



## Safe-guarding Policy

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**To be revised: January 2023**

### 1. Safe-guarding Statement

We, the Trustees/Directors of Wildwood Church Stafford, recognise the importance of our ministry to children and vulnerable adults and our responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of those entrusted to our care. We acknowledge that children and vulnerable adults can be the victims of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual and neglect). We have therefore adopted the procedures set out in this document, which is based on a model published by thirtyone:eight (31:8), formerly known as CCPAS.

Wildwood Church Stafford is committed to:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting children and vulnerable adults as well as promoting their welfare and protection.
- Encouraging and supporting parents and carers.
- Safe recruitment, supervision and training for all those who work with children and vulnerable adults within the church.
- Taking allegations and concerns about possible abuse seriously.
- Appropriate supervision and on-going safeguarding training for all our staff and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults in recognising and responding appropriately to abuse.
- Supporting those who have been affected by abuse.
- Supervising those who pose a risk.
- Maintaining good links with statutory childcare authorities and other organisations.
- Communicating this policy to the wider church annually.
- Reviewing this policy every 3 years.

We also undertake to follow the principles found within the Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance issued by the Home Office. It is therefore unacceptable for those in a position of trust to engage in any behaviour that might allow an abusive relationship to develop for as long as the relationship of trust continues.

## 2. Practice Guidelines

### General Guidelines

- Do not be alone with a child or vulnerable adult: be sure you can be seen.
- When counselling, where privacy and confidentiality are important, ensure another adult knows the interview is taking place and with whom. If possible, another adult should be in the vicinity and the child or vulnerable adult should know they are there.
- Treat all children or vulnerable adults with respect and dignity befitting their age: watch language, tone of voice and where you put your body. When praying, be careful about physical contact.
- Do not:
  - invade privacy when showering or toileting.
  - initiate rough, physical or sexually provocative games.
  - make suggestive comments about or to a child or vulnerable adult.
  - touch in an intrusive or inappropriate way.
  - scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child or vulnerable adult.
- Make sure you know and follow first-aid and fire procedures.
- Number of leaders:

It is vital that the ratio of adults to children is adequate to ensure safety. Always have at least two adults present with a group, preferably one of each sex and particularly when it is the only activity taking place at the premises. The standard ratios under the Children Act are as follows:

  - Under 2 years: 1 adult to 3 children
  - Under 3 years: 1 adult to 4 children
  - Under 8 years: 1 adult to 8 children
  - For children over eight the recommended ratio is two adults for up to twenty children and one additional adult for every ten extra children
  - Outings and outdoor activities are generally more demanding to supervise and consideration will be given to requesting extra help when these are planned.
- Consent Forms and Register:

Consent forms will be completed by a parent or carer when children join a group, including health problems, diets, contact details, etc. Forms giving permission for specific activities will be used when undertaking visits or when going away. Group leaders will keep a register of children attending.
- Travel:

If driving children, it is better that they occupy the rear seats of the vehicle. Seat belts should always be worn. It is preferable not to be alone with a child or vulnerable adult in a car. If unavoidable, another adult should know of the trip and the reason for it and note times of departure and arrival.

- Physical Contact:

Socially acceptable physical contact between adults and children is quite proper in a public situation. However, it should not take place when an adult and child are not readily seen by others. It is important to respect the privacy of children and vulnerable adults and you should avoid playing rough games with them or making provocative comments, even in fun.

Appropriate touch and physical contact:

- Of paramount importance is that touch should be related to the needs of the child or vulnerable adult, not the worker's.
- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child or vulnerable adult not the worker.
- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Children and vulnerable adults have the right to decide how much appropriate physical contact they have with others, except in exceptional circumstances when they need medical attention.
- Avoid any physical activity which is, or may be thought to be, sexually stimulating to the adult or child.
- Team members should monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They should be free to help each other by pointing out anything which could be misunderstood. Concerns about possible abuse should always be reported to church leaders.

- Minimising situations where abuse may occur:

Where lone working is unavoidable and is agreed by the church elders or other responsible body, ensure that the lone worker indicates his/her movements, particularly if leaving the normal premises. This information would include details about the group or individual, place being visited and expected timetable. Always take a mobile phone. Consider taking a personal alarm.

Assess the risks based on knowledge of the children or vulnerable adult involved and take into account the following factors:

- venue and environment
- time of day or night
- type of work/activity being undertaken
- how well the children or vulnerable adults are known (new or established group, unpredictable behaviour)
- gender of children/vulnerable adult and the worker

Other examples of safe practice would include:

- encouraging members of the church to call in
- allowing others to see into the room (keep doors open, leave curtains open)
- inviting parents or carers on a rota to 'sit in' on the activity, make the drinks or staff the snack bar
- having activities take place on the ground floor where possible

- barring access to unwanted visitors
- having other groups meeting on the premises at the same time
- encouraging parents or carers to deliver and collect their children or vulnerable adults

## **Ensuring Safe Recruitment**

All staff and volunteers, who are seeking to work with children or vulnerable adults, will be asked to

- read this Safe-guarding Policy document, complete and sign the attached Volunteer Registration and Declaration Form, stating that they have read and understood this document.
- make a confidential self-declaration at interview about previous convictions using the attached Voluntary Disclosure Form.
- provide two references from similar previous roles, using the attached Reference Form.
- undergo an enhanced DBS check with the help of the Deputy Safe-guarding Officer. Disclosures will be re-requested every three years if the candidate has not registered for the DBS Update Service.
- only work under supervision for a maximum of two weeks with the Senior Elders approval, until all above actions are completed.

## **Responding to Concerns of Harm or Allegations of Abuse**

If abuse is suspected, disclosed or discovered:

- Under no circumstances carry out your own investigation into the allegation or suspicion of abuse.
- Report concerns as soon as possible to the Designated Safe-guarding Officer.
- In the absence of the Designated Safe-guarding Officer or if the suspicions in any way involve the Designated Safe-guarding Officer, then report should be made to an Elder.
- If the suspicions implicate both the Designated Safe-guarding Officer and an Elder, then the report should be made in the first instance to another Elder.
- The local Social Services First Contact Team can be contacted on: 0800 1313 126. The out-of-hours emergency number is: 0345 604 2886. However, if the

child or vulnerable adult is at immediate risk and in need of protection call the police: 999

- Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. A written record of the concerns must be made and kept in a secure place by the Designated Safe-guarding Officer, or Lead Elder.
  - Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Designated Safe-guarding Officer, the absence of either the Designated Safe-guarding Officer or the Elders, should not delay referral to Social Services.
  - The role of the Designated Safe-guarding Officer / Elders is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion, pass this information onto the Social Services department, and ensure appropriate records are kept in a secure place. It is Social Services' task to investigate the matter under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.
  - Remember that a vulnerable adult should, wherever possible, be informed about and consent to the referral unless this would put the welfare or vital interests of the adult who may be vulnerable, or another person at further risk. If you have serious concerns, the absence of consent should not prevent a referral. The Duty Social Worker will give you advice over this if necessary.
  - If you observe an adult who may be vulnerable being harmed by someone other than a family member, or you believe they are at risk of harm from someone other than a family member, you should inform carers immediately, so that an appropriate referral to the police or social care can be made.
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- DO NOT – delay.
  - DO NOT – act alone.
  - DO NOT – start to investigate.
  - DO NOT – contact alleged abusers.
  - DO NOT – talk to parents or guardians.
  - DO NOT – discuss with friends.
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- DO – write down what they have said in their own words. (You may be asked for this report).
  - DO – report the matter to the Designated Safe-guarding Officer, who will handle the matter from there.

### **How to react to someone who wants to talk about abuse?**

It is important that you react in a way, which will be helpful and supportive. Remember you may be the first person this individual has told. It may also have taken them a long time to build up enough courage to speak to you.

- DO NOT – agree to keep the information secret.
- DO NOT – say or suggest that you are shocked.
- DO NOT – say or suggest that you don't believe the child.
- DO NOT – ask questions.
- DO NOT – make false promises.
  
- DO – explain to them that you may have to tell someone else.
- DO – remain calm and supportive.
- DO – show acceptance of what they say.
- DO – reassure them that they were right to tell you.
- DO – tell them what you are going to do next.

### **Allegations of Abuse**

The Designated Safe-guarding Officer/Elder will:

- Contact Social Services to report concerns, or 31:8 for advice.
- Will not tell the parents or carers unless advised to do so having contacted Social Services (*ask for this in writing or request a case or reference number*).
- Seek medical help if urgently needed, informing a doctor of any suspicions.
- For lesser concerns (e.g. poor parenting) encourage a parent/carer to seek help, but not if this places the child or vulnerable adult at risk of injury.
- Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, offer to accompany them. In cases of real concern, if they still fail to act, contact Social Services for advice.
- Seek and follow advice given by 31:8 (and ask for them to confirm their advice in writing) if unsure whether or not to refer a case to Social Services.

### **Record Keeping and Storage**

The Designated Safe-Guarding Officer will make sure appropriate notes will be made of all safeguarding incidents. They will be treated confidentially and will be securely stored by the Designated Safe-Guarding Officer or the Lead Elder. They will be retained even if the information received was judged to be malicious, unsubstantiated or unfounded.

### **Supervising and supporting known sexual offenders**

Where a known offender joins the church, it will be important to extend love, friendship and pastoral care to the individual. At the same time the church leadership will need to ensure that a frank discussion takes place with the person concerned and efforts are made to sustain open communications.

The leadership commits to:

- Undertake a risk assessment in recognition of the fact that there will be some people who are too dangerous to allow into normal services. This may lead to referring them to another church, which is better placed to help them.
  
- If they are permitted to attend, the leadership must
  - Establish and maintain close links with any agencies involved (e.g. police, probation, MAPPA)
  - Be open with the offender and prepare a contract setting out boundaries, support and care to be offered.
  - Establish clear boundaries for both the protection of the offender and the children or vulnerable adults to lessen the possibility of the offender being wrongly accused of abuse.
  - Enforce the terms of the contract, ensuring that key leaders know the situation. If the contract is broken, then the offender must be banned from the church and the local police advised of the situation.

### **Organizations hiring Church Buildings or Premises**

In relation to all activities and events which are not run directly by the church but which take place in church buildings or grounds the responsibility for implementing safeguarding policies rests with the hiring organisation and not with the church. However, we will take reasonable steps to ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are being practised by the hiring organisation. Visiting groups will be required to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected at all times, follow safe recruitment procedures, and are aware of health and safety issues in the building. Visiting groups will be required to sign the attached hire agreement and abide by the Safeguarding Policy.

## **3. Supporting Documents**

Attached in separate Document, to be regularly updated:

- Relevant Leaders
- Safe-Guarding Roles
- Telephone Numbers
- Voluntary Disclosure Form
- Volunteer Registration and Declaration Form
- Reference Form
- Hire agreement
- Parental Consent Forms (Youth Work, Faith Club, etc.)
- Record Keeping
- Body Map