

Milton Keynes Council

GUIDANCE FOR REPORTING CONCERNS REGARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

This Guidance will inform you of the actions to take when there are concerns about suspected abuse. Abuse includes, but is not limited to, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, financial abuse, institutional abuse and bullying.

Every child and vulnerable adult has the right not to be abused or neglected and we all have a responsibility for the safety of children and vulnerable adults. The legal obligation concerning children and young people is contained in the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004.

As an elected Member you may come across cases of suspected abuse or neglect, either through direct contact with children and vulnerable adults or through concerns raised by others. Whilst it is not your responsibility to decide whether or not a child or vulnerable adult has been abused, **it is your responsibility to report your concerns.**

You may be concerned that the information came to you in your role as a councillor and that it was provided to you in confidence or that the person informing you asked that their name be kept from the Social Care Teams. In this instance, your obligations under the Members' Code of Conduct to not disclose confidential information, or information which you believe to be of a confidential nature is overridden. This circumstance, informing the Council's Social Care Teams of your concerns and where they came from, falls under the given exceptions to that obligation.

If someone does come to you in those circumstances, you must use your judgement, but please inform them that it may not be possible for them to remain anonymous to the social workers because, depending on the nature of the concerns, this could prevent the social worker from investigating these

concerns where further information or clarification is required or where the information has come from is needed to be known . The more serious the concerns, the greater the importance of openness. You can, however, reassure them if they are worried that they can request that their name will not be given to the family concerned without their consent.

If you personally are the source of the concern, the same applies to yourself. You will be given the option of your name not being passed on to the family concerned without your consent. To clarify from recent questions, your situation as a councillor is different from those who raise concerns arising out of their professional roles. Professional referrals cannot be anonymous and are made in the knowledge that during the course of enquiries it will be made clear which agency has originated the referral. For these purposes, therefore, an elected Member will be treated as a member of the public.

It is important that you keep a detailed and contemporaneous record of the concerns. This will include what you observed or were informed of, when and by whom and the details of the child or vulnerable adult i.e. date of birth/age and address.

All suspicions, concerns and disclosures have to be reported, with all the relevant information, to Alastair Gibbons or Melinda May (in the case of a child) or Lyn Scott (in the case of an adult) without delay. They will then discuss with you any action or referral needed to the relevant authority. If the matter is urgent and Alastair, Melinda or Lyn are not available, then contact should be made immediately with Children's Social Care Referral and Assessment Team on **01908 253169** (in the case of a child) or ASCAT on **253772 or 253773** (in the case of an adult) during office hours, or the Emergency Social Work Team (**265545**) outside of office hours.