing for ongoing monitoring and updates as further actions are taken.

## **10 Information sharing**

10.1 Adults have a general right to independence, choice and self-determination including control over information about themselves. In the context of adult safeguarding these rights can be overridden in certain circumstances, including where:

- The person lacks the mental capacity to make that decision
- Other people are, or may be, at risk, including children
- Sharing the information could prevent a crime
- The alleged abuser has care and support needs and may also be at risk
- Staff are implicated
- The person has the mental capacity to make that decision, but they may be under duress or being coerced
- The risk is unreasonably high and meets the criteria for a multi-agency risk assessment conference
- A court order or other legal authority has requested the information
- Information needs to be shared without consent in response to an emergency or life-threatening situation

10.2 Information can be shared lawfully within the parameters of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), 2018. There are local agreements in place setting out the principles for sharing information between organisations.

10.3 Staff dealing with concerns must never promise confidentiality and always report safeguarding concerns in line with safeguarding procedures.

## **11 Whistleblowing**

11.1 The Council's Whistleblowing policy can be used to support safeguarding when:

- A staff member has not responded appropriately to a safeguarding concern e.g. did not make a referral.
- A staff member is suspected to be the perpetrator of abuse.

## **12. Allegations of Abuse Against Employees, Volunteers, Councillors or a Contracted Service Provider**

12.1 An allegation is any information that indicates that a councillor, employee, volunteer or contracted service provider may have:

- Behaved in a way which might constitute abuse of a vulnerable adult
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a vulnerable adult
- Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with vulnerable adults

12.2 This applies to any vulnerable adult that the member of staff, volunteer, councillor has contact with in their personal, professional or community life.

12.3 If a councillor, employee, volunteer or contracted service provider receives an allegation that falls into any of the categories above, they should:

- Take the allegation or concern seriously
- Immediately report it to the Designated Officer for Vulnerable Adults (DOVA)

- The DOVA will inform the Assistant Director of Resources to agree the next steps

These could involve:

- The immediate suspension of the individual against whom the allegation has been made
- Informing Hertfordshire County Council whose role it will be to investigate the allegation. Ideally, this should be done immediately, but where this is not practical, within one working day of when an allegation is made about abuse against a vulnerable adult. This is because the individual concerned may work in multiple settings for multiple employers
- Contacting the police, where it is appropriate to do so

12.4 Failure of the Council to act in accordance with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 in responding to allegations made against its staff, volunteers or councillors may result in the prosecution of the Council.

12.5 Where concern of abuse of a vulnerable adult is made against a councillor, employee, volunteer or contracted service provider it must link directly to the related policies, specifically the Council's Disciplinary Policy, the Whistleblowing Policy, the Complaints Procedure and the Data Protection Policy.

### **13. Responding to Allegations or Concerns About Any Other Person e.g. Parent, Carer, Other Service Users**

13.1 If a councillor, employee, volunteer or contracted service provider receives an allegation or concern regarding a parent, carer or other service user, they should refer the matter to the DOVA using [safeguarding@broxbourne.gov.uk](mailto:safeguarding@broxbourne.gov.uk)

13.2 The DOVA will inform Hertfordshire County Council and the police as appropriate. This should be within 24 hours of receiving the referral, if not immediately.

13.3 HSAB has indicated that a specific approach to visiting VIPS's is appropriate. There is no evidence whatsoever that this group represents an increased risk when compared to the general population. However, high profile cases have indicated that the enhanced profile of such individuals has been a factor in patterns of abusive behaviour. The Council will therefore develop appropriate procedures in this regard.

13.4 Customer contact staff should be trained to refer callers with adult protection concerns that do not relate directly to the Council's services to the Hertfordshire County Council Customer Service Centre on 0300 123 4042.

### **14. Recruitment and Staffing**

14.1 Recruitment procedures are guided by principles set out by HSAB and are intended to parallel those set out in the Council's Child Protection Policy.

14.2 Before recruiting staff (whether paid or unpaid), the Council will ensure that:

- Job advertisements state that the Council takes safeguarding seriously and some roles will require an enhanced DBS disclosure to be undertaken before employment can commence. The Human Resources section should work with the line manager for the new recruit and the DOVA to agree whether the post requires an enhanced DBS check

- Thorough checks are made of an applicant's identity, work history and reference
- All job applicants are asked to declare any criminal convictions
- All employees must provide at least two references, which must be received and accepted as satisfactory by the Council before employment commences. One referee must be the current employer, or if the applicant is not employed, the most recent employer. References must cover the last three years of employment and if in education be provided by the course tutor. Referees must be previous employers, not friends and must not be related to the applicant.
- Proof of qualifications are obtained
- Evidence of the person's right to work in the UK is obtained (employees only).
- An Enhanced DBS Disclosure may be carried out depending on role
- There are always two members of staff interviewing candidates for positions working with vulnerable adults
- Confirmation of employment will be subject to the receipt of necessary clearance
- A probationary period and close supervision of the person is undertaken
- Existing employees who have changed jobs and in the opinion of the line manager/Personnel, new duties bring them into contact with vulnerable adults (and children and young people) must complete DBS checks
- DBS disclosures must be renewed every three years

It will be made clear to applicants that have a substantial contact with vulnerable adults that the position is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, that is, certain convictions will never become spent.

## **15. Contracted Services**

15.1 In accordance with the core standards set by the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (HSAB), the Council is responsible for ensuring that the duty to safeguard adults are embedded in all services it commissions. When commissioning services where safeguarding is relevant, prospective contractors must demonstrate that they have a safeguarding adults policy aligned with HSAB requirements, along with procedures for conducting appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

15.2 The Council continuously monitors the contractor's ability to meet these standards through its contract compliance process. This includes ensuring that:

- Commissioned services are aware of and follow relevant safeguarding guidance for adults at risk
- Senior managers within those services understand their leadership role in maintaining service quality, supervising and supporting staff appropriately, and responding to safeguarding concerns
- Service users and carers are provided with clear and accessible safeguarding information

## **16. Official Visits**

16.1 The Council also has a duty to protect adults at risk when organising visits from official visitors, VIPs and celebrities. All official visits shall be pre-arranged and always overseen by a member of staff.

## **17. Confidentiality and Information Sharing**

17.1 A framework for the sharing of information is set out in the HASB Safeguarding Adults at Risk: the multi-agency policy, procedure and practice for working with adults at risk of abuse or neglect in Hertfordshire. This includes the requirements set out in the Care Act (2014) and can be found above at 3.5.

17.2 It is important to identify an abusive situation as early as possible so that the individual can be protected. Withholding information may lead to abuse not being dealt with in a timely manner. Staff, therefore, have a duty to share information relating to suspected abuse with Hertfordshire County Council Social Care and Herts Constabulary.

17.3 Consent is not required to breach confidentiality in order to make a safeguarding referral where:

- A crime has been committed
- The alleged perpetrator may go on to abuse other adults
- Other vulnerable adults are at risk in some way
- The vulnerable adult is deemed to be at serious risk
- There is a statutory requirement to share information (e.g. under the Mental Health Act 1983, or Care Standards Act 2000, Care Act 2014)
- The public interest overrides the interest of the individual
- When a member of staff of a statutory service, a private or voluntary service or a volunteer is the person accused of abuse, malpractice or poor professional standards

17.4 If an employee has any doubt about the legality of sharing information, they must in the first instance consult the DOVA. Information on secure electronic storage in relation to Data Protection and computer misuse is available in the ICT Standards which can be found on the IT intranet homepage.

## **18. Review of Policy**

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner when there are significant changes in legislation or statutory guidance in this area.

## **19. Related Policies and Procedures**

- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Working for Broxbourne

## **APPENDIX 1**

### Lead Designated Adult Safeguarding Officer

Katy Leman, Assistant Director Planning and Place

[Katy.leman@broxbourne.gov.uk](mailto:Katy.leman@broxbourne.gov.uk)

01992 785555 ext. 5857/ 07973 889335

Deputy Adult Safeguarding Officer

Nicola Sharp, Housing Allocations Manager

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