



Auntie's Cookery Academy

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

1. Why Safeguarding Matters at ACA

At Auntie's Cookery Academy, we want every learner to feel safe, respected and supported. Many of the young adults we work with are navigating big life changes. Some are care-experienced. Some are managing disabilities, mental health challenges or the impact of trauma. Others simply need a steadier environment than they've had before.

Safeguarding means looking out for them — consistently, calmly, and without assumptions. It's something we all take responsibility for, whatever our role.

This policy explains how we do that and what happens when a concern arises.

2. Principles That Guide Us

We work to nationally recognised safeguarding principles, adapted to our practical learning settings:

Empowerment

Learners are treated as partners in their own safety. We explain things clearly, adjust communication where needed, and encourage self-advocacy.

Prevention

Safer culture, not just safer paperwork. We manage risks before they become harmful — including hazards linked to cookery, tools, allergies, sensory needs and space layout.

Proportionality

We respond in a way that fits the situation, taking account of disabilities, trauma histories or communication differences.

Protection

If someone is at risk, we act quickly and do not ignore concerns.

Partnership

We work with learners, the local authority, police, and partner organisations when needed. We don't do safeguarding alone.



Accountability

Everyone in ACA is responsible for noticing and reporting concerns. Oversight sits with the Board of Trustees.

Equality and Non-Discrimination

No assumptions based on disability, race, gender, neurodiversity, appearance or background. Everyone deserves protection and respect.

It Could Happen Here

We stay alert. We don't minimise concerns, and we don't wait for "proof".

3. What We Mean by Harm or Abuse

We work primarily with adults aged 18–25, so our safeguarding approach aligns with the **Care Act 2014** definition of an *adult at risk*.

Abuse can take many forms, including:

- Physical
- Emotional / psychological
- Sexual
- Neglect or self-neglect
- Bullying or harassment
- Exploitation (sexual, financial or criminal, including County Lines)
- Domestic abuse
- Discriminatory abuse
- Online abuse
- Radicalisation / extremism
- Harmful sexual behaviour
- Honour-based abuse / forced marriage

In our cookery environment, we also consider:

- Unsafe kitchen practice
- Inaccessible activities or equipment
- Lack of allergy and food safety awareness
- Sensory overload
- Assumptions about a learner's capacity or communication

Spotting signs

Changes in behaviour, mood, attendance, engagement, appearance or confidence may indicate something is wrong. You don't need evidence — just reasonable concern.



4. Who Does What

Executive Safeguarding Lead (ESL – Trustee Board):

Overall responsibility. Handles allegations against staff or volunteers. Oversees policy compliance.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

Day-to-day lead. Receives and triages concerns. Decides when external referrals must be made. Liaises with statutory agencies.

Deputy DSL (DDSL):

Supports the DSL and acts when they are unavailable.

All Staff, Tutors, Volunteers and Contractors:

- Follow policy and procedures
- Report concerns immediately
- Maintain boundaries and professionalism
- Understand how safeguarding applies to disability, neurodiversity and mental health
- Report hazards or unsafe environments

Safer Recruitment:

All staff and relevant volunteers are vetted in line with our Vetting & Recruitment Policy.

5. What To Do If You're Worried

5a. Spotting a Concern

A concern might come from:

- Something a learner tells you
- Something you see
- A change in behaviour
- Something that just feels “off”

Trust your instincts.

5b. If Someone Discloses Abuse

Do:

- Listen calmly



- Reassure them they've done the right thing
- Be honest about the need to share
- Record in their words

Don't:

- Promise confidentiality
- Ask leading questions
- Investigate
- Delay reporting

5c. Reporting Steps (Internal)

1. **If someone is in immediate danger, call 999.**
2. Report the concern to the **DSL or DDSL** as soon as possible, and no later than the end of the session.
3. Complete an internal safeguarding concern form.
4. The DSL reviews the information and decides on next steps.

5d. External Statutory Referrals (Required by Law)

This is the section that now answers the reviewer's request clearly.

When a concern meets the threshold for statutory intervention, ACA must refer immediately to the appropriate agency.

The DSL (or DDSL if deputising) will make referrals to:

For adults aged 18+ (Primary ACA group):

Milton Keynes City Council Adult Safeguarding Team:

- Via the MKC Adult Safeguarding Referral Portal
- Or by phone if urgent

If a crime is suspected:

Thames Valley Police – 999 (immediate danger) or 101 (non-emergency)

If the concern relates to radicalisation:

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Prevent Duty referrals via the Milton Keynes Prevent team (or via police if urgent)

If the concern involves a partner agency or placement provider:

The DSL will also notify the relevant organisation's safeguarding lead.

Staff do NOT investigate.

Staff do NOT decide whether a referral is "serious enough".

Only the DSL/DDSL makes that judgement.

If the DSL/DDSL is unavailable and the risk is immediate, staff must contact emergency services directly and then inform the DSL as soon as possible.

5e. If the Concern Is About a Colleague

Report to the DSL.

If the allegation is about the DSL, report to the Executive Safeguarding Lead.

ACA follows local authority **LADO** procedures where allegations involve risk of harm.

5f. Whistleblowing

If you think a safeguarding concern is being ignored or mishandled, you can raise it with:

- The DSL
- A Trustee
- Or through the Whistleblowing procedure

Your identity will be protected as far as possible.

6. Confidentiality

We share information on a **need-to-know basis**, only to protect someone from harm or fulfil legal duties.

Records are stored securely.

We take extra care with information relating to disability, mental health and neurodivergence.



7. Good Practice in Action

- Keep clear boundaries
 - Avoid unnecessary physical contact
 - Only use ACA communication channels
 - Get written consent for photos or video
 - Adapt activities for accessibility
 - Notice sensory needs
 - Log wellbeing concerns early
 - Ask, don't assume, what support a learner may need
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8. Training and Awareness

Everyone working with learners completes safeguarding training (including Prevent).
DSL/DDSL complete advanced training every two years.
Training includes disability and neurodiversity awareness, and risk in practical cookery sessions.

9. Keeping It Current

This policy is reviewed:

- annually
- after any safeguarding incident
- when guidance or law changes
- if partners, learners or staff raise valid concerns

Approval sits with the Board.

10. Final Thought

Safeguarding is a mindset, not a checklist. If something doesn't feel right, speak up.



11. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed **at least once every 12 months**, or sooner if:

- Relevant laws, regulations, or guidance change;
- A serious incident, complaint, or near miss occurs;
- Feedback from learners, staff, or partners suggests improvements; or
- Operational changes make an update necessary.

This includes review after any safeguarding concern, disclosure, or change in statutory guidance.

Signed: 

Emily-Jane Dale

Position: Chair / CEO

Date: 29th October 2025