

# A Safe Church

Policies, Procedures and Guidelines  
for Safeguarding Children, Young  
People and Adults  
in the  
**Free Church of England**



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## **FOREWORD**

**IT IS ONE OF THOSE STRANGE FACTS THAT THE WORDS "SAFETY" AND "SALVATION" ARE DERIVED FROM THE SAME LATIN ROOT. IT MAY BE STRANGE, BUT IT IS WHOLLY APPROPRIATE.**

The Free Church of England is committed to the safeguarding of children, young people and adults. As a result, we have developed policies, procedures and guidelines to assist you in ministry. Our work and ministry with children, and with adults who may (for whatever reason) be "at risk", is a privilege but also a trust. We cannot betray that trust in any way if we are to fulfil our responsibilities as followers of a Saviour who came into the world that all may know safety and find salvation.

It is my prayer that the policies and practice followed here in the Free Church of England will help to contribute to making the Church a safe and welcoming place for all.

***Revd Mark Spiers BA (Hons)***

## Introduction

A Christian approach to child protection asks both individuals & communities to create a safe environment for children, to act promptly on any complaints made or concerns raised, to care for those who have been abused in the past, and to minister appropriately to those who have abused children. This approach takes seriously both human propensities to evil but also the God-given resources of goodness.

Child protection is a very broad field, and there are important topics that are not specifically included here: domestic violence, drug and alcohol-abusing parents, parents with mental health problems that are negatively impacting on their ability to care for their children, Internet grooming and others. The principle of placing the child's welfare at the heart of whatever we do gives you the responsibility to seek advice if you feel these are an issue for the children and/or families with whom you work. But if you need advice on any specific situation, help is available from the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser.

**N.B Please remember that if you need any support at all with any aspect of safeguarding work, responsibilities or using these guidance notes, do telephone the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser on 07900 912754.**



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# Speedy Guide for Dealing with Child Protection Concerns

## 'GOLDEN RULE – A CHILD'S SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT'

(A child is anyone who is under the age of 18 years.)

### General Child Protection Concerns

If you are worried about or think that **a child is in immediate danger** of harm **DO NOT HESITATE** to telephone your local police and/or your local social services. You can do this anonymously if you wish or need to. Always remember to keep yourself safe too and do not alert the person who you think is harming the child as this may put the child in further danger. When you have made the call speak with your local Church Safeguarding Officer who will then contact the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser – both of these people will sensitively provide advice and support and will be aware of issues relating to confidentiality and safe information sharing.

If you have concerns that a child may be being abused, then discuss them with your Church Safeguarding Officer (CSO).

If after talking with the CSO there are no longer concerns, then no further action needs to be taken. The CSO can always contact the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser for further support and advice. This can be done without naming names or giving personal details.

If, after talking, the CSO feels that there are valid concerns then she or he will make a referral to Children's Social Care – she or he should always follow this referral up in writing within 24 hours. Remember all notes and records of safeguarding issues must be kept in locked cupboards or in password protected electronic files. The CSO should let the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser know that a referral has been made as soon as possible.

Children's Social Care will investigate the referral and provide feedback to the CSO.

### Remember:

- **If in doubt about anything at all, telephone the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser – if they are not available and you need to talk with someone urgently then contact your Bishop.**
- Never promise that you will not share information – if a child's safety is in danger this overrides confidentiality
- It is always better to make a referral where there is no need for concern or action rather than risk a child's safety – Children's Social Care would rather have more referrals than risk any one child's safety or wellbeing.
- Never investigate a concern yourself – this might hinder any investigations later.

- Always make clear records of any conversations about a safeguarding matter using the language that has been used by the person telling you their concerns and keep these records securely.

**If a child tells you about abuse**, then you must listen carefully. It is not your job to decide if they are telling the truth or not. Make sure the child knows that you are taking what they say seriously and record all that they say using the words that they do. You must not tell the child that you are able to keep what they tell you a secret. Tell the child that you are going to find out from people who can help children what to do next. Never speak directly to the person against whom the allegation is being made. Remember the need for confidentiality and contact your Church Safeguarding Officer or the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser as soon as possible. If you are concerned that the child is in immediate danger, then contact the police or children's social care.

**If an adult tells you about abuse** that occurred when they were a child, then you should listen carefully. You must be clear with the person sharing their experience that if they inform you of the name or any identifying details of the abuser, you may have to breach their confidentiality in order to protect any children with whom the abuser may still have contact. As an adult the person telling you of their abuse in childhood has the right to expect you to keep their information confidential BUT if there is any reason to believe that the person who abused them is still in contact with children then there might still be a risk that the abuser is still abusing.

The adult should be supported to share their past history of abuse whilst still maintaining control over what information they share with you.

Remember you may need to seek support for yourself in order to continue supporting an adult in this way.

**If you have any concerns that anyone working within the church setting**, either as a paid member of staff or a volunteer has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that he or she is unsuitable to work with children

Then you must immediately contact the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser on 07900 912754. If they are not available, then please contact your Bishop as a matter of urgency.

**The Denominational Safeguarding Adviser's job is to provide advice and support and you must always contact them within a sensible timescale if you have any worries or need any advice on any safeguarding matter.**

# **Safer Recruitment to paid and voluntary posts in the Free Church of England**

## **Introduction**

Working with children, young people and vulnerable adults is exciting, rewarding and challenging. It also demands that everyone working with these groups does so safely and keeps them safe from harm.

## **Safe recruitment and selection**

All recruitment and selection relies on judgement, and there are always risks that the wrong person may be appointed to a job. We can, however, take steps (some of which are legal requirements) to minimise the risks, as well as ensure that we are recruiting fairly.

## **Be clear about who is responsible for appointments**

In local churches the responsibility for appointments and approval of paid officers and volunteers rests with the Church Council.

Responsibility can be delegated but the person must have been safely recruited him/herself, be capable and competent in recruitment and able to keep personal matters confidential. You must seek advice if it is unclear who has the responsibility for appointments.

## **Job description**

Have a clear job description or role, which sets out what tasks the applicant will do and what skills are required. The job description or job role will also say whether it is eligible for and requires a criminal records check, and if so the level of the check. If it is a paid role, this must be a formal job description/person specification. If it is a voluntary role, a simple job role may be used.

## **Application form/references**

An application form will always be necessary in a paid role to assess the person's suitability. An application form will also be good practice when recruiting for a voluntary role. Always ask for and take up references. Ask referees specifically about an individual's suitability to work with vulnerable people.

Ensure that you carefully examine application forms and references and make sure that the information that has been provided is consistent and the organisation is provided with a satisfactory explanation for any discrepancies and/or gaps in an applicant's personal history and/or career. If anything is unclear in the reference, contact the referee to clarify the position.

## **The Confidential Declaration**

At the start of the process, where an individual is going to work or volunteer with vulnerable people, ask him/her to complete a 'Confidential Declaration' form which, in broad summary, asks if there is any reason why he/she should not be working with children and vulnerable adults. It can also help to identify any issues that might need resolving at an early stage.

If a person has disclosed information in the Confidential Declaration form, the applicant should put the details in writing in a sealed envelope marked 'Private and Confidential', and this should be sent to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA).

Having a criminal record may not necessarily be a bar to working with children or vulnerable adults.

### **Interview/discussion**

Have a face-to-face interview or discussion with pre-planned and clear questions to assess a person's suitability for a role. Check the Confidential Declaration form and references. In paid roles (and sometimes in volunteering roles), the candidate's identity will need to be checked by asking him/her to bring photographic ID as well as evidence of his/her relevant qualifications. Ensure that the candidate has the right to work in the UK.

Include questions about an applicant's values, attitude to working with children and vulnerable adults, and motives for wanting to engage in such work. Always ask if he/she knows of any reason why he/she should not be working with children or vulnerable adults or if there are any pending cases/issues which could affect him/her or his/her ability to carry out the role. If the applicant discloses any matter during the interview that relates to children and/or vulnerable adults and which may affect the applicant's suitability for the role, then this must be referred to the DSA for advice.

### **Asking for a Criminal Record Check**

In broad summary, it is the policy of the Free Church of England that all those who work regularly with children and/or vulnerable adults, including those on a rota, must have, where appropriate, an enhanced criminal record check (with/without a check of the barred list, as appropriate).

Should the applicant not wish to apply for a criminal record check, which is entirely his/her choice, the application must not proceed further and must be terminated.

Those who manage or supervise those who work with vulnerable groups and those in a leadership capacity who carry responsibility for safeguarding will also be required to obtain a check, provided they are eligible.

## **The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)**

The Disclosure and Barring Service is an executive agency of the Home Office. Its primary purpose is to help employers and voluntary organisations make safer recruitment decisions. It is an offence to appoint a person who is banned from working with children (Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 Part 2 S35) to work in any capacity with children or young people (i.e. those below 18 years of age). The DBS is a national agency, which gives the opportunity for all who work with children to be checked through a consistent disclosure service. It became operational in the spring of 2013, replacing the Criminal Records Bureau and the Independent Safeguarding Authority, and provides a 'one stop shop' for ascertaining whether an individual has a criminal record, has been under police investigation, has been banned from working with children by the courts or has had his/her name placed on the lists of those unsuitable to work with children and young people held by the Department for Education and Skills or the Department of Health.

Although it is not a legal requirement for the Church to use the DBS service, the Bishops regard it as a mandatory element in the recruitment process (of both paid and unpaid workers) and DBS checks have been adopted in the Free Church of England as a necessary prerequisite for posts involving work with children or vulnerable adults.

All activities that involve work with children must be based on a clear understanding of how and when DBS checks should be undertaken. If in doubt, advice can be sought from the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser.

The DBS does make a charge for checking people who will be paid employees, but not for volunteers. However, Thirtyone:eight formally known as CCPAS charge an administration fee. For the purposes of definition, anyone receiving payment for a position, other than reimbursement of expenses, is deemed to be employed.

The DBS offers two levels of check: standard and enhanced. The Free Church of England requests the enhanced level check for any post where there is the expectation of regular contact with children (or vulnerable adults); this will also be requested for any posts that offer the workers public credibility and unsupervised access to children because of their roles within the Church. The enhanced level check searches not only records of criminal convictions but also checks for non-conviction information from local police intelligence records which a senior police officer thinks may be relevant e.g. where someone has been questioned about, or involved in, a crime but not charged.

Positions that involve substantial or unsupervised access to children are exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This means that the DBS check will disclose ALL criminal convictions and intelligence, regardless of how long ago the offence was committed or intelligence gathered, or whether it is relevant to the particular post. The check may also reveal dealings with police/social workers from many years ago. For this reason, it is always best for those undergoing a DBS check to disclose to the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser who checks the form anything that might come up on the search. A criminal record does not necessarily mean that the applicant will not be allowed to take up the post.

In the Free Church of England, the Registered Body is Thirtyone:eight. All DBS checks must go through the Safeguarding Adviser for the Denomination, where the appointed Countersignatory for the DBS gives them a final check before sending them off.

It must be emphasised that DBS checking will only ascertain if there are any KNOWN reasons why a person may be unsafe to work with children. Although there is clearly real value in this system, a clear DBS disclosure should never be seen as a guarantee, as many

perpetrators of child abuse will be unknown to the Disclosure and Barring Service because many perpetrators are not known to authorities. Additionally, it must be acknowledged that those who seek to harm, or abuse children will actively seek roles where they can work with children, especially if that work is unsupervised. A high level of vigilance must always be maintained.

## **A short guide to Disclosure and Barring Service applications in the Free Church of England**

All DBS checks are now completed electronically, guidance notes are supplied by the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) on request.

All checks and renewals are administered centrally by the DSA.

When the applicant has completed the online Disclosure Application Form, they must then show their original identification.

The correct identification and verification of addresses is crucial to the effectiveness of the disclosure process. When identity is verified beyond doubt, names can be matched with criminal records and also checked against DBS barred lists.

### **Who to check**

It is impossible to give a definitive list of who should be checked in each church, as each church is organised differently. However, the list below should give you some idea. If you are not sure whether someone needs a check, please contact the DSA.

Needs a check (both voluntary and paid):

- Sunday School Helpers
- Youth & Children's Workers & Helpers
- Holiday Club Helpers
- Crèche Workers IF the parents are not present
- Drivers for youth & children's church activities (not for private arrangements)
- Worship Leaders

### **Does NOT USUALLY need a check:**

- Parents & Toddler Group leaders (where parents are present)
- Churchwardens
- Welcome team
- Choir members
- Caretakers & gardeners
- Members of the Church Council (unless they are involved in direct work with children)

## **Safer Recruitment of People who will Work with Children and Young People**

This safer recruitment guidance (which also applies to those who will work with vulnerable adults) covers:

- all clergy who have the freehold, hold the Bishop's licence or permission to officiate
- all accredited lay workers and readers who hold the Bishops licence or permission to officiate
- any other leaders in the Church whose office of trust gives them the opportunity or the expectation that they might have regular or unsupervised contact with children
- those people whose jobs involve supervising work with children, young people
- the church Child Protection Representative, and Children's Advocate where applicable
- all people employed by the church whose work may involve regular and direct contact with children
- all volunteers whose work or activities may involve regular and direct contact

**More than 90% of child sex abuse cases involve a relative, friend or someone else close to the child. ~ NSPCC**

## **Useful Safeguarding and Child Protection Definitions**

### **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding is a process which combines two parts:

- Child/vulnerable adult protection: the protection of individual children/adults who are identified as either suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect
- Promoting the rights and welfare of children/vulnerable adult: this incorporates raising awareness of rights and welfare issues; taking actions to enable children and vulnerable adults to enjoy their rights and entitlements; supporting them to thrive and reach potential

## **A Child**

In respect of Child Protection and Safeguarding and as in the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, **a child** is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'children and young people', and these terms are used interchangeably throughout this document. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital, in prison or in a Young Offenders' Institution, does not change his or her status or entitlement to services or protection under the Children Act 1989. The term 'parent' includes all those who have parental responsibility for the child. There may be other adults who have contact or care of children about whom you have concerns in relation to their contact with or care of a child. In these circumstances you should always seek advice from one of the sources listed in Useful Contacts.

## **A Vulnerable Adult**

A vulnerable adult is defined by the regulated services they receive. Regulated services include: any healthcare service, personal care in any setting to a person who needs the care because of age, illness or disability; social work; the formal provision of day to day assistance with general household matters e.g. paying bills, shopping, or managing money and finally transport which is provided because of age, health or disability.

**“You may choose to look  
the other way but you can  
never say again that you  
did not know”.**

**William Wilberforce**

## **Child Protection and Safeguarding Responsibilities**

## **All those working with children & their families, parents or carers should:**

- be alert to potential indicators of abuse or neglect
- be alert to the risks that individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children
- share and help to analyse information so that an assessment can be made of the child's needs and circumstances
- contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote the child's welfare
- take part in regularly reviewing the outcomes for the child against specific plans
- Work co-operatively with parents, unless this is inconsistent with ensuring the child's safety.

## **Church Responsibilities in Working with Children:**

Each Church should accept the prime duty of care placed upon the Minister in charge and the church council to ensure the well being of children in their care. In order to meet this responsibility, the Church should:

- Create a culture of 'informed vigilance', which takes children seriously.
- Ensure that appropriate health and safety policies and procedures are in place.
- Provide appropriate insurance cover for all activities undertaken in the name of the church.
- Ensure that current Health and Safety requirements are met for all groups involving children. Childcare providers e.g. pre-school and nursery groups or after-school clubs should take advice from their Local Authority (Children's Workforce Team) or Ofsted about the regulations for their activity and the need to register the group.
- Adopt and implement the Denominational Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. Consideration should also be given to specific local church requirements.
- Appoint a Church Safeguarding Officer and inform the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser of this person's details. The Church Safeguarding Officer should be someone without other pastoral responsibility for children in the church. This person must ensure that any concerns about a child, or the behaviour of an adult in relation to children, are appropriately reported both to the statutory agencies and to the Bishops. The CP Representative post is **NOT** subject to a Disclosure and Barring Service check.
- Ensure that appropriate pastoral care is available for those adults who have disclosed that they have been abused as children. Pastoral care given should be acutely aware of the need to establish whether the alleged abuser is still in contact with children. If this is the case, please do contact the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser in the first instance.
- Provide, as appropriate, support for all parents and families in the congregation, being particularly aware of parents whose children have suffered abuse.
- Ensure that those who may pose a threat to children and young people are effectively managed and monitored.

- Appoint a person, who may be different from the Child Protection Representative, to be a children's advocate. This person should be someone whom children know they can talk to about any problems, if they so wish.
- Display the "Childline" telephone number prominently on a noticeboard that is accessible to children. (Accessible online)
- Ensure that all those authorised to work with children and young people or in a position of authority, are recruited according to current Safe Recruitment Practice guidelines, and appropriately appointed, trained and supported while in post.
- Pay particular attention to children with special needs and those from ethnic minorities, to ensure their full integration within the church community, remembering that children who are disabled, have learning difficulties, those for whom English is not their first language or who are isolated in any way are always more vulnerable to abuse.
- Review the implementation of the Child Protection Policy, Procedures and Good Practice Guidelines annually, to ensure that the Church is adhering to good practice.
- Provide appropriate insurance cover for all activities with children and young people that are undertaken in the name of the parish.



## **The Church Safeguarding Officer**

The Child Safeguarding Officer, CSO, has an essential role in a church in relation to child protection. S/he should be a lay person who has a special interest in the care and welfare of children and young people and an ability to liaise with and advise those who work directly with them. The representative should have an understanding of child protection issues, either through outside employment or through training provided by the Denomination, Thirtyone:eight or their Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for the Church Minister to be the child protection representative, but this is generally not desirable as the Minister should be available in a supporting role when difficulties arise.

### **What sort of person is suitable?**

Most critically the CSO will be a person of great integrity, common sense and be able to act independently;

In addition, the CSO should have:

- A developed understanding of the issues relating to safeguarding children and child protection;
- Up-to-date training (at least every three years) in child protection issues;

The Church Safeguarding Officer will be supported by the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser.

### **What are the responsibilities of the Child Protection Representative?**

The CSO is chosen primarily for their good standing in the local church and community, their integrity, common sense and particularly for their independence. The CSO does not need to be experienced in social work or children's work, although it is recognised that this may be advantageous.

The Child Protection Representative, CSO, should be responsible to the Minister in charge, and these two people should work together to implement the Church Child Protection Policy & Procedures.

The reasoning behind the appointment of CSOs is to have a person to whom concerns about a child, the behaviour of an adult or allegations of abuse can be reported without a conflict of interest. Experience shows that if concerns are reported to a person closely associated with children's or youth work, a conflict of interest may arise, albeit subconsciously, between addressing the needs of the child and supporting the worker or workers involved.

CSOs will need to attend appropriate child protection/safeguarding children training and ensure that those working with children and young people also take up such training opportunities at regular intervals. Child protection training is available online with Thirtyone:eight and from time to time appropriate training may also be provided locally by other agencies or Local Safeguarding Children Boards, details of which can be found on Local Safeguarding Children Board's web sites.

The CSO has the following responsibilities:

- To **familiarise** themselves with the Churches Safeguarding Policy and make sure that the Church Council review it regularly.
- To ensure that copies of the **church** Safeguarding Policy, and the Denominational Safeguarding Procedures and Good Practice Guidelines are shared to all existing and new workers in the church.
- To ensure that all those who work with children know the contact details of those from whom child protection or safeguarding advice can be accessed.
- To ensure that any person with anxieties about child welfare is able to discuss their concern with the Church Child Protection Representative, or the Minister if more appropriate.
- To **ensure** that any allegations of abuse behaviour by someone working for the church (either paid or volunteer) are immediately brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Adviser for advice and support.
- To **ensure** that there is a Childline poster (available online [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)) on a noticeboard in every place where children meet, is displayed within the church.
- To **ensure** that the **church's** Child Protection Policy is adhered to, and to raise any concerns in this respect with the minister and churchwardens, or the Church Council or in the last resort with the Bishop who will liaise with the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser.
- To **receive** any concerns as to the safety or well-being of children and young people in relation to the church, or concerns raised by a church member in respect of any child or young person known to them.
- To respond to concerns (as directed in the Child Protection Policy) by discussing and agreeing an appropriate response with the person raising the concern. Depending on the nature of the concern this response may range from discussing the matter with the minister or churchwarden, to (in an emergency) immediately contacting the police or local social services department. It will in almost all circumstances involve contacting, at an early stage, the Bishops who will liaise with the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser as appropriate.
- To ensure that DBS checks for volunteer workers are undertaken.
- The CSO will **NOT investigate** the concern beyond asking the person raising the concern such questions as may be necessary to establish the facts on which the concern is based e.g. what is it that you are worried about; what have you seen/heard/ that makes you concerned; who have you spoken to about your concerns etc.
- The CSO will keep an **accurate note of any concerns** received and of their response. If a disclosure of abuse has been made by a child or young person, the CSO will record the child's own words, or the words used by any person that has told them of their concerns.

## **Definitions of Abuse**

The trigger for making a child the subject of an inter-agency child protection plan is an agreement between the relevant agencies that the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm without such action to keep them safe. In considering whether a child has been abused, these are the definitions currently used in child protection work:

**Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children** is defined for the purposes of this document as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health or development

**Child Protection** is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are at risk of suffering, significant harm. Effective child protection is essential as part of wider work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. However, all individuals should aim proactively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children so that the need for action to protect children from harm is reduced.

**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 fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in, a child.

**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 the 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 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.

**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 (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

**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 and development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing or shelter, including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional 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 the neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

**Organised Abuse** may be defined as abuse involving one or more abusers and a number of children. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation, or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for abuse.

**Spiritual Abuse**, whilst not a 'recognised' abuse as such, can be considered on a par with Emotional Abuse, in that inappropriate expectations may be imposed upon children and young people. It may involve conveying to children the dire consequences of sinfulness so causing children to accept what someone is preaching / teaching / saying through bullying and causing children to be fearful. To say "You won't go the heaven if you get run over by a bus on your way home" is a form of bullying, exploitation of emotions, manipulation of young minds and a corruption of the Gospel message.

This is not to stilt the message that a loving God wants each of us to respond to his love, but abuse can happen when fear tactics are used to get conversion results. Instead, allowing reflection and an ability at any age to consider carefully what is being taught should be the norm.

**Any suspected case of such abuse MUST be reported to the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser and if that person is not available then please contact the Bishops.**

## Types of abuse of Vulnerable Adults

**Physical:** including hitting, shaking, biting, grabbing, withholding food or drink, force-feeding, wrongly administering medicine, unnecessary restraining, failing to provide physical care and aids to living.

**Sexual:** including sexual assault, rape, inappropriate touching/molesting, pressurising someone into sexual acts they don't understand or feel powerless to refuse.

**Emotional or psychological:** including verbal abuse, shouting, swearing, threatening abandonment or harm, isolating, taking away privacy or other rights, bullying/intimidation, blaming, controlling or humiliation.

- **Financial or material:** including withholding money or possessions, theft of money or property, fraud, intentionally mismanaging finances, borrowing money and not repaying.
- **Neglect:** including withholding food, drink, heating and clothing, failing to provide access to health, social and educational services, ignoring physical care needs, exposing a person to unacceptable risk or failing to ensure adequate supervision.
- **Discriminatory abuse:** including slurs, harassment and maltreatment due to a person's race, gender, disability, age, faith, culture or sexual orientation.
- **Institutional abuse:** including the use of systems and routines which neglect the person receiving care – in any formal care setting.

Spiritual abuse is of concern within and outside faith communities and can manifest as:

- Harm can be caused by the inappropriate use of religious belief or practice
- Misuse of authority
- Intrusive healing and deliverance ministries
- The denial of the right of faith or the opportunity to grow in the knowledge and love of God



## **Responding to Concerns about Possible Abuse**

It is the duty of every Christian to be vigilant about the safety and care of children in the congregation. Those church members who have direct contact with children are more than likely than most to become aware of potential child protection issues. Such people are usually other parents, youth workers (including leaders of uniformed organisations) clergy, children's workers and music group leaders.

Anyone who is worried about the behaviour of another member of the congregation or the demeanour of a child has a duty to voice those concerns to the church Child Protection Representative. It is important that anyone expressing concerns should be respected and that his or her concerns should be taken seriously. The Church Safeguarding Officer should keep a careful record of such conversations, as well as all decisions and actions taken (see role of Child Protection Representative). These records should be kept in a secure place and in accordance with GDPR requirements. The Church Safeguarding Officer will decide whether:

- a). they need further advice from the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser) or
- b). that they need to make a referral to children's social services or to the police.

**No one other than the statutory authorities (Children's Social Services or the Police) should ever attempt to investigate child protection disclosures or concerns.**

Clergy or lay people may hear child protection concerns relating to their church school or uniformed organisations, or indeed any other organisation. These concerns should be reported to the relevant organisation's child protection lead. If you are in any doubt about what to do if you hear such concerns do not hesitate to contact the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser on 07900 912754.

### **What to do if a child tells you about abuse:**

Most children find it enormously difficult to tell about abuse; if they have summoned up the courage to talk to you, it is important to listen carefully. Remember that it is not your job to decide whether the child is telling the truth or not – despite the fact that children very rarely make up stories of abuse – there are specialised staff within a variety of agencies that are highly trained to undertake such work. Your role is to let the child talk at his/her own pace – don't ask questions, don't jump in to fill pauses, just listen. Try to keep the conversation going with encouraging nods, murmurs and repetitions of what has been said. Make sure the child knows you are taking what s/he says seriously, and that you will try to help. Never speak directly to the person against whom the allegation has been made as this is likely to increase the risk to the child.

Never promise not to tell; you will almost certainly have to share the information in order to help keep the child safe. Once the child has finished telling you what has happened, you need to seek advice. Explain to the child that this kind of thing happens to a lot of children, and you are going to find out from the people who help those children what to do. Enlist the support of your Church Safeguarding Officer or contact the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser as necessary but remember the need for confidentiality. Even if the account the child has given to you seems vague or unlikely, still take advice from the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser. You can do this, if necessary, by discussing the

situation without mentioning any names. If in doubt, it is always better to make a referral to children's social services rather than doing nothing.

In an out-of-hours situation, in an evening or weekend youth club for example, the immediate decision you will face is whether the child is safe to go home, especially if the alleged abuser is there. If you can wait until the next day to act, make sure the child is comfortable to go home, and tell him/her that you will be talking to someone tomorrow and you will keep in touch with the child (don't forget to discuss with the child what would be a safe way for you to contact them). If you believe the risk to the child is serious and immediate, or the child does not feel safe to go home, call the local out-of-hours social work team (also known as the Emergency Duty Team) or the Police. When you call, make it clear that this is a child protection matter. They will advise you what to do next.

As soon as possible after receiving the information from the child:

- Make a careful record of what has happened: what the child told you (use his/her words as closely as you can, even if the child used 'slang' words), when and where the alleged abuse took place, who was involved, and when and where the child told you about it.
- Record any calls you made e.g. to your Church Safeguarding Officer, the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser, Children's Social Services or the Police, including any decisions made or agreements for action reached – remember to record the names of the people that you have discussed the situation with. Put a full date and time on the record.
- If you have not already discussed the situation with them, contact your Church Safeguarding Officer or Bishop to relate what has happened and seek advice. Go over the Record Form together to make sure it is clear, and then ensure it is stored away in a secure place. The information in your Record Form might be needed by other agencies at some time in the future.
- Call Children's Social Services, if you have not already made an emergency referral. Have at hand all the details you have about the child, including their name(s), address and date of birth if at all possible. Follow up the call with a written referral (you will be advised whether there is a specific form that you need to use – often referred to as a MARF (Multi-Agency Referral Form)).
- If the alleged abuse involves a worker in the church, whether paid or voluntary, contact the Denomination Safeguarding Adviser for further advice. Such allegations must always be investigated by agencies outside the Denomination.
- Arrange continuing support within the church for the child, yourself and the family as appropriate, in collaboration with Children's Social Services.

The child or young person is likely to need a significant amount of support. As mentioned above, this may be able to be provided in whole or in part from within the Church community. However, there are many other ways in which a child can get such support as well, including from the NSPCC, NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and a number of voluntary organisations. Your local council's Children's Social Care Services will be able to advise of local support services for children and their parents or carers.

**What to do if an adult tells you about abuse that occurred when they were a child?**

Many of those who have experienced child abuse never told anyone about the abuse when they were a child. As an adult, they may find that they are suffering from repeated memories of the abuse that get in the way of their daily living activities or cause them a lot of distress – it is particularly common that such memories are more strongly aroused when they are working with children, or when they have children of their own.

It is important that any adult suffering in this way is able to access pastoral care from an appropriate person in their church – if they have chosen you to tell about the abuse, then you are probably the person that they see as 'appropriate' in terms of someone that they feel that they can talk to.

As an adult, the person telling you of the abuse in their childhood has the right to expect you to keep their information confidential, but if there is any reason to believe that the person who abused them is still in contact with children, then there is a risk that the abuser is continuing to present a risk to children.

As soon as any adult starts to tell you about their childhood abuse, you must be clear with that person that if they inform you of the name or any identifying details of the abuser, you may have to breach their confidentiality in order to protect any children that the abuser currently may have contact with. This will allow the adult disclosing a history of abuse to continue to seek support from you whilst maintaining control over what information they share with you.

It can feel very uncomfortable to hear of abuse that has occurred to someone when they were a child whilst knowing that the abuser may still be a risk to children, but not having enough information to be able to approach the relevant investigative agencies (social services or the Police) to seek advice as to how to protect those children. You will probably need to seek some support for yourself to be able to continue to effectively support the person who has made such a disclosure to you.

Over time, the adult disclosing childhood abuse may feel able to contact the Police to inform them of the abuse, thus enabling the authorities to act to prevent harm to any children that the abuser currently has contact with. Police Authorities now have Child Abuse Investigation or Protecting Vulnerable People Teams who will often be happy to meet with the person who you are supporting to discuss what would happen if they gave the details of the abuse and abuser to the Police. This then allows the adult to make an informed decision as to whether to formally report the abuse to the Police.

It can be an extremely frightening thought for any adult victim of child abuse to make a report to the Police, as often they will have experienced threats from the abuser as to what they will do to them if they ever tell of the abuse. Therefore, your role is not to try to persuade the person seeking your support to report the abuse, but to work with them until they may feel strong enough to decide to make such a report at some point in the future.

### **What to do if a child or an adult tells you that they have abused a child?**

If someone discloses to you that they have abused a child in any way (including children or young people who have abused other children/young people, often using an imbalance of power e.g. age, size, ability etc, to abuse another child or young person) you have a responsibility to inform the relevant agencies of this disclosure, however long ago the abuse was committed. However, that doesn't mean that you cannot continue to support the person who has told you of the abuse. If they have told you of abuse that they have

committed it is a good indicator that they want help. You will need to tell the person who has made the disclosure to you that you have to inform Children's Social Services or the Police to enlist their support and help, BUT you must only do this if you are sure that doing so will not put yourself at any risk.

Enlist the support of your Church Safeguarding Officer or Minister, who can contact the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser as necessary, but remember the need for confidentiality. Even if the account that the person has given seems vague or unlikely, still take advice from your Church Safeguarding Officer or Minister. You can do this, if necessary, by discussing the situation without mentioning any names.

In an out-of-hours situation, in evenings or at weekend youth club for example, call the local out-of-hours social work team (also known as the Emergency Duty Team) or the Police. When you call, make clear that this is a child protection matter. They will advise you what to do next.

If you **SEE** something **Do** something



### **Reporting Alleged Abuse**

"If someone believes that a child may be suffering, or may be at risk of suffering, significant harm, then s/he should always refer his or her concerns to the local authority social services department ... While professionals [and others] should seek, in general, to discuss any concerns with the family and, where possible, seek their agreement to making referrals to social services, **this should only be done where such discussion and agreement seeking will not place a child at increased risk of significant harm**"

*Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006, HMSO.*

Any failure to refer could endanger a child's life or well-being and also compromise the Free Church of England's commitment to creating a safe environment for children and young people. Responsible and informed judgement must be exercised by all concerned.

Although there is not at present in the UK any mandatory requirement to disclose information about suspected child abuse to the statutory agencies, society increasingly acknowledges a moral responsibility to do so. The Bishops, expect those with concerns about a child to consider the matter of disclosure very carefully, taking seriously the public interest in safeguarding a child's welfare and having a proper regard for the needs and rights of all those involved, whilst bearing in mind the principle enshrined in the Children Act 1989 that ***the child's welfare is paramount.***

### **General Duty of Confidence**

Both the law and societal moral codes impose a general duty not to pass on information that has been shared with the clear expectation that it will be treated in confidence. However, this duty is not absolute and there are exceptions to the above duty where regarding disclosures of confidential information to prevent or detect a crime or serious misconduct, or disclosures in the public interest. **Thus, where a child is judged to be at risk of significant harm, it is legally allowed as well as appropriate and highly desirable to disclose relevant information to the statutory agencies which are responsible for acting to protect children, even where the child or parents withhold their consent for such information to be shared.**

Where information that suggests that a child is at risk of, or has experienced, significant harm is received in confidence, the person giving the information should, where appropriate, be encouraged to share the information with the statutory authorities. In the case of young children, this will need to be facilitated by the person receiving the information in the first instance. Alternatively, the person receiving the information should inform the person who has made the disclosure that, now being in possession of that information the person in receipt of the information has a duty to inform the statutory authorities in order to protect the child/children concerned. It is generally thought to be best practice to be clear with the person sharing the information that this is a duty that the person in receipt of the information has, rather than asking permission to share the information, as even if permission is denied, the duty to share the information remains.

The key factor in deciding whether to share confidential information is ***proportionality***. Is the proposed disclosure a proportionate response to the need to protect the welfare of the child? The degree of information shared, and the number of people with whom it is shared, should be no more than is strictly necessary to meet the public interest in protecting the health and well-being of a child/children. Only those professionals who **need** the information to protect the child should receive the information e.g. the Church Safeguarding Officer would need the full information to enable them to make a referral to children's social services, but the Bishop would not.



## **FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

# **Procedure for the Handling of Safeguarding Concerns, Incidents and Allegations**

**Revised April 2020**

It is important that there is a clear procedure for dealing with Safeguarding allegations made against any person within the context of church life. This procedure is based upon nationally recognised good safeguarding practice, Working Together 2013, and recently completed research which has unquestionably demonstrated that the absence of a robust allegations procedure fails to meet the needs of all those involved.

This procedure must not be improvised and must be rigorously followed.

This procedure will be triggered when allegations, concerns or incidents are reported in relation to an ordained member of the clergy, people with permission to officiate, office holders, and all lay persons both paid and voluntary working within the Free Church of England. It is critical to note that this procedure will also be followed when an allegation is made relating to a person who was once, but is no longer, included in any of the categories referred to above, in other words, retired or having resigned.

At the **first stage**, any allegation must be reported to the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser, telephone 07900 912754. If he or she is not available, then you must contact the General Secretary or the relevant Bishop. The person who makes that report **must not** begin an investigation, because that could make the work of official agencies more difficult or even impossible.

The Free Church of England will respond to any allegation, incident or concern relating to those working within the church community by following appropriate procedures.

If suspension or dismissal is necessary, the relevant authority will need to take that action in each case. For someone working within a church, that authority is likely to be the Minister in Charge and Church Wardens on behalf of the Church Council. For Diocesan employees, it will be the Diocesan Secretary. For clergy, the Bishops will need to act within the terms of the Clergy Discipline procedures. Failure to take any necessary action is itself potentially dangerous, and in the most extreme instances may place individuals at risk, as well as exposing the church to a loss of public confidence.

**Remember that the first point of contact must be the Denomination Safeguarding Adviser and/or the Diocesan Bishop.**

## Principles

1. The framework for managing cases set out in these procedures applies to a wider range of allegations than those in which there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. It also caters for cases of allegations that might indicate that a person is unsuitable to continue to work with children in their present position, or in any capacity. These procedures must therefore be used in respect of all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children has:
  - Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
  - Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or,
  - Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children
2. These procedures apply to situations where there are allegations or concerns relating to any person's, who works with children either in a paid or unpaid capacity, behaviour or conduct towards children:
  - Where the concerns relate to issues arising from their employment

- Where the concerns relate to issues arising from activities, either in a paid or unpaid capacity, outside of their normal employment
- Where the concerns relate to issues arising from a person's family or social life
- Where the concerns relate to issues arising from previous employment or activities.

3. These principles underpin the management of allegations against any person who works in a paid or unpaid capacity within the Free Church of England:

- The welfare of the child is the paramount consideration.
- The Bishop's are responsible for ensuring compliance with policies and procedures relating to allegations against staff and work alongside the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser
- The Free Church of England Bishops will need to be informed of all allegations against members of staff in our churches. They will work closely with the Minister of the church and Denominational Safeguarding Adviser and report any concerns to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) of all allegations against staff and volunteers.
- Those subject to allegations or concerns in respect of children should be informed of those concerns as soon as possible, but with due regard to protecting evidence and disclosure of information, and ONLY after the agreement of the LADO that they be informed.
- It is not the responsibility of the recipient of the allegation to determine its validity; failure to report an allegation could result in disciplinary action.
- A decision to suspend staff members or volunteers will rest with the employing organisation/charity in discussion with the LADO and Bishops, and will be based on the decision of the strategy discussion (where held) that children are at risk, or the investigation would be impeded, or that the alleged behaviour is so serious that the member of staff or volunteer faces the possibility of dismissal. Suspension in these circumstances should be seen as neutral action.
- A child protection and / or police investigation must take priority over any internal investigation.
- In the interests of the young person making the allegation and to avoid further interviews, wherever possible the Police or social services statements/records should be requested to inform an internal enquiry.

## **Roles**

4. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006 introduced three new roles to ensure allegations against professionals and volunteers are managed effectively:

### **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**

5. The LADO provides an oversight of individual cases: providing advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations; liaising with the police and other agencies and monitoring the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible consistent with a thorough and fair process.
6. All allegations against childcare professionals and volunteers should be notified to the LADO and it is therefore important that the relevant LADO's contact details are known.

7. The LADO's responsibilities include:

- Management and overview of individual cases from all partner agencies of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB)
- Providing advice, information and guidance to the relevant persons
- Monitoring progress of cases to ensure all cases are dealt with within set timescales as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010
- Ensuring a consistent and thorough process for all adults working with children and young people against whom allegations are made
- Liaising with Police and Social Care where further action on their part may be required
- Responsibility for maintaining information databases in relation to all allegations and producing qualitative and quantitative reports for LSCB's and DfES
- Attendance at strategy meetings and liaising with chairs of strategy meetings
- Contributing to LSCB training and awareness raising
- Providing assistance to agencies in the discussion of suspension (the power to suspend is vested in the employer alone)
- Liaison with Crown Prosecution Service
- Discussing with the Bishops/Safeguarding Adviser about the need for referral to the Protection of Children Act or to the accused persons regulatory body
- Coordinate, collect and maintain appropriate data

**Named Senior Officer (NSO) – General Secretary**

8. The Named Senior Officer has overall responsibility for; ensuring that the Free Church of England operates procedures for dealing with allegations in accordance with the guidance in Working Together 2010 resolving any inter-agency issues; and liaising with the LSCB on the subject.

9. The NSO's responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that the organisation complies with the standards identified and agreed by the LSCB for managing allegations and employing and maintaining a safe workforce.
- Ensuring that LSCB procedures for managing allegations are reflected and implemented within agency procedures
- Ensuring that the workforce is aware of and uses the procedures in relation to the allegations against adults working with or on behalf children,
- Ensuring that the organisation has in place systems for reviewing cases and identifying and implementing any changes required to improve procedures and practice.
- Resolving any inter-agency issues which affect the implementation of LSCB procedures
- Ensuring that the identity and key roles of NSO, LADO and senior manager (organisations) are reflected in agency policy and procedures
- Ensure effective recording and reporting arrangements are in place.

## Senior Manager within the Organisation (SMO) – Denominational Safeguarding Adviser

10. The Senior Manager within the Organisation has overall responsibility for ensuring procedures are followed at an operational level and that rigorous recording of information is undertaken. This person may be, or may represent, the employer
11. The SMO's responsibilities include:
  - Ensuring that LSCB procedures are properly applied and implemented
  - Providing advice, information and guidance for staff within the organisation
  - Being the Senior Manager within the Organisation to whom all allegations or concerns are reported
  - Clarify information regarding details of specific allegations
  - Gather any additional information which may have a bearing on the allegation e.g. previous known concerns, and care and control incidents
  - Liaise with LADO where allegations against staff or volunteers are made
  - Providing the subject of the allegation with information and advise them to inform their union or professional body in accordance with LADO advice
  - Requesting advice from Social Care should the allegation be unfounded as the child young person may be in need of services themselves or the police may need to be involved if allegation deemed to be deliberately malicious or invented
  - Attend Strategy meetings where required
  - Liaise with LADO /Church Council where employer's disciplinary action is required
  - Ensuring that risk assessments are undertaken as and when required
  - Ensuring that effective reporting and recording systems are in place which allow for the tracking of allegations through to the final outcome
  - Undertaking appropriate checks with data the agency may hold
  - Providing reports and information as required by NSO
  - Raising awareness of the need to empower children and young people who are in vulnerable positions by ensuring their agencies produce good whistle blowing and complaints procedures for all children.
  - Ensuring appropriate and relevant training programmes are in place for staff
  - Ensuring that relevant support programmes are in place for staff, parents, and young people

### Procedure

12. Any member of staff or volunteer, who receives an allegation or concern relating to a child made against another member of staff, must immediately inform the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser, the SMO, Failure to act on information or a concern may result in disciplinary action.
13. An allegation or concern should be reported to the SMO when a child has suffered or is likely to suffer harm from:
  - Abuse *or*
  - Actions, which a reasonable person could foresee, may result in harm (i.e. the person acted recklessly) *or*
  - The failure to provide an appropriate response to safeguard a child from harm (i.e. failure to protect or provide appropriate assistance) *or*

- Failure to follow a procedure or policy which, resulted or, was likely to result in harm to a child
14. Details of the allegation or concern should be recorded (and securely retained) as soon as possible after the event occurred. All subsequent events, discussions and decisions should be recorded and passed to the SMO who will maintain an overarching, central record.
  15. Where the SMO is uncertain as to whether a referral should be made to Children's Social Care, advice should be sought from the LADO prior to making a referral to Children's Social Care.
  16. The SMO will immediately refer the allegation or concern to the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
  17. The Free Church of England Named Senior Officer (NSO) should be notified of all allegations against staff irrespective of whether the allegation or concern relates to an employee of Denomination or Churches within the Diocese. The NSO will seek advice as necessary from the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser.
  18. Where the concerns relate to the SMO the information should be discussed directly with the Bishop's who will seek guidance and support from the Local Authority.
  19. The responsibility to investigate concerns and allegations against staff rests with social services and the police. Enquiries under s.47 Children Act 1989 and criminal enquiries always take precedence over internal and disciplinary investigations.
  20. Under no circumstances should the concern or allegation be discussed or raised with the accused person. Where the concern relates to a situation, which is alleged, occurred to a parishioner or child of a parishioner or is within the person's professional duties, limited enquiries may be made by the SMO to establish the validity of the allegation. However, such enquiries should be limited to establishing, where possible, the person or alleged victim's whereabouts when the incident was alleged to have occurred.
  21. Where an allegation has been directly made by a child or young person (i.e. below the age of 18 years) the child (where appropriate) or young person, and their parents or carers, should be advised of the intention to refer to the LADO and their views and co-operation sought, unless there is reason to believe that doing so may place the child at increased risk of significant harm or impede an investigation.
  22. All allegations and concerns should be referred to the relevant LADO by the SMO within the same working day. Where it is considered that the allegation or concern is serious<sup>1</sup> and requiring an immediate response the matter should be referred to Children's Social Care or the police in line with the Diocese of York Child Protection Procedures.

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<sup>1</sup> An allegation or concern should be regarded as serious where:

- It is believed a child has suffered significant harm or
- Is likely to suffer significant harm or
- Any delay would compound the risk to the child or
- Where a delay may act to impede an investigation.

23. Following the making of a referral to the LADO a Strategy Discussion / Meeting will be held. The SMO will usually be invited to attend in order to share information and inform internal processes. Any decision to suspend a member of staff or volunteer should be informed by the Strategy Meeting.
24. Investigations into allegations against members of staff should adopt the approach recommended by Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010), where child protection enquiries, a police investigation and disciplinary processes are considered as related though independent strands. The fact that a prosecution is not possible does not mean that disciplinary action is not necessary or feasible. Evidence of an employee's conduct should be considered using the test that 'on the balance of probability' an event did happen.

### **Action resulting from disciplinary processes**

25. Investigations into allegations against members of staff may result in one of four possible outcomes:
  - It has been proved conclusively, or on the balance of probability, that a person did not commit the alleged act, and was not culpable either through their actions or behaviour for the allegation having been made, *or*,
  - It has been proved on the balance of probability that a person did not commit the alleged act, but acted unprofessionally or irresponsibly, and was culpable for the allegation having been made, *or*,
  - The investigations were inconclusive, and concerns continue to exist, *or*,
  - The person has been found to have committed the act by a criminal court or in the conclusion of a child protection investigation.
26. In all cases a record of the concern along with the outcome should be placed on the person's personnel file, if they have one, and, if not, a record of the concerns & outcome should always be sent to the Bishop's and Denominational Safeguarding Adviser to hold on file.
27. Where it is found that a person did not commit the alleged act or that there are no grounds for concern and they were not culpable, the person should be notified in writing of the decision and no further action should be taken with a copy placed on the person's personnel file if they have one, and, if not, a record of the concerns and outcome should always be sent to the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser to hold on file.
28. Where it is found that a person did not commit the alleged act although was culpable for the allegation having been made, the person should be notified in writing of the decision and consideration given to the degree of culpability. Where it is felt that a person's actions were irresponsible or negligent, disciplinary action should be considered. In less serious situations an action plan should be devised to address the issues raised.
29. Where investigations are inconclusive, consideration should be given to the commissioning of an independent assessment, for the purpose of assessing the risk posed to young people. If it is assessed that a person poses a risk to young people, the outcome of the assessment should be presented to a disciplinary hearing.

30. In all cases where a person has been found to have committed the alleged act, disciplinary proceedings should be instigated.

### **Action following a person's dismissal**

31. The following guidance relates to a person who has been dismissed for misconduct, or has resigned or retired prior to the findings of a disciplinary hearing (taken from the Protection of Children Act Guidance 1999)
32. The Protection of Children Act sets out the circumstances where a childcare organisation **must**, and other organisations **may**, refer names to the Secretary for State for consideration of inclusion in the Protection of Children Act List. These are:
- That the organisation has dismissed the individual on the grounds of misconduct (whether or not in the course of his employment) which harmed a child or placed a child at risk of harm;
  - That the individual has resigned or retired in circumstances such that the organisation would have dismissed him, or would have considered dismissing him, on such grounds if he had not resigned or retired;
  - That the organisation has, on such grounds, transferred the individual to a position within the organisation which is not a childcare position;
  - That the organisation has, on such grounds, suspended the individual or provisionally transferred him to such a position as in (c) above, but has not yet decided whether to dismiss him or to confirm the transfer.
33. Additionally, and very importantly, childcare organisations and other organisations may refer names to the Secretary of State in other circumstances. This would be where they have dismissed an individual, he has resigned, retired or has transferred to a position within the organisation which is not a childcare position and where information not available to the organisation at the time has since become available. On the basis of that information the organisation has formed the opinion that, had the information been available at the time and if (where applicable) the individual had not resigned or retired, the organisation **would have, or would have considered** dismissing him on the grounds of misconduct, which harmed a child or placed a child at risk of harm.
34. "Would have dismissed" This covers the situation where an individual has engaged in misconduct which satisfied the criteria for referral (i.e. misconduct which harmed a child or placed a child at risk of harm), and has possibly been suspended or moved whilst the matter is investigated by the employer. As a result of the employer's investigation (and possibly a disciplinary hearing) the employer is satisfied that the individual has carried out the misconduct and as a result should be dismissed or moved to a role with no contact with children or young people. However, before this decision can be communicated to the individual he resigns/retires. The point here is that the employer has come to the conclusion that dismissal was appropriate in the circumstances. The employer can only come to this conclusion because he has completed his enquiry into the allegations.
35. "**Would have considered dismissing**". This type of referral will be where an allegation has come to light, which satisfies the criteria. However, before the employer has had the opportunity to complete his investigation the individual retires/resigns. Until the employer has completed his investigation he cannot conclude, with any degree of certainty that he would have dismissed. Whilst the

employer should undertake all investigations open to him it may not be possible to conclude all enquiries. For example, if a child made an allegation of abuse the employer would need to interview the child and seek any corroborating evidence from any independent sources. He should also attempt to obtain the individual's comments on the allegations. In the circumstances where the employer has only been able to obtain one side of the story (for example where it has not been possible to get the individual's comments), it is difficult for him to conclude that he would have dismissed the individual. He could only realistically conclude that he **would have considered dismissing** the individual. Employers could only come to that conclusion bearing in mind the nature of the allegations made; dismissal would have been a serious possibility – i.e. within the range of reasonable options.

36. It is important here for all employers to note that referrals are not required when dismissal of the individual was **not a serious option**. For example, when it would only have been a passing consideration within the range of possible options but not a real possibility. If a referral was made in such circumstances the Secretary of State would take the matter no further on the basis that it would not be appropriate for the individual to be included on the List. Misconduct after the individual left his position is never relevant for this purpose; because once he had left the post he could not have been dismissed.
37. It is important that employers and the Diocesan Bishop keep a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made, details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, and details of any action taken and decisions reached, on a person's confidential personnel file and give a copy to the individual. A comprehensive form for recording allegations is available from the Safeguarding Adviser. If the person concerned does not have a personnel file, then a record of the concerns should always be sent to the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser to hold on file.
38. Such information should be retained on file, including for people who leave the organisation, at least until the person reaches normal retirement age or for 10 years if that will be longer.
39. The purpose of the record is to enable accurate information to be given in response to any future request for a reference. It will provide clarification in cases where a future DBS Disclosure reveals information from the police that an allegation was made but did not result in a prosecution or a conviction and it will prevent unnecessary re-investigation if, as sometimes happens, allegations re-surface after a period of time.

## **Procedures for the management of safeguarding information**

Careful attention should be paid to the storage, use and sharing of data held by the church relating to other people. This is critical to ensure that those who engage with safeguarding processes have confidence in the legitimacy and appropriateness of actions taken. The management of information is governed by law, statutory and government guidance including:

- General Data Protection Regulation (2018)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)

## **The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act (2018) outline the rights of individuals regarding information that is held and used by organisations. Many of the provisions which were previously within the Data Protection Act 1998 are also present within GDPR and new Data Protection Act but the requirements for transparency have been increased, along with the sanctions for failing to comply. Everyone within the church **should** understand their responsibilities under GDPR and comply with its requirements.

The introduction of GDPR and the Data Protection Act (2018) provide an opportunity for all those engaging in activities, which relate to safeguarding to review how they use information about others and commit to the highest standards of data protection practice.

### **Key terms relating to data protection**

There are several key terms relating to data protection and the GDPR, which need to be understood in order for those supporting safeguarding within the Free Church of England **so that they** comply with their legal responsibilities.

Personal Data is any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person, the 'Data Subject'. This could include details such as names, dates of birth and addresses relating to safeguarding. If the information is anonymous, it will still be personal data if it is possible to identify the individual through the circumstances.

### **Special Categories of Personal Data**

- political opinions
- religious or philosophical beliefs
- trade union membership
- genetic data
- biometric identity data
- health information
- sex life
- sexual orientation

In most cases, safeguarding concerns will include special category personal data. **Criminal Offence Data** is designated under a separate category with additional requirements relating to its processing. This is information relating to criminal allegations, proceedings or convictions.

### **Specific Provisions in the Data Protection Act 2018 relating to Safeguarding**

While the General Data Protection Regulation provides for routine processing of data for church activities, the Data Protection Act 2018 makes specific provision for the release of information relevant to safeguarding situations.

1. The supply of information to investigations or inquiries conducted by statutory agencies such as police, adult or children's services.  
In this case, the legitimate basis for processing is that it is in the substantive public interest for the prevention or detection of an unlawful act under the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, Schedule 1, Part 2 (10). In all cases, a data protection form should be requested from the agency requesting the information which should be added to the safeguarding record. Concerns about the vulnerability of any party must be passed to the officer receiving information in writing.
2. Other safeguarding activities including recording information, making inquiries, risk assessment and the application of safeguarding measures.  
The legitimate basis for these activities, is that it is in the substantive public interest and necessary for the protection of someone of any age at risk from neglect, or physical or emotional harm, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, Schedule 1, Part 2 (18). This includes specific individuals and groups (e.g. children or adults at risk). If there is reasonable suspicion that the individuals need care and support, are at risk from neglect, physical or emotional harm and unable to protect themselves, they are considered at risk for this legislation. Information can be shared without consent.

On occasion, concerns are raised that information sharing about safeguarding issues is a breach of the subject's human rights. Information Sharing for Practitioners (2018) provides the following guidance:

The provisions of the Human Rights Act and the common law duty of confidence must be balanced against the effect on children or individuals at risk, if information is not shared. Welfare of a vulnerable party is the most important thing and the need for disclosure should be assessed in every case on an ongoing basis.

It is possible that it is in the subject's overall interests, the public interest, or a legal obligation such as a court order may require disclosure. In the context of safeguarding a child or young person, where the child's welfare is paramount, it is possible that the common law duty of confidence can be overcome.

It can sometimes be helpful to share a copy of the government guidance to reassure those who may have concerns about the basis and legitimacy of information sharing.

## Retention of Safeguarding Information

### The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)

In March 2015, a government inquiry into child sexual abuse in statutory and non-statutory organisations was set up. The Chair of the inquiry wrote to church leaders outlining its authority to request information under Section 21 of the Inquiries Act 2005. The Chair confirmed that it was an offence to destroy, alter or tamper with evidence with the intention of suppressing it or preventing its disclosure to the inquiry. Consequently, the Chair directed that that information relevant to child sexual abuse in organisations should not be destroyed during the course of the inquiry. Prolonged retention of records for this purpose will not be considered a breach of the current Data Protection Act. This is will also apply to GDPR.

Relevant safeguarding material includes the following documents:

- Safeguarding referrals for advice, inquiries and support to other organisations and internally
- Risk assessments
- Safeguarding casework files and records
- Documents relating to Safeguarding Panels
- Safeguarding contracts
- Quality assurance information e.g. safeguarding audits, data returns etc.
- Files relating to education establishments, recruitment and safeguarding
- HR Staff files
- Complaints and discipline material
- Files on appointments to councils, committees and other bodies
- Safeguarding leadership and governance at a church, diocese or denominational level
- DBS checks
- Records of safeguarding concerns about children and young people or about behaviour towards them.
- Policies and procedures relating to safeguarding children and young people

**The following table provides information about retention periods relating to safeguarding data: Item Record Keeping Retention**

Record of a safeguarding concern or allegation relating to a child or vulnerable adult. <b>This</b> may be a member, volunteer, employee, role holder or minister This includes risk assessments and safeguarding contracts and all related materials.	A record should be retained of the nature of the allegation or concern, actions taken and the outcome.	75 years after the last contact relating to the subject or any survivor
Other material held as part of safeguarding records.	This may include data supplied from other sources which may be subject to shorter retention periods if not forming part of a safeguarding record.	75 years after the last contact relating to the subject or any survivor

## **Step-by-step guide to sharing information**

Taking into consideration the above guidance, the following procedure should be adopted when receiving a request for personal data or making such a request.

### **Validate the person requesting information**

Before supplying any information to a third party, check their identity and that they are in a role or position which is entitled to make such a request and to receive the information. If you have prior personal or organisational knowledge of the person concerned you will not need additional validation. However, it can be tempting to be helpful and respond directly, particularly to calls which suggest they may come from a statutory agency or another church member or are said to need urgent action.

### **Validate the nature of the request**

Think carefully about whether there is a legitimate reason to disclose the information that you are thinking of sending and only disclose what is relevant and proportionate in the circumstances, which could include:

- current risk to a child
- current risk to a vulnerable adult
- request to provide information in relation to a statutory investigation (police, Children's Services or Adult Social Care etc)
- court order
- subject access request under the General Data Protection Regulation.

If there is any doubt about whether there is a legitimate reason for providing information, ask the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser.

If you are making a request for information, say why you believe there is legitimate reason for the other party to disclose it, identify any risk posed by not doing so, and say how it will be used. If the third party is not aware of safeguarding processes in The Free Church of England, it is often helpful to explain the procedures.

### **Consider whether it is appropriate to gain consent**

People often feel concerned about asking or telling someone that information about them is going to be disclosed to another party, particularly when it may not give a positive impression. Be prepared to identify at the outset information may be shared if there is believed to be a safeguarding risk. This often leads to greater acceptance, as the person sharing the information is perceived as acting in an open and honest way.

**If lacking capacity to provide consent, under duress or in fear or where there are children at risk, it may be necessary to share information without consent.**

## **Working Together: Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs)**

The Children Act 2004 led to changes in the way children are provided for in our communities. Social Services and Education have now become fully integrated and are known by the new joint title of 'Children and Young People's Services'.

Education and social work still carry on, of course, with trained teachers and social workers in each case, but they no longer work in isolation from each other, or from their agencies such as Health and Police. In addition, each Local Authority had to establish by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) that provides a new, broader, statutory inter-agency approach to the safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Its central focus remains the protection of children from significant harm, but there is also a new broader responsibility for the promotion of the welfare and general safety of children.

Effective work in protecting children from harm requires properly co-ordinated activity across a wide range of agencies, both statutory and voluntary, including what are known in the new procedures as 'faith groups'. The LSCB helps to co-ordinate an effective joint effort by all the various agencies represented in the community, but all partner agencies keep their own lines of accountability. The LSCB has more recently been placed on a statutory footing and therefore has the power to *direct* any organisation working with children, young people or adults who may be perpetrators of abuse, including the Church, but is also able to help and support us to follow procedures effectively. Similarly, the Church can contribute an understanding of the Christian 'faith-group' context to the operations of the LSCB. It is all a matter of understanding the variety of practices within the local community, in the hope that a better understanding and better communication must inevitably mean a better service to vulnerable children and families.

Perhaps the most important thing to note in relation to child protection in the Church is that co-operation with the LSCB, and with the policies and procedures it oversees, is an effective way of making sure that we keep to the best possible practice in our work with children. Most LSCBs (there is an LSCB in each Local Authority) have their own websites which usually contain their Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children / Child Protection Procedures and details of the training that they offer as well as contact details for LSCB staff, at the least. In the Free Church of England, we are committed to working with our partner agencies on the LSCBs wherever appropriate.

## **Guidelines for Work with Children and Teenagers**

1. Avoid working in one-to-one situations with children wherever possible. Make sure there is always another adult within earshot. Try to have a man and a woman at each mixed-age activity. Adults leading a session with children should not smoke or use or have recently used alcohol or illicit drugs.
2. Those undertaking one-to-one counselling or pastoral work must adhere to the highest standards of conduct in their working relationship with the child and should have received appropriate training. Know your own level of competence, and do not step beyond it; if a situation becomes difficult, seek advice straight away. Be clear at the start what you and the child are planning to achieve by meeting, and the limits of what you can offer. Meet at an agreed time, in a place that affords an ability to talk confidentially without being secretively 'tucked away', and let a colleague know what you are doing. Write up a confidential log straight after the meeting.
3. Socially acceptable physical contact between adults and children in a public place is quite proper and appropriate where it can be readily seen by others and is not hidden away. Physical contact with children should be minimal, and solely intended to meet the needs of the child rather than the adult. It is important to be sensitive to, and respect, each child's sense of personal space. Avoid playing 'rough and tumble' games with children or making provocative or 'teasing' comments, even in fun. These can very easily be misinterpreted by children and young people, especially by those who are vulnerable.
4. Keep an up-to-date register of all children attending a group: date of birth, home address, telephone number and names of parents/carers should be included.
5. The ratio of adults to children must be sufficient to ensure safety and comply with the requirements of the Children Act 1989. These requirements are particularly relevant to work with children under the age of eight. If you are providing care for young children, particularly in a group that runs for two or more hours per day for more than five days a year, you will usually need to register the group with Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education). Some groups e.g. sports clubs that exist only to teach one specialist activity, do not have to register. But the rules are quite complicated, and if you are unsure about whether the group needs to be registered or not, always check with Ofsted. You can call Ofsted's helpline on 0845 601 4771.

The NSPCC recommended minimum ratios are:

Age of children	0 - 2	2 - 3	4 - 8	9 -12	13 - 18
Children per one adult	3	4	6	8	10

6. All U18s<sup>2</sup> need to provide a parental consent form when they join a group or activity. If the child is 'in care' (i.e. under a Care Order to the Local Authority) then this form must be signed by a senior manager within that Local Authority, NOT the Foster Carer.
7. Children may attend worship or other activities unaccompanied by an adult. Where this is the case, try to establish if parents know where the child is and what time s/he is expected home. If necessary, encourage the child to leave at the appropriate time to get home for this deadline.

If a child is joining a regular activity, record his/her name, age, and address on a registration form and ask the child to bring it back signed next time. Make every effort to make direct contact with the parents, particularly of a younger child, by sending information home or providing a contact telephone number for them to call you. No child should ever be taken on a trip away from the church site without a parental consent form.

8. The premises used should be safe and well maintained. Particular consideration should be given to safety checks of play equipment, furnishings, fire alarms etc. Keep a suitably stocked First Aid kit always accessible during children's activities (special children's First Aid kits are available from most major retailers of pharmaceutical goods). Make sure that all planned activities, on or off site, are covered by an adequate insurance policy.
9. Workers must be receptive to what children and young people in their care have to say. If a child makes a complaint or an allegation about the behaviour of an adult within the church or the community, listen carefully without making a judgement on how plausible what you are hearing might be. (See 'What to do if a child tells you about abuse' in Section 1). If a complaint is made about someone in the church, this must ALWAYS be referred outside the church for advice about how to proceed. **You must always contact the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser / Bishops or go directly to the LADO.**
10. **NEVER** promise any child, young person or adult that you can keep what they tell you confidential, e.g. if you are spoken to by someone who states that they want to tell you something but need you to promise them that you will not tell anyone else. It is essential to respond to such requests (in age appropriate language, of course) by informing the person that you will be respectful of their wishes but that you have to retain the right to disclose any information which suggests/may suggest that any person is at risk of significant harm.

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<sup>2</sup> except where an U18 is married

## **Appointment of youth workers**

It is not generally advisable to appoint young men or women under the age of 21 to be youth leaders with youth groups of 14+ years. Experience has shown that where the age of the youth leader and the youth is quite close, and at an age where levels of maturity vary widely, it can become difficult for the youth leader to maintain the professional distance that is essential to the work. This becomes especially problematic in cases where a relationship might develop between the youth leader and one of the youth group members.

In addition, there are two relatively new criminal offences in law that employers need to note. It is a criminal offence for someone in a position of trust, responsibility or authority with 16-18 year olds to engage in a sexual relationship with those in his/her care, even though the young person is over the age of consent. It is also a criminal offence for an adult to 'groom' a young person. Grooming is the term used for befriending children or young people with the purpose of engaging in a sexual relationship at a later date.

We support all attempts to safeguard the children and young people in our care. However, naive and/or immature youth workers, particularly if recruitment and supervision procedures are not scrupulously followed, could find themselves in a situation where their naivety costs them a career with children and a blemished DBS status where there was no evil intent. We would therefore advise any church that is planning to appoint a youth worker to seek up-to-date advice on recruitment matters from the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser as a matter of good practice. We would further advise churches not to appoint a youth worker under the age of 21 without discussing the situation with the Diocesan Bishop.

However, there may be 'youth workers' or those training to be Youth Leaders who are under the age of 21 years, but they should always be working in the presence of a formally appointed Youth Leader (over 21 years of age) and never left in sole charge of any individual or group of young people. This is to ensure that emerging youth leaders and workers are encouraged to develop their skills and potential without putting either young people or themselves at risk.

## **Ministering to People who Might Pose a Risk to Children**

Research has indicated that a higher proportion of convicted offenders against children may be found in church congregations than in the population generally. Many congregations will include people who have abused children amongst their worshippers, and sometimes their history will be known to the Minister and others. Not all will have committed sexual offences: some will have been guilty of neglect, physical or emotional abuse.

The Church has a duty to minister to **all** people, whatever their background. However, the responsibility to children includes a duty of care to keep them safe from those who might seek to harm them; the welfare of children must always be our paramount consideration.

As well as people with convictions against children there are others whose position in a congregation may need to be carefully and sensitively considered to decide whether they pose a risk to children. This would include people convicted of violent or sexual offences against adults, including domestic violence; people involved in drug or alcohol addiction, or those whose medical conditions or disabilities that might, in rare cases, result in erratic behaviour.

If a congregation is generally aware of how offenders, or others who may pose a risk to children, will be treated it will be easier to deal confidentially with a specific case, should one occur. The procedure for ministering to people who have a history of sexual abuse against children is included below. Where a minister or any other member of the congregation is aware of possible risks as described in the previous paragraph, advice must be sought. In the first instance, contact the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser.

## **Ministering to people who are known to have sexually abused children**

Where a sex offender is known, befriended and helped by a group of volunteers to lead a fulfilled life without direct contact with children the chances of re-offending are diminished. This gives the Church an important role in the prevention of child abuse.

When it is known that a member of the congregation has sexually abused a child the Bishop should be consulted. A course of action to minimise risk can then be agreed in consultation with the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser and/or Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. Child sexual abuse is a compulsive pattern of behaviour, and it is important to set up an agreement with the offender that protects children and yet gives him/her the opportunity to be included in the ministry of the Church.

If the person's victim attends the church the person should be introduced to another congregation. Consideration must also be given to others who have been abused in the past. The person should not accept any role or office in the church that gives him/her access to children and/or young people, OR any role that gives him/her the kind of status or authority that might make a child believe the person to be trustworthy. A frank discussion should be held with the person who is entering into the agreement, explaining that a small group from the parish will need to know the facts in order to create a safe environment for children and for the person who has previously harmed children.

If possible, the membership of the group should be agreed with the person. It is likely to include the clergy, churchwardens, Church Safeguarding Officer and any befriending volunteers. If there is a children's work co-ordinator, s/he will need to be informed that an agreement is in place and that this person should not be approached to volunteer for such work and that should the person concerned try to seek any work with children, the Church Safeguarding Officer must be informed.

This small group should offer support and friendship as well as supervision. They should endeavour to keep open channels of communication. No-one else except the Bishop and the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser should be informed of the facts/history without the person's consent. The highest levels of confidentiality should be maintained.

It will be necessary to establish clear boundaries, both for the protection of children and young people and to lessen the possibility of the person being wrongly accused of abuse. Prepare an agreement, in consultation with the Bishop and Safeguarding Adviser, which might include the following elements:

- attendance at specific and agreed services/meetings only
- sitting apart from children
- staying away from areas of the building where children meet
- only attending a house group where there are no children
- declining hospitality where there are/will potentially be children present or within a household
- never being alone with children
- never working or be part of a mixed age group that includes children

The person who is the subject of the agreement should be asked to sign it, and the agreement should be carefully and strictly supervised. Do not make any alteration to the terms before talking to the Bishop and Denominational Safeguarding Adviser.

The Minister of the Church and any others involved in the agreement should offer close support and pastoral care.

The agreement should be reviewed at regular intervals (at least quarterly) to ensure that it is still being followed exactly as written. An agreement must remain in place so long as the person is a part of the congregation, whether or not his/her name appears on the Sex Offenders Register. If the agreement is broken, seek advice from the Bishops. As a final resort, you may have to consider banning the offender from church. In this case, alert the Bishop who, in discussion with the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser may feel it necessary to alert other local churches, the police or the probation service, if appropriate

In some cases, offences only come to light after many years. In such situations great sensitivity will be required – but remember that there may still be a substantial risk to children and an agreement will still be appropriate in most cases.

## **Child Protection and Mixed-Age Groups in the Church**

One of the positive things that the church can offer is a place where young and old, children and adults can be together, including worship and learning about the faith together. Children have the opportunity to get to know adults in a shared activity; perhaps singing, making music, acting together, study groups or church weekends. When these activities include children without their parents or carers being present, it is the responsibility of the Church Council or equivalent body to make sure that these children are cared for within health, safety and child protection guidelines.

Experience has shown that such groups are vulnerable to infiltration by people seeking to harm children. The opportunity for regular informal contact can enable a potential offender to gain the trust of a young person, enabling them to move on to offend. It is expected that all such groups will recognise the need to provide a safe environment, including the need to exclude from their activities those shown to be a risk to children.

### **Implementing the policy**

All groups should arrange a meeting for their adult members to learn about the need for child protection. Members should agree and sign up to good practice guidelines.

These should include:

- Not arranging to meet children outside the group without their parents' permission.
- Not giving extra tuition in your own home.
- Not giving lifts to a child on his/her own, or without the parent's permission.

All leaders of groups where there is an expectation of child members, even if there are none at present, should be appointed through the 'safer recruitment' procedure and apply for a DBS disclosure.

## **Communicating Electronically**

This section of the Denomination Safeguarding Policy concerns the use of mobile phones, email, SMS (text) messages, MSN Messenger, Social Networking sites and other electronic communication methods.

The issues involved in communicating electronically are not very different from those in face to face communication, except that the person is not with you, so neither of you can use facial expressions or body language to clarify your meaning, nor can any person using some methods of electronic communication (e.g. web chat) be absolutely certain exactly who they are communicating with. It is also normally private, so others are not there to provide a context and background. Finally, it usually creates a detectable record, which could, if necessary, be printed out and used in evidence.

Those who wish to abuse young people often start with electronic communications and then attempt to lure young people into an unprotected face to face meeting. Therefore, good practice is to communicate in such a way that achieves its purpose without unintentionally encouraging habits in young people, which could be dangerous.

### **A few Do's and Don'ts**

- If young people want you to have their mobile phone numbers, email addresses or similar, make sure that their parents know and have agreed.
- Keep communications short. If you need a discussion, fix a time to do so face to face during or following the group, and follow the good practice guidelines for workers with children.
- Use an appropriate tone: friendly, but not over-familiar or personal. Beware of 'jokey' remarks: these are often misinterpreted, especially when conveyed electronically.
- While communications should be friendly, they should not suggest or offer a special relationship.
- Respect the young person's confidentiality, unless abuse is suspected or disclosed.
- Before sending your communication, ask yourself: would you be embarrassed if it were seen by the young person's parents, or church officials?

## **Information about the Sexual Abuse of Children**

*(Based on the NSPCC's 'Protecting Children from Sexual Abuse in the Community')*

Sexual abuse, while only one of the four categories recognised as contributing to 'significant harm' under the terms of the Children Act 1989, nonetheless often causes more concern to those who work with children than all the others. This may be because it is by nature secretive and difficult to detect and deal with, as well as social taboos. The most frequently asked questions about sexual abuse, and responses, are therefore included in this section.

### **Who sexually abuses children and young people?**

Approximately 90% of convicted abusers are male. Whilst women do perpetrate sexual abuse and there is probably some under reporting of females, evidence at present shows it is predominantly an offence committed by males.

Children can be sexually abused by adults or by other young people, although there is almost always an imbalance of power involved.

### **Can we recognise a sexual abuser?**

There is no easy way to identify someone who may sexually abuse children and there is no such thing as a typical sex offender. Abusers do not look different from other people. They are found in all walks of life and at all levels of society. They may sometimes hold respected positions in the community. They can come from any racial, cultural or religious background. They could be someone you know, someone in your church, a parent of one of your children's friends, a relative.

### **What are the implications of this?**

Many adult sexual offenders report that they began their behaviour around the age of 13 or sometimes younger. This means that when they are finally discovered they may have been sexually abusing others for many years and their behaviour will have become compulsive and hard to break. It also means that if a young person engages in inappropriate sexual behaviour it would be dangerous simply to view it as teenage "experimentation" which they will grow out of.

### **Why do people abuse?**

The reasons why adult abuse is very complex. Sometimes they will have been abused themselves and are repeating pattern of behaviour that they learned earlier in life or be responding to past hurts or unmet needs. Sexual abuse of vulnerable children may meet a need for power and control or for self-gratification. Although their behaviour is appalling to most people, and extremely harmful to the children that they abuse, it is important to remember that the abuser themselves was once an innocent child, and it is their life experience that has brought them to their current behaviour. Help for the abuser where possible and protection of children is what is needed rather than vilification.

## **Does sexual abuse just happen?**

A sexual abuser may claim that they did not know why the behaviour happened or that it was a result of stress, sexual frustration or misuse of drugs or alcohol. There is no evidence that this is the case; abusers may not understand why they abuse, but they do plan their sexual abuse of children. Equally, although the use of drugs or alcohol may help the abuser to disregard their innate knowledge that abuse of a child is wrong, the use of drugs or alcohol in itself does not 'cause' abuse.

Sexual abuse, or the opportunity to abuse, is almost always carefully and meticulously planned, often over a long period of time. Abusers may choose friendships or relationships with adults who already have children or may choose employment or voluntary work where they will have positions of responsibility over, or unsupervised access to, children.

## **How can sexual abusers justify their behaviour?**

Unless the sexual abuser is a sadistic offender who thrives on the pain of others, he or she will have to develop thought patterns (distorted thinking) that deny or minimise the harm caused to others. This allows them to live with themselves. Some of the ways an abuser tries to justify such actions include claims like:

- The child wanted the sexual experience
- Children are seductive and provocative
- It won't harm them
- The child liked the sexual experience
- It was a "one-off" and it won't happen again

The distorted thinking of a sexual abuser can be fed in a number of different ways including pornographic literature or on-line images of both adults and children, seeking out other like-minded adults, or by misrepresenting children as sexual beings. In attempting to deny or minimise the effects of their abusive behaviour, a sexual abuser may appear very plausible. This can draw other people into their way of thinking.

One of the ways an offender can deny responsibility or seek to avoid having to address their behaviour through treatment is by claiming a religious conversion. When this is the case, it would be important to know whether faith in God has really led to true repentance, including taking full responsibility for the abuse, seeking to repair its damage and seeking to prevent a relapse by receiving the support of others.

## **Can a sexual abuser be 'cured'?**

There is no evidence that a sexual abuser can be 'cured' of a desire to abuse children. All the available evidence suggests that the behaviour will have developed over a, usually long, period of time and will be so entrenched that it will have become an integral part of a person's character, making its powerful urges difficult to control.

The most effective way for abusers to change their behaviour is by developing an insight into their pattern or cycle of behaviour and by keeping away from situations where child abuse could occur. To ensure that there is no further offending the abuser is likely to require a long-term specialist programme, and long-term supervision, so that they cannot develop or reinforce their distorted thinking. Once discovered, adult sexual abusers will need to have controls placed on their behaviour to ensure that they do not have opportunities to abuse other children.

## **How do sexual abusers operate?**

Sexual abusers usually operate by befriending either children or adults who will enable them to have access to children. They are often talented and likeable people. They are often very good at making friends with children. They can be extremely plausible and other adults may be convinced that the interest they show in children is totally innocent. They will go to great lengths to get close to children and are often well organised, manipulative and sophisticated in the ways they attach themselves, not just to children, but also to families, where they take time and effort to build up trust.

## **How do sexual abusers gain access to children?**

Sexual abusers gain contact with children in all sorts of ways. Most contacts are not random but are the results of careful advance planning. Sexual abusers are extremely good at relating to children and gaining their confidence and trust. They are often well known to the child or their family, where they are seen as a safe and trusted person. Others will seek positions and/or activities that give them easy access to children. Here they will bide their time, building up trust and confidence, sometimes over a considerable period, in order to prevent or allay any suspicions of their intentions. Some of the positions and/or activities sexual abusers are known to seek include:

- a leader of or helper with a children's activity
- a coach or volunteer in children's sport
- a worker in a school
- a worker in a caring profession
- A member of a mixed age activity, such as a church choir or bell ringing team.

## **Are all children equally vulnerable to sexual abusers?**

Sexual abusers will be attracted to children of different ages and characteristics. Some will abuse only pre-pubescent children; others will approach older children. Some will abuse boys, other girls and some will abuse children of both sexes. Some abusing adults may operate alone whilst others may be linked into an organised network. If an abuser is having a sexual relationship with another adult, this does not mean that they are not a risk to children.

Sexual abusers rarely pick children at random. They are skilled at identifying children who may be particularly vulnerable to their approach. They may single out a child who is:

- left alone for long periods of time without proper supervision
- bored, lonely or bereaved
- in care or away from home, at school or on holiday
- emotionally deprived and particularly looking for love, affection or seeking attention
- lacking in confidence
- too trusting
- already a victim of bullying or abuse
- disabled and in need of high levels of intimate care
- unable to communicate well for whatever reason
- Eager to succeed in activities such as sport, music, schoolwork or in other activities, which may allow him/her to be manipulated by a potential abuser.

## **How do sexual abusers target children?**

Sexual abusers will often carefully introduce or "groom" children into a sexually abusive relationship. They will begin by getting to know the child and showing them special attention. They frequently use a progression of activities, which may begin with apparently innocent physical contact such as coaching for physical recreations. Other grooming activities may include:

- forming a friendly relationship with the child and/or their parents or carers
- taking a strong interest in the child and his/her activities
- seeking opportunities to be alone with the child
- giving the child gifts, toys or favours
- offering to take the child on trips, outings or holidays
- gradually introducing the child to physical contact, which a parent may initially view as innocent, but which becomes increasingly sexual over time
- Telling the child that what is happening is not wrong, or that it's because the child is special/loved etc.

If undiscovered, this behaviour is likely to become increasingly intrusive, progressing into sexual abuse. Alcohol or other substances and pornography are often used in the process. An adult sexual abuser can regularly abuse the same child over many years. The abuse of other children at the same time is also common depending on the level of access and opportunity.

In addition to "grooming" the child, an abuser will also "groom" other people around them to create the impression that they would not be capable of such an action. If they are discovered, the people around them may find it difficult to believe the allegations and may defend the abuser rather than think about the needs of the child. In such situations the child will feel very distressed that they are not believed and may be under pressure to retract their allegations.

## **Why don't children tell anyone what is happening?**

Sexual abusers will use many different ways to ensure that a child remains quiet about the abuse. They will frequently use a child's natural fear, embarrassment or guilt, as well as threats of punishment, to stop him/her telling anyone about the abuse. Children are put under immense pressure by their abuser to keep the secret. Some of the ways in which abusers may exert pressure over children include:

- making the child believe that they have a special relationship or secret
- making the child believe that he/she invited the abuse so that she/he feels guilty
- telling the child that no one will believe any allegation/disclosure
- making the child believe that if a disclosure is made the family will be split up or parents/carers sent to prison
- offering gifts, money or other items
- threatening or using violence towards the child
- making threats against someone or something close to the child
- isolating the child and discouraging relationships with others who could be told
- Encouraging the child to become emotionally dependent upon the abuser so that he/she fears losing the relationship with the abuser.

## **What can we do to prevent this abuse occurring?**

Any organisation that works with children has the potential to be targeted by sexual abusers. It is well known to local police forces that many sexual abusers consider church activities with children to be a particularly easy target. This is why it is vital that churches develop safe practices in their work with children and in recruitment of employees and volunteers.

**1 child in 14 in the UK suffers serious physical abuse by a parent or carer.**

**1 child in 10 under the age of 16 experiences an actual or attempted sexual assault.**

**Source: NSPCC**

## **Undertaking a Risk Assessment for Activities With Children & Young People (i.e. those under 18 years of age)**

### **What is A Risk Assessment?**

A risk assessment is an important step in protecting yourself, other workers (including volunteers) and your church, as well as complying with the law. It helps you focus on the risks that really matter – the ones with the potential to cause real harm. In many instances, straightforward measures can readily control risks, for example ensuring spillages are cleaned up promptly so people do not slip, or that no one works alone and unseen by other adults when working with children and young people.

The law does not expect you to eliminate all risk, but you are required to protect people as far as 'reasonably practicable'. This section tells you how to achieve that with a minimum of fuss.

This is not the only way to do a risk assessment; there are other methods that work well, particularly for more complex risks and circumstances. However, this method is likely to be the most straightforward for most activities undertaken by parishes.

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in your dealings with children and young people, could put children / young people, workers, or volunteers at risk of some form of harm, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm. Children and others have a right to be protected from harm caused by a failure to take reasonable control measures.

### **How to assess the risks in your workplace**

Follow the following five steps:

**Step 1 - Identify the hazards**

**Step 2 - Decide who might be harmed and how**

**Step 3 - Evaluate the risks and decide on necessary precautions**

**Step 4 - Record your findings and implement them**

**Step 5 - Review your assessment and update if necessary**

When thinking about your risk assessment, remember that in the context of safeguarding children:

- **hazard** is anything that may cause harm, such as children injuring themselves accidentally, someone having the opportunity to intentionally harm a child, or a child or young person misinterpreting innocently intentioned word or actions etc;
- **risk** is the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be.

## Step 1: Identify the hazards

First you need to work out how children or young people could be harmed. When you work in a place regularly it is easy to overlook some hazards, so here are some tips to help you identify the ones that matter:

- **Walk around** your venue and look at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm – are there things that young children might find attractive to climb that could be dangerous? Are there any 'hidden' areas where an adult could be unseen with a child? Could young children get out of the safe area/building without an adult being aware?
- **Look at how you do things in your group** – are adults or older children asked to undertake any 'unseen' activities with children?
- **Ask your co-workers** (or if working with young people, ask them what they think). They may have noticed things that are not immediately obvious to you.
- **Check manufacturers' instructions** or data sheets for any equipment you use as they can be very helpful in spelling out the hazards and putting them in their true perspective.
- Have a look back at your **accident/incident records** – these often help to identify the less obvious hazards.

## Step 2: Decide who might be harmed and how

For each hazard you need to be clear about who might be harmed – a child or young person, or a worker / volunteer; it will help you identify the best way of managing the risk. That doesn't mean listing everyone by name, but rather identifying groups of people. In each case, identify how they might be harmed, i.e. what type of injury or harm might occur. For example, 'children may fall off stage area' or 'adult could have opportunity to abuse child'.

Remember: some workers/volunteers have particular requirements, e.g. new workers / volunteers are less well known and may act in a way to harm a child either intentionally or unintentionally; and young workers/volunteers may not be as aware as more experienced workers of how their actions could be misinterpreted or what the 'rules' are for working with children.

*Remember that those who wish to harm children, especially via sexual abuse, will often actively seek work or volunteer to undertake activities with children and young people, or find a 'reason' to be in an area frequented by children and young people. Although these individuals are in a distinct minority in our society, we must always maintain an awareness of that risk.*

Extra thought will be needed for some hazards;

- visitors, contractors, maintenance workers etc, who may not be in the workplace all the time;
- members of the public, if they could access the venue, may be in a position to harm a child;
- any activity in a venue that you are unfamiliar with; and
- Ask your co-workers if they can think of anything that you may have missed.

### **Step 3: Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions**

Having spotted the hazards, you then have to decide what to do about them. You should do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect children and young people from harm.

So, first look at what you are already doing; think about what controls you have in place and how the work is organised. Consider:

- Can I get rid of the hazard altogether?
- If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

When controlling risks, apply the principles below, if possible, in the following order:

- try a less risky option (e.g. ensure that no worker or volunteer spends time alone and unseen with a child or young person);
- prevent access to the hazard (e.g. by ensuring that cleaning materials are kept in a locked cupboard);
- organise work to reduce exposure to the hazard (e.g. always having two workers present as a minimum, or ensuring that the public cannot enter the venue of the activity without ringing a doorbell thus letting other adults know that they are present);
- Provide welfare facilities (e.g. first aid kit).

### **Step 4: Record your findings and implement any necessary actions** ***(See Risk Assessment Form in Section 4)***

Putting the results of your risk assessment into practice will make a difference when looking after children and young people. Writing down the results of your risk assessment, and sharing them with the Church Council members, encourages you to do this.

When writing down your results, keep it simple, for example 'Tripping over rubbish: bins provided, weekly housekeeping checks', or 'Sometimes only one worker available: suspend group until second worker / volunteer available'.

A risk assessment does not have to be perfect, but it must be suitable and sufficient. You need to be able to show that:

- a proper check was made;
- you asked who might be affected;

- you dealt with all the significant hazards;
- the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low; and
- You involved your co-workers and the Parish Council in the process.

Make a plan of action to deal with the most important things first. A good plan of action often includes a mixture of different things such as:

- easy improvements that can be done quickly, perhaps as a temporary solution until more permanent controls are in place;
- long-term solutions to those risks most likely to cause accidents or put a child at risk of harm;
- arrangements for training workers and volunteers on the main risks that remain and how they are to be controlled;
- regular checks to make sure that the control measures stay in place; and
- Clear responsibilities – who will lead on what action, and by when.

Remember, prioritise and tackle the most important things first. As you complete each action, tick it off your plan AND ALWAYS LIAISE WITH YOUR CHURCH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER FOR ADVICE and SUPPORT.

### **Step 5: Review your risk assessment and update if necessary**

Few activities or venues stay the same. Sooner or later, you will bring in new equipment, activities and procedures that could lead to new hazards. It makes sense, therefore, to review what you are doing on an ongoing basis. Every year or so formally review where you are, to make sure you are still improving, or at least not sliding back.

Look at your risk assessment again. Have there been any changes? Are there improvements you still need to make? Have your workers spotted a problem? Have you learnt anything from accidents or near misses? Make sure your risk assessment stays up to date.

When you are running an activity or group business it's all too easy to forget about reviewing your risk assessment – until something has gone wrong and it's too late. Why not set a review date for this risk assessment now? Write it down and note it in your diary as an annual event.

During the year, if there is a significant change or new activity or venue planned, don't wait. Check your risk assessment and, where necessary, amend it. If possible, it is best to think about the risk assessment when you're planning your change – that way you leave yourself more flexibility.

## Levels of Risk:

The 'Risk Factor' of any hazard is the PROBABILITY of it occurring multiplied by the SEVERITY of the effects if it did happen. To guide your thinking regarding risk of any situation or event, and to assist you in completing the Risk Assessment Form (CP 11) you should consider the following re probability and potential severity of risks related to safeguarding children:

**If the risk factor = 0-3 (i.e. Low Risk):** *If you can think of any ways to reduce the risk further, then you should use them*

**If the risk factor = 4-12 (i.e. Medium Risk):** *you should be able to work out what you need to do to reduce the risk, but you can always seek advice from your Church Safeguarding Officer or Bishop.*

**If the risk factor = 13 or above (i.e. High Risk):** *you must seek the advice of your Church Child Protection Representative, Denominational Safeguarding Adviser or your Bishop.*

PROBABILITY	<b>VERY HIGH</b>	<b>5</b>	5	10	15	20	25
	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>4</b>	4	8	12	16	20
	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>3</b>	3	6	9	12	15
	<b>LOW</b>	<b>2</b>	2	4	6	8	10
	<b>VERY LOW</b>	<b>1</b>	1	2	3	4	5
			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
			<i>Minor Injury – no first aid required</i>	<i>Minor Injury or incident - First Aid or CP advice required</i>	<i>Severe Injury or incident - Hospital treatment or CP Referral required</i>	<i>Major injury – or significant harm of child</i>	<i>Death or major Incapacity, or severe abuse, abduction etc</i>
SEVERITY							

## **Checklist for Implementing or Reviewing the Child Protection Policy, Procedures and Good Practice in the Church.**

*(Adapted from document on [www.safeguardingadvice.org](http://www.safeguardingadvice.org))*

The Church Council, Minister and Church Safeguarding Officer should work together in implementing and then reviewing (at least annually) the child protection policy for the Church. The following areas should be included in the policy:

1. Identify all children's and youth activities and mixed-age activities that are the responsibility of the Church Council and therefore come under the child protection procedures.
2. Check that every group has up-to-date registration forms and a register of attendance.
3. Check whether any of the Under 8 groups need to be registered with the local authority
4. Identify all leaders, helpers and adults in mixed-age activities who will need to follow child protection procedures.
5. Check that every group has enough helpers and that there is a gender balance wherever possible. (For work with Under 8s, leaders must be appointed in accordance with required adult-child ratios.
6. Decide what training will be required and how on-going support will be given to children and young people's workers.
7. Consider whether there are any adults in the congregation who have informal contact with children, which will come under the child protection procedures e.g. caretaker, mini-bus driver etc.
8. Check that all current paid employees, volunteers and adult members of mixed-age groups have signed a Confidential Declaration Form within the last three years, and, as appropriate, have an enhanced-level DBS disclosure that is less than five years old.
9. Decide how new workers will be appointed, trained and supervised.
10. Decide who should be contacted by people who are concerned about a child or young person or concerned about the behaviour of an adult. This will usually be the Church Child Protection Representative. Generate sufficient publicity to ensure that the congregation knows whom the contact is and how to get in touch.
11. Make sure the parish insurance policy covers all church activities on and off the premises and includes legal protection insurance for employees and volunteers.

12. Inspect all premises used by children and young people to make sure they are physically safe. Address any health and safety issues e.g. lighting, security of access, etc.
13. The Church Safeguarding Officer should hold a loose-leaf folder where concerns or notes of incidents can be kept. This should be kept confidentially in a secure place and should be maintained in compliance with GDPR.
14. Decide how the child protection policy will be brought to the attention of the congregation, volunteers, parents and children. In annual review, consider how to refresh awareness within the congregation.
15. Identify local support groups, counselling services and resources for adult survivors of child abuse and make sure the information is easily accessible to those who might need it.
16. If there are any people in the congregation who are known to have offended against children, inform the Denomination Safeguarding Adviser/Bishops, who will help to initiate an agreement with that person.
17. Identify all outside groups using church premises and ensure that they either have an appropriate, compatible child protection policy or will agree to adopt the parish policy.

*The Church Child Protection Policy and guidelines for its implementation should be brought to the Church Council for ratification. The incumbent and churchwardens should sign the Safeguarding Policy Statement and agree a date to review the policy on an annual basis.*

*A copy of the policy should be placed on the church notice board or in another easily accessible place.*

**General Consent Form for Regular Groups/Activities**

*(This form should be filled in annually and kept with the group's records where it can be accessed in case of emergency. All those working with the child named on the form should be made aware of any health and dietary concerns which are given so that the child's needs may be met.)*

**Name of your church:**.....

**Title of the Group:**.....

**Full Name of Child/Young Person:**.....

**Date of birth:**.....

**Address:**.....

.....

**Telephone number:**.....

**Are there any medical or dietary concerns that we should know about your child?  
(Please continue overleaf if necessary).**

**Name of Parent or Carer:** .....

**Name/tel. no. of an additional contact:** .....

**I give my permission for ..... to take part in the normal activities of this group. I understand that transport to and from the activity is my responsibility.**

**Signature of parent or carer**..... **Date**.....

**Name:** .....

## Logging a Concern about a Child's Safety or Welfare:

Name and Address of your church:.....

Full Name of Child/Young Person:.....

Address: .....

Date of birth:.....

School (if known):.....

### Account of what happened

*(Write what happened as accurately as you can. Include who was involved, when it happened, i.e. day, month and time, where it happened, any other witnesses or behavioural signs that you observed. If your log includes an injury, describe it and say exactly where it was on the child. If your log includes anything that a child told you, please use the child's own words. Use a separate sheet if necessary.*

**Action taken:** *if any referral is made or professionals spoken to please give their name and organisation, and any actions that they agreed to take.*

Your name and role in the church:.....

Your Signature:.....

Date (include year) and time of the incident and of this log:.....

## **Logging concerns, incidents or allegations regarding a volunteer or paid worker within the church community**

*This form must be used when recording information about an allegation made against a volunteer or paid worker within the church community. A copy must be sent by recorded delivery and marked private and confidential to the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser who must keep an overall record of all allegations against volunteer or paid workers. This information will be added to any existing records and held securely.*

### **Basic Information**

**Name, role, contact details and church of the person completing this form:**

**Name:**

**Preferred contact details:**

**Role within the Church:**

**Date information logged:**

**Date information shared with Denominational Safeguarding Adviser:**

**Name of Person of Concern:**

**Position of Person of Concern:**

### **Safeguarding Information relating to the concern, incident or allegation**

**Please record any information that you have acquired in relation to an allegation made against a volunteer or paid worker within the Church community. This might include details of an offence, relevant dates, places and times, the names of those involved, the names of those with whom you have shared information with and why, any advice you have been given and how you have acted upon that advice. This information must be written in clear language and avoid any personal opinions.**

**Date**



Free Church of England  
**CONFIDENTIAL DECLARATION FORM  
FOR PEOPLE INTENDING TO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The work that you are intending to undertake may give opportunities for unsupervised contact with children and/or vulnerable adults. This may be regular assistance with a church-based group or helping at a “one-off” event.

The Confidential Declaration Form applies to clergy, employees, ordinands, other adults and volunteers who are likely to be in regular contact with children or vulnerable adults. This form is strictly confidential and, except under compulsion of law, will be seen only by those responsible for the appointment and, when appropriate, the Denominational Safeguarding Children Adviser or someone in a similar position. All forms will be kept securely in-line with GDPR.

The information you supply about your history of working with, or caring for, children and/or vulnerable adults is confidential. It may ONLY be shared, on a ‘need-to-know’ basis, in order to protect children and/or vulnerable adults. A Confidential Declaration must be held by the person who makes the appointments or provides the licence for all clergy and those paid employees and volunteers who have contact with children/vulnerable adults.

If you answer yes to any question, please give details, on a separate sheet if necessary, giving the number of the question you are answering.

## **CONFIDENTIAL DECLARATION**

Your Full Name: .....

Date of Birth: .....

Address: .....

Telephone Number: .....

### **Please answer the following questions by ticking the appropriate boxes**

1. Have you, since the age of eighteen, ever been known by any name other than the one given above?  
 Yes (please give details)  
 No
2. Have you, during the past five years, had any home address other than that given above?  
 Yes (please give details)  
 No
3. Have you ever been convicted of any criminal offence? (You must include all ‘spent’ convictions however long ago, as the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 does not apply to posts involving contact with children and/or vulnerable adults. A criminal offence in the past does not necessarily mean that you will not be able to take the post applied for.)  
 Yes (please give details)  
 No
4. Have you ever been cautioned by the police, given a reprimand or warning or bound over to keep the peace?

- Yes (please give details)
- No

5. Has your name been placed on the Protection of Children Act (POCA), List99, the Protection of Vulnerable Adults List (POVA) or the barred lists maintained by the Disclosure and Barring Service, barring you from work with children or vulnerable people?
  - Yes (please give details)
  - No
6. Has your conduct ever caused or been likely to cause significant harm to a child or vulnerable adult, or put a child or vulnerable adult at risk of significant harm\*?
  - Yes (please give details)
  - No
7. To your knowledge, has it ever been alleged that your conduct has resulted in any of those things?
  - Yes (please give details, including the date(s) and nature of the conduct, or alleged conduct, and whether you were dismissed, disciplined, moved to other work or resigned from any paid or voluntary work as a result)
  - No
8. Have you ever had allegations made against you, been the subject of an investigation or disciplinary action by any official body in relation to your conduct with children or young people even if no further action was taken? (Include information arising from a paid or voluntary job OR from a situation where you had care of a child/vulnerable adult outside work.)
  - Yes (please give details)
  - No
9. Are you at present under investigation by any agency or employer?
  - Yes (please give details)
  - No
10. Has a child in your care or for whom you have or had parental responsibility ever been removed from your care, been placed on the Child Protection Register or been the subject of child protection planning, a care order, a supervision order, a child assessment order or an emergency protection order under the Children Act 1989, or a similar order under other legislation?
  - Yes (please give details)
  - No

*\* Significant harm involves serious ill-treatment of any kind including neglect, physical, emotional or sexual abuse, or impairment of physical or mental health development. It will also include matters such as a sexual relationship with a young person or adult for whom you had pastoral responsibility or were in a position of trust.*

**DECLARATION**

I declare that the information given is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.

Signed .....

Date .....

**References**

Please give the names of **two** people who would be able to provide a reference. (If you are employed, one of these should be your current employer.)

**Referee 1:**

Name: .....

Address: .....

Tel: .....

How does this person know you?

.....

**Referee 2:**

Name: .....

Address: .....

Tel:.....

How does this person know you?

.....

**Note:** *If it is necessary for the particular post, before an appointment can be confirmed applicants must provide an enhanced disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service. Consult with the Denominational Safeguarding Adviser, your Minister, or Church Safeguarding Officer for details of the process and for information whether this requirement applies.*

**Please return the completed form to the Church Child Protection Representative.**



## **Letter and reference form to be sent to a referee**

*(Use headed church paper if possible; if not, include the name and address of the church here)*

**Date:**

Dear *(name of Referee)*,

RE: Revd, Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms

Address .....

Post applicant applying for .....

The above has given your name as someone who may be contacted in relation to their application to work with children and young people or vulnerable adults.

Guidelines from the Government and the Free Church of England advise that all voluntary organisations including churches should take steps to safeguard the vulnerable groups entrusted to their care. I would be grateful if you could comment on the following factors as they may apply to the applicant:

- previous experience of looking after or working with children, young people or vulnerable adults
- their ability to provide warm and consistent care
- evidence of their willingness to respect the background and culture of children or vulnerable adults in their care
- their commitment to treat all children, young people or vulnerable adults as individuals and with equal concern
- Any evidence or concern that they would not be suitable to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

I would be grateful if you could complete the enclosed reference form, which will be treated in the strictest confidence, and return it in the pre-paid envelope as soon as possible.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

*(Sign and print name)*



**PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL**

REFERENCE FOR WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

NAME OF CANDIDATE.....

What is your relationship to the person named above (e.g. friend, employer etc.)?

How long have you known the person?

Please can you comment on:

Their previous experience of looking after or working with children, young people or vulnerable adults

Their ability to provide warm and consistent care

Evidence of their willingness to respect the background and culture of children or vulnerable adults in their care

Their commitment to treat all children, young people and vulnerable adults as individuals and with equal concern

Any evidence or concern that they would not be suitable to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults

N.B. All information will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Are there any other comments you would like to make? If so, please continue below or on a separate sheet if necessary.

Signed: ..... Date: .....

Name (please print): .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

Telephone number: .....

Your church (if applicable): .....



## Volunteer Agreement

Name of your church: .....

Name of the Worker: .....

Job title: .....

Those working with children and young people, together with the whole church, commit themselves to their care and nurture in the Christian faith. On behalf of those who worship here, we undertake to support you and the work you do in our prayers, by our interest and in the provision of resources and training.

The person to whom you are directly responsible is

.....

S/he is there to discuss any matters of concern that you may have.

The responsibilities of your work are as follows:

Once a year you will be given the opportunity to review your work and discuss any concerns you may have as well as opportunities for development and training. Working with children and young people is a responsibility but it also brings great rewards. We hope you will enjoy the work you have undertaken.

Signed: ..... (Minister)

I have understood the nature of the work I am to do with children/young people. I have read the guidelines produced by the Church for safeguarding children and young people. I understand that it is my duty to protect the children, young people and vulnerable adults with whom I come into contact. I know what action to take if abuse is discovered or disclosed.

Received by: ..... (Worker)

Date: .....

*One copy of this form should be kept by you, one will be held by the person named above to whom you are responsible, and a third copy will be kept by the Secretary of the Church Council*

# Accident and Incident Report Form



Name of church.....

Name of group .....

Address.....

.....

.....

*Use this form to record **all** accidents, injuries and dangerous occurrences.*

*The form should be completed as soon as possible after the occurrence. Whenever possible, the description of the accident should be completed by the injured person. All details should then be checked by a church official. If there were any witnesses to the accident, they should complete witness statements as soon as possible after the occurrence.*

## **This section to be completed by the injured person or person involved in the incident**

Full name of person injured.....

Home address.....

.....

.....

Age (if U18) .....

Circle as appropriate: Employee Volunteer Visitor Congregation member Child

Date of Occurrence ..... Time of Occurrence .....

Place of Occurrence .....

Please give a full description of the accident circumstances, including a description of any apparatus or equipment involved and any injuries received, and First Aid given (continue on a separate sheet if necessary).

Signed by injured person or responsible adult on behalf of a child

.....

Date (include year): .....

**This section to be completed by the church official**

If the person involved was an employee or volunteer:

1. State nature of employment .....
2. Was she/he on or off duty at the time? YES/NO
3. If on duty did, she/he continue to work after the occurrence, or go off duty? YES/NO
4. If she/he went off duty at what time and for how long?  
.....

5. If the accident occurred at a youth or children's group meeting:

Who is normally responsible for the group?

.....

Who was responsible for the group at the time of this incident (if different from above)?

.....

Have you retained any damaged equipment or apparatus for inspection? YES/NO

Does action need to be taken to prevent such an incident happening again?  
.....

Are the premises still a safe place for the group to meet? YES/NO

Is the equipment still safe to be used? YES/NO

Who else has been informed?  
.....

**Signature of the person in charge of the group at the time of the accident or incident (please also print name).**  
.....

**Signature of church official**  
.....

I/we confirm that as far as I am/we are aware the above details including the description of the accident are true and complete.

Signed ..... Print Name.....

Position ..... Date .....

**Names of Witnesses:**

Please attach statements from witnesses (use separate sheet), signed and dated if applicable



## Risk Assessment Form

<b>Levels of Risk:</b>  Low Risk Medium Risk High Risk	<b>Activity:</b>  <b>Start Date:</b>  <b>Duration:</b>	<b>Address of Event:</b>  <b>Lead Worker:</b>			
<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Who May Be Affected?</b>			<b>Level of Risk</b>	<b>Action Taken to Reduce Risk</b>
	Children	Workers	Others		

<b>Assessment By:</b>	<b>Signed:</b>	<b>Date:</b>



## **Contacts and References**

### **DBS Checks: Denominational Safeguarding Adviser – Revd Mark Spiers**

Tel: 07900 912754      E-mail: Markspiers198@btinternet.com

#### **Diocesan Bishop (North)**

**The Rt Revd Dr John Fenwick**

01229 584997

#### **Diocesan Bishop (South)**

**The Rt Revd Dr Paul Hunt**

01902 607335

#### **Diocesan Secretary (North):**

**Mrs Margaret Cassidy**

0151 639 3100

#### **Diocesan Secretary (South):**

**Revd Robert Wilson**

0208 965 2019

#### **Denominational Safeguarding Adviser:**

**Revd Mark Spiers**

07900 912754

markspiers198@btinternet.com

**NSPCC:** Helpline: 0808 800 5000 (24 hours, every day) [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

**Childline:** Helpline: 0800 1111 (24 hours) [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

**Parentline:** 0808 800 2222

**Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre:** [www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk)

**Domestic Violence:** [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

**HOPElineUK** (prevention of young suicide): 0870 170 4000      [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

**The National Association of People Abused in Childhood:** Helpline: 0800 085 3330  
[www.napac.org.uk](http://www.napac.org.uk)



**ALERT OUR SAFEGUARDING ADVISER IF YOU THINK  
SOMETHING MAY BE WRONG**

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Email: [markspiers198@btinternet.com](mailto:markspiers198@btinternet.com)**