

village church

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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RECRUITMENT

- Children / youth leaders and workers will be committed Christians, Church Members and have been known to the elders for at least one year.
- Children / youth helpers who are not committed Christians (e.g. a young person in Year 10) will be permitted, subject to the discretion of the elders and after consultation with the relevant children / youth leader.

Recruitment Procedure (18+)

- An informal interview to be carried out by an elder or children / youth leader.
- Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS) at Enhanced Level to be carried out for a new worker unless:
 1. There is a relevant certificate with another organisation no older than 12 months.
 2. The candidate is registered with the update service and a check is undertaken.
 3. In each case, the original certificate **MUST** be produced.
- DBS certificates are updated after 3 years.
- Upon completion of these steps a 'Ready to Start' form must be signed by the department leader.
- The new worker will then begin a settling in period of no less than 4 months.
- During this time, they will be known as probationary workers and subject to the restrictions set out in the 'Ready to Start' form.
- Probationary workers must complete a Child Safeguarding Training Course within the settling in period.
- Upon successful completion of the settling in period the department leader will complete a 'Probationary to Approved' form and be known as 'workers'.
- Workers may run activities and be responsible for a group of children without supervision. It is not desirable however, apart from in exceptional circumstances, for a worker to be left alone with a child or children.
- It is not desirable that a married couple to be responsible for or alone with a child or group of children.
- If a worker steps down, their approved status will lapse after a period of 3 years from when they last worked.

Recruitment Procedure (-18)

- Young people must be in Year 10 or above.
- A 'Junior Helper' form must be completed.
- They will be known as helpers and subject to the restrictions in the 'Junior Helper' form.
- A DBS check is not required unless they remain in that position when they turn 18, in which case, one is required.
- Upon turning 18, the 'Recruitment Procedure (18+)' will apply.

Completed Forms

- All completed forms in relation to recruitment should be given to the Child Safeguarding Officer (CSO) to be stored confidentially.

Emergency Cover

- Subject to availability, it is preferable that the individual holds a current DBS.
- Subject to the restrictions of a probationary worker (as set out in 'Ready to Start' form).

SAFEGUARDING ACTIVITIES

Information Folders

- The leader of **any** activity is responsible for keeping the Information Folder up to date and stored confidentially.
- Entries should be signed and dated.
- Information Folders will be available every time the activity runs and should contain:
 1. Register: noting the children, leaders, workers, helpers and anyone else who attends the activity, including anyone join late or leaving early.¹
 2. Incident Log: to note 'Minor Incidents'.
 3. Concern and Disclosure Log: confidential information, such as a disclosure or suspicions of abuse should not be kept in the Information Folder but handed to a CSO.
 4. Parental/Carer Consent: must be completed for each child / young person attending.
 5. Special Activities Consent.
 - A. For activities that go beyond the regular hours and / or activities of the group.
 - B. No child may take part in the event without a completed form.
 - C. All consent forms should be taken on the activity by the accompanying event leader.
 6. This policy document.

Activities at the school

- Probationary and approved workers to wear orange lanyards.
- Helpers and Emergency Cover to wear a red lanyard marked 'Helper'
- Where possible, only those directly involved in the children's work activity remain in the room while the activity is in session. Care should be taken to keep any visitors separate from the children.
- It is good practice for an adult not to be alone with a group of children. Leaders / workers should avoid being alone with a lone child. If unavoidable, it is advisable to leave the door open or ask another adult to be nearby.

¹ Old registers should be stored securely (either electronically or in a locked cabinet)

Activities in people's homes

- If only two approved workers are present, they should endeavour to remain together for the session.
- If group work is undertaken it is desirable that it takes place in the same room or adjoining rooms with the doors open.
- Where the host are not leaders / helpers of the club:
 1. The hosts will not be counted in adult / child ratios.
 2. The hosts should not be left alone with the children.

Activities' including residential and day trips

- The activity will be supervised by a 'Designated Leader' who will have overall responsibility for Child Safeguarding and Health & Safety during the activity. He / she will complete a register of all attendees and a risk assessment form that will be retained for a minimum of 10 years.
- It is desirable that only workers are used on residential trips.
- If workers in their settling in period are 16 / 17 year-olds are used, they will be subject to the restrictions set out in the recruitment process.
- No children / young people will be allowed to participate in the activity unless their parent / carer has completed a 'Special Activity' consent form.
- Sleeping arrangements on residential activities:
 1. Boys and girls will be accommodated in separate rooms / tents.
 2. Only under extreme circumstances would the possibility of children sharing a room with adults be considered. The decision would be the responsibility of the Child Safeguarding Team. Where the Child Safeguarding Team has seemed this situation permissible, there should be two or more children in the room and written permission by the parents / carers.
 3. Workers will never be accommodated on their own with children.
 4. Workers should avoid entering the bedroom of children unless there are two or more children present.
 5. Workers should never invite children into their own bedroom.
 6. 16 / 17 year-old helpers will, where possible, have a room on their own. Where this is not possible, they may, with the approval of the Child Safeguarding Team, be accommodated with two or more approved workers of the same sex, but the adult workers should endeavour never to be alone with the young helpers in the room. Written parental permission for this arrangement will need to be sought.

Child-Worker ratios applicable to all activities

- There is currently no legal requirement for churches to have specific ratios of adults to children.
- Nonetheless, we will endeavour to maintain the ratios set out below:

	Approved Workers (18+)	Children
0-2 years	2	up to 6 (see also 'Toilet Trips')
2-4 years	2	up to 8 (see also 'Toilet Trips')
4+ years	2	16

- 16+ Helpers can be included in child-adult ratios.

Toilet Trips

- Workers should not take children of school age into the toilet.
- It may be necessary for leaders / workers to escort children to the outside of the toilet.
- It is best for a group of children to go together rather than leaders take individual children.
- Younger children / children with special needs may need help on toilet trips:
 1. They should only be accompanied by leaders / workers.
 2. Where possible, workers should be the same sex as the child and the toilet door left ajar.
- At least one leader / worker should remain with those children in the activity area.
- Unless there are exceptional circumstances, no under 18-year-old, probationary workers, or emergency cover should escort children on toilet trips.
- For groups where children may need to be escorted to the toilet because of age / special needs, there will need to be at least two leaders / workers on the rota.

Reading the Bible One-to-One

- The purpose of reading the Bible One-to-One in the church situation is to encourage the young person in discipleship and, therefore, this will largely consist of Bible discussion, prayer and the practical development of the young person's walk with Christ.
- If a young person is interested in reading One-to-One, they should approach a children / youth leader. Before a One-to-One commences, a leader will approach the parent / guardian to discuss the situation.
- The One-to-One parental 'Consent Form' should be completed, signed, and returned by the parent or guardian. The Safeguarding Team will store this.
- The reader will always be a leader / worker.
- The reader and young person will always be of the same sex.
- The meeting will always take place in a location where others are present (e.g. Cafe).
- The reader should endeavour to avoid transporting the young person in their car. Where unavoidable, the reader should notify the parent / carer as soon as possible.
- Notwithstanding that some issues may arise where advice is sought, the relationship will not be one of a counsellor / counselled.

- The minimum age for a young person to be in a formal One-to-One arrangement should be school Year 11.
- If parents make their own arrangements for children below school Year 11 or with someone who is not on the children / youth team, it will not come under the auspices of this safeguarding policy.

Social Media and Messaging

- Children and leaders / workers should not be 'Friends' with -18s on social media, except when the young person is a close relative or a personal friend and the parents consent.
- If leaders / workers wish to communicate with their group, they should set up a designated social media / WhatsApp and keep communication open for all leaders / workers to see.
- Instant messaging (e.g. Snapchat) should never be used.
- If a young person sends a personal message to a leader / worker, the leader / worker is strongly advised to make a confidential log of the incident with a CSO and should not respond to the message.
- If a leader / worker becomes aware of bullying, they should speak to their leader or a CSO immediately.

Transport arranged by Village Church

- All drivers will hold an enhanced disclosure certificate save where emergency cover is required in which case it is preferable not mandatory.
- Drivers should try to avoid transporting a single child.
- Where possible children / young people should sit in the back of the vehicle.
- The driver should endeavour to arrange the 'drops' so that two children are dropped last.
- Where it is unavoidable that a driver is alone in the car with a single child, another worker / leader should be made aware of this, and it is good practice for this to be logged via message.

Visiting children at home

- Inform another leader / worker of the proposed visit.
- Never enter the child's home if the parent / carer is absent.
- Keep a record of the visit (in a diary, for instance), noting date and purpose.

Photographs and Videos

- Parental permission will be sought before we use a photograph or video of a child in our church publicity.

Discipline Policy

- The Village Church 'Discipline Policy' will be made available to parents / carers on request.

Complaints

- Complaints to do with a particular activity should be directed to the Department Leader of that activity.
- If the complaint is serious, it should either be communicated to one of the CSOs or the elders, who are responsible for children's work.

RESPONDING TO SERIOUS CONCERNS AND ALLEGATIONS

If you are seriously concerned for the safety or welfare of a child:

- Keep strict confidentiality. It is absolutely essential that workers do not discuss suspicions with anyone else other than a Department Leader of CSO².
- Record your concerns in a written format. Do not use the 'Incident Log'.
- Depending on the nature of the concern, it may not be appropriate to notify the family of the child involved. That decision will be made by the elders in liaison with the CSOs.

In the case of a child / young person or third party disclosing alleged abuse:

- Do not promise the child / young person confidentiality.
- Avoid direct or leading questions.
- Inform the child / young person that you will be involving one of the CSOs who are trained to deal with such situations.
- Inform your Departmental Leader or one of the CSOs immediately.
- Depending on the nature of the allegation, it may not be appropriate to notify the family of the child concerned. That decision will be made by the elders in liaison with the CSOs.
- Complete a 'Concern and Disclosure Log' form detailing everything that the child / young person said and anything you said as soon as you can. Hand this to a CSO.

² If a suspicion involves one of the CSOs, one of the other CSOs should be approached

Department Leaders Only

- If you cannot contact a CSO, contact Thirtyone:Eight for advice: 0303 003 1111 (previously known as Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service or CCPAS) You should inform an elder of the advice given.

Child Safeguarding Officers Only

- Elders should be promptly notified of any serious concerns and allegations.
- Final responsibility rests with the elders who will record and set out the reasons for their decision.

RESPONDING TO SEX OFFENDERS

While sexual abuse is only part of the abuse covered by this policy, the issue of how we deal with those who have committed sexual offences and start attending our church is nevertheless a crucial area of policy. While the Church of Jesus Christ welcomes all sinners, our desire is to be wise as well as welcoming.

It is well documented that those who commit sexual offences develop deeply manipulative and frequently self-deceptive behaviour. It is also clear that the strategy of such individuals is to seek to get into positions where friendship and trust can be developed with children which over time may be manipulated to satisfy the inappropriate desires of such people.

Our priority will therefore always be to maintain the safety of the children who attend our activities.

We may be informed by the Police, Probation Service or Social Care that we have a registered sex offender worshipping regularly with us or the individual may disclose that fact to the church leadership. In either case we will act in the same way.

While seeking to extend love and friendship, we will adopt the following guidelines:

- We will seek to have direct contact with the individual's probation officer/Social Care to discuss the best course of action. We will take advice on the wisdom of welcoming the individual into church.
- If the decision is taken to accept the individual into the church, a supervisory group will be set up for a period of at least 12 months, consisting of one member of the Child Safeguarding Team, an Elder for pastoral care, a nominated 'supervisor' who is a mature Christian (or a couple), the partner or a relevant family member, and probation officer, if appropriate.

It would be the role of this group to support the individual and discuss the boundaries to be defined while involved in the Village Church. These would include:

- No contact to be initiated with children.
- No involvement in any children's/young people's activities while at Village Church.
- No involvement in any church activity where the individual may regularly have contact with children/young people (e.g., serving refreshments or food).
- Attendance only at meetings/Homegroups as directed by the supervisory group.
- Agreement not to enter certain parts of the building where the church meets as directed by the supervisory group, nor any area where children's activities are in progress.
- Agreement to decline any invitations of hospitality where there are children in the home.
- Agreement not to use the public toilets unless accompanied by one of those in the supervisory group.
- For at least the first 12 months, the individual is to sit or stay close to the supervisor/Elder while in church. S/he will not be allowed to sit near or next to children/young people and should not attend the permitted church activities unless accompanied by the supervisor/Elder. (Note: It may be necessary for the supervisor/Elder to pick the individual up or meet him/her outside the building where the church meets).
- Maintain regular contact with supervisor.
- Attendance at regular meetings of the supervisory group to ascertain conformity with these boundaries.
- After this 12-month period – regular meetings to occur with the supervisor or Elder. If transgression is noticed the supervisory group to be re-formed to review the situation.

A written agreement will be drawn up which will be signed by the individual agreeing to act within these boundaries. This will remain indefinitely.

It will be necessary to inform key people in the church that the individual is attending. The supervisory group will determine exactly who needs to be made aware, but it would most probably involve the crèche leader and selected children's club leaders. However, only those who need to know would be informed. A balance would need to be established between confidentiality and accountability.

If these boundaries are not observed, depending on the seriousness of the offence, and taking into account the advice we are given by the relevant authorities, the supervisory group will determine whether or how the boundaries need to be tightened, or whether the individual should be banned from attending the church.

The elders will be informed at this stage, and they will decide whether any other action is necessary.

If the individual stops attending the Village Church for whatever reason, and we are aware that s/he is attending another church, we would inform the leadership of that church immediately as well as the relevant statutory agencies.

Available from the Safeguarding Team

Children's Work Recruitment Interview Form
Ready to Work Form
Probationary Approved Form
Union Helper Form
Parental Consent Form
Visitor Consent Form
Special Activity Parental Consent Form
Incident Log Form
Concern and Disclosure Log Form
Children's Work Discipline Policy

Child Safeguarding Officers

Lesley Carpenter
Veronica Cooper

Concerned about a child?

SGC

01454 866000 - Monday to Thursday, 9am-5pm
01454 866000 - Friday, 9am-4:30pm
01454615165 - out of hours and at weekends
In an emergency, ring 999

NSPCC

0808 800 5000 - Monday to Friday, 10am-4pm