

# **ENCOUNTER VINEYARD**

## **B1 POLICY SAFEGUARDING**

**Please Note: This document should be read in conjunction with Vineyard UK Safeguarding Key Facts Sheet October 2024**

### **POSITION STATEMENT**

Safeguarding is at the heart of our Christian faith. We are all made unique and in the image of God. Jesus came that we might have life and have it in abundance (see John 10.10).

‘Safeguarding’ means the action that Encounter takes to promote a safe space. In order to achieve this, we will promote the welfare of children, young people and adults. We will work to prevent any type of abuse from occurring. We will seek to protect those who are vulnerable and respond well to those who have been abused. We will take care to identify where a person may present a risk to others and offer support to them whilst taking steps to mitigate such risks.

Encounter will take appropriate steps to maintain a safer environment for all. In order to do this, we will practise fully and positively a ministry to all children, young people and adults, and respond sensitively and compassionately to their needs in order to help keep them safe from harm.

This policy aims to further strengthen Encounter’s approach to safeguarding by bringing into one place the safeguarding responsibilities to support the day-to-day work of the church in relation to safeguarding and those who have a key role to play with children, to play with children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable.

### **Introduction**

- The guide brings into one place the key safeguarding responsibilities for Encounter Church.
- It is not exhaustive but is designed to support the day-to-day safeguarding work. The policy signposts to more detailed guidance that can be accessed as required.
- The policy is aimed at all those who have a key role to play with children, young people and adults.

### **Responsibilities**

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## **Respond**

- Encounter has a procedure in place to deal promptly with safeguarding allegations or suspicions of abuse
- All safeguarding concerns or allegations made against the church are reported to the **Safeguarding Officer, Michelle Dearman**.
- Ensure that known offenders or others who may pose a risk to children and/or vulnerable adults are effectively managed and monitored
- Comply with all data protection legislation especially in regard to using (e.g. storing) information about any church officers and any safeguarding records
- Ensure an 'activity risk assessment' is completed and reviewed regularly for each activity which is associated with either children or vulnerable adults and run in the name of the church.

## **Review and Report progress**

The Safeguarding Officer should regularly report on safeguarding in the church. Safeguarding should be a standing agenda item at Board meeting. There should be an annual report in relation to safeguarding. In the annual report will be a statement which reports on progress.

## **Hire out church premises**

Ensure an addendum to a hire agreement is always used when any person/body hires church premises for activity that involves children, young people or vulnerable adults, for example: a pre-school, youth group or mental health support group

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## **1. Abuse and Neglect of Children**

The abuse of children and young people can take many forms. They have the same right to protection regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities (physical, sensory and/or learning difficulties) are especially vulnerable and need special care and protection.

### **Statutory definitions**

The UK central government document 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' categorises and defines abuse in terms of:

#### Physical abuse

Including hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating.

#### Emotional abuse

Including conveying to a child that they are inadequate, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, verbal abuse, isolation, seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying).

#### Sexual Abuse

Including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. It may include involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse.

#### Neglect

Including failure to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter, to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, to provide adequate supervision and/or access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

#### Domestic abuse

Witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse, and teenagers can suffer domestic abuse in their relationships.

#### Sexual exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. Children or young people may be tricked into believing they are in a loving, consensual relationship. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol. They may also be groomed and exploited online. Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

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## **Bullying and cyberbullying**

Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else – such as name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone. It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It is usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally. Bullying that happens online, using social networks, games and mobile phones, is often called cyberbullying. A child can feel like there is no escape because it can happen wherever they are, at any time of day or night.

## **Online abuse**

With the ever-growing use of the internet, mobile telephones and online gaming (e.g. Xbox/ PlayStation), there has been a corresponding rise in the use of the internet and other electronic communication to target, groom and abuse children. Adults may target chat rooms, social networking sites, messaging services, mobile phones, online gaming sites and the internet generally. Children are particularly vulnerable to abuse by adults who pretend to be children of similar ages when online and who try to obtain images or engineer meetings.

## **Electronic images**

The downloading, keeping or distributing of indecent images of children are all classified as sexual offences referred to as non-contact sexual offences. However, it must be remembered that children will have been abused in the making of the images. The texting of sexual messages and photographs (sometimes referred to as 'sexting') can be particularly problematic and abusive amongst children and young people.

## **2. Abuse and Neglect of Adults**

All adults, including vulnerable adults, have a fundamental human right to choose how and with whom they live, even if this appears to involve a degree of risk. They should be supported to make those choices, to live as independently as possible and treated with respect and dignity.

### **Who abuses adults?**

Potentially anyone, adult or child, can be the abuser of an adult. Abuse will sometimes be deliberate, but it may also be an unintended consequence of ignorance or lack of awareness. Alternatively, it may arise from frustration or lack of support. The list can include:

- Relatives of the vulnerable person including husband, wife, partner, son or daughter. It will sometimes include a relative who is a main carer.
- Neighbours.
- Paid carers.
- Workers in places of worship.
- People who are themselves vulnerable and/or are users of a care service.
- Confidence tricksters who prey on people in their own homes or elsewhere.

### **Relatives who are main carers**

Carers can experience considerable stress, exhaustion and frustration without respite or support. This can lead to unintended poor care or abuse. Relatives who are the main carers may also be subject to abuse by those for whom they are caring. This abuse is often endured for long periods and unreported

### **Institutions**

All people living in institutions are more likely to have a degree of vulnerability. The Care Quality Commission in England has responsibility for inspecting and regulating the quality of care in institutions such as residential care homes, domiciliary care services and hospitals. In addition, the Local Government Ombudsman deals with complaints that relate to adult social care. HM Inspectorate of Prisons in England inspects prisons. Some members of the church may be visiting adults in institutions – hospitals, prisons and residential homes. If, as part of these responsibilities, they have concerns about the care being given and/or the way that someone is being treated, the Safeguarding Officer should be contacted. You can also refer directly to the institution or raise concerns with the appropriate inspection and/or complaints body.

### **Definitions of adult abuse**

The UK central government document 'Care and Support Statutory Guidance' categorises and defines adult abuse in terms of:

- **Physical abuse** including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.
- **Sexual abuse** including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented or could not consent or was pressurised into consenting.
- **Psychological abuse** including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.
- **Financial or material abuse** including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- **Neglect or acts of omission** including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.
- **Discriminatory abuse** including racist, sexist, based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.
- **Domestic abuse** that is usually a systematic, repeated and escalating pattern of behaviour, by which the abuser seeks to control, limit and humiliate, often behind closed doors.
- **Organisational abuse** including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home. This may range from one-off incidents to ongoing ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.
- **Modern slavery** including human trafficking; forced labour and domestic servitude; and traffickers and slave masters using whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment

### **3. Safer Recruitment**

A key way of protecting children and adults from harm is to ensure the careful recruitment of those working with them. Encounter's Safeguarding strategy is to select and vet all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church. All those involved in recruitment must be capable and competent, trained in safer recruitment and able to keep personal matters confidential.

#### **A. Job/role description**

Construct a clear and accurate job description and person specification, or for an unpaid role, a role outline, who set out what tasks and responsibilities the applicant will undertake, and the skills and experience required. This will include what level of DBS check is required.

#### **B. Application form**

Ask all applicants to complete an application form for all paid roles (a Curriculum Vitae may be used for voluntary roles, but an application form is used for good practice and is recommended). Encounter always ask for and take up and check two references.

#### **C. Confidential Declaration Form**

Ask all applicants to complete a Confidential Declaration Form.

#### **D. Shortlist (paid posts)**

Shortlist, carefully examining the application forms. Identify any gaps in employment and/or personal history and ensure those shortlisted meet the requirements of the person specification.

#### **E. Shortlist (unpaid posts)**

Review any interest from volunteers and assess suitability against requirements.

#### **F. Interview**

Have a face-to-face interview (or informal discussion if unpaid) with pre-planned and clear questions to assess applicants' suitability for the role. Seek explanations for gaps in employment/personal history. It may also be appropriate to ask the individual to complete a test or presentation if applicable. Check identification and the Confidential Declaration Form (CDF).

#### **G. Offer the role**

Decide whom to offer the role to. This decision will be made by the interviewing panel. This is subject to completion of all checks to the satisfaction of the Board. No role can commence until satisfactory checks have been completed.

#### **H. Checks**

Once the applicant has been offered the role, subject to satisfactory checks, ask the applicant to complete an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check application<sup>26</sup> (online or paper depending on the diocese's process). Any blemished DBS checks or information of

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concern on the CDF must be risk assessed by the DSA. Always check the applicants' two references. Please note if someone has either never lived in the UK or spent a period of time overseas (i.e. lived abroad), the person making the appointment should request an additional check and ask the applicant to obtain criminality information from the country where he/she resident. It is also recommended to undertake an occupational health check for paid roles where possible.

#### **I. Appoint**

Once all checks are satisfactory and support the interview decision, the person can be formally appointed. It is recommended to add an end date to unpaid roles. This can always be extended but helps set expectations for both parties.

#### **J. Probation period**

Have a period of probation for any paid role (or a settling-in period for unpaid) and review throughout, as well as at the end of this period.

#### **K. Induct, train and support**

Induct new unpaid and paid workers. This should include expectations in relation to behaviour (a Code of Conduct). Ensure supervision/support is in place and arrange for attendance on the Encounter safeguarding training.

### **4. Safeguarding Training**

Encounter will train and equip church staff to have the confidence and skills they need to care for and support children, young people and vulnerable adults and to recognise and respond to abuse.

#### **Basic Awareness**

Recommended for anyone who needs a basic level of awareness of safeguarding.

#### **Foundation**

Required for anyone who has safeguarding responsibilities/contact with children and/or vulnerable adults.

#### **Leadership**

Required for anyone who has safeguarding leadership responsibilities/is leading activities involving children and/or vulnerable adults.

#### **Senior Staff**

Senior staff who have key roles in safeguarding policy, strategy and practice.

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## 5. Abuse concerning a Church Leader

If you have a concern that a child or adult is or may be being abused, or that a church officer is or may be abusing a child or adult

- a Respond well to the victim/survivor, if it is a direct disclosure, to ensure they feel listened to and taken seriously. Explain what will happen next and check out support requirements. They should be informed that their identity and the identity of the respondent will be shared with key church leaders, and may be shared with the statutory agencies, if there's a risk to children or adults. The concern or allegation should not be shared with anyone other than those who need to know (e.g. the statutory agencies and appropriate church officers).
- b **Emergency:** if you believe a child or adult is in immediate danger of significant harm, contact the emergency services on 999.
- c **Non-emergency:** contact the Safeguarding Officer in the first instance. If the concern arises in an activity, discuss with the group/activity leader, who will contact the Safeguarding Officer.
- d Any safeguarding concerns must be recorded within 24hrs.
- e If the Safeguarding Officer is not available within 24hrs, contact Children's Social Care and/or the police directly, if the concern is that a child or adult is being abused. Contact the police if the concern is that a church officer may be abusing a child or adult.

Advise the Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible that you have made a referral.

**If in doubt don't delay – seek advice from statutory agencies.**

- i Do not contact the respondent or anyone who may be implicated in the allegation or disclosure, even if they would normally be contacted as part of the procedure, until advice has been sought from the Safeguarding Officer or statutory agencies.
- ii Record details of the concern or allegation. Where it is not appropriate to take notes at the time (usually it will not be), make a written record as soon as possible afterwards or before the end of the day. Record the time, date, location, persons present and how the concern or allegation was received e.g. by telephone, face to face conversation, letter, etc. the record should include details of information provided to that person as well as the information received. Always sign and date the record. Keep it factual. Pass on a copy to the Safeguarding Officer. The records should be kept secure and confidential.

**If the concern is about a child or adult:**

- iii The Safeguarding Officer will offer advice, support and guidance and help to make the required referrals. If there is a risk of harm, the concerns must be reported to the statutory agencies with 24hrs of the Safeguarding Officer receiving the concerns. This would be Children's or Adult Social Care and/or the police.

There should be close communication between the Safeguarding Officer and the Lead Pastor, Mark Bailey until the situation is resolved.

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**If the concern also involves a church officer:**

- iv The Safeguarding Officer will offer advice, support and guidance and refer the concerns to the designated officer and/or the police within 24hrs. The Safeguarding Officer will take over the management of the safeguarding concern in conjunction with the core group and statutory agencies. There may be also be a requirement for the church leaders to meet together.

A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and adults and respecting the rights of the person to whom an allegation is made. In such circumstances the welfare of the child, young person or adult must come first. The rights of the person against whom the allegation is made are more important and must be given due weight, once the immediate safety and protection of the child, young person or vulnerable adult have been assured.

## **6. Guidelines for responding to a person disclosing abuse**

### **A. Respond**

**Do:**

- Listen.
- Take what is said seriously.
- Only use open questions
- Remain calm.
- Take into account the person's age and level of understanding.
- Check, if face to face, whether they mind you taking notes while they talk so you can make sure you capture the information accurately. At the end you can check with them that you have understood everything correctly.
- Offer reassurance that disclosing is the right thing to do.
- Establish only as much information as is needed to be able to tell your activity leader/ Safeguarding Officer/ and statutory authorities what is believed to have happened, when and where.
- Check what the person hopes to happen as a result of the disclosure.
- Tell the child or adult what you are going to do next.

**Do not:**

- Make promises that cannot be kept (e.g. that you won't share the information).
- Make assumptions or offer alternative explanations.
- Investigate.

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- Contact the person about whom allegations have been made.
- Do a physical or medical examination

## **B. Record**

- Make some very brief notes at the time, if appropriate, and write them up in detail as soon as possible.
- Do not destroy your original notes in case they are required by the DSA or the statutory authorities.
- Record the date, time, place and actual words used, including any swear words or slang.
- Record facts and observable things, not your interpretations or assumptions.
- Don't speculate or jump to conclusions

## **C. Report**

- If there is immediate danger to a child or adult contact the police.
- Otherwise report to your activity leader/Safeguarding Officer immediately
- Within 24 hours the Safeguarding Officer reports the concerns to Mark Bailey
- If there is any doubt seek advice from Children's/Adult's Social Care or the police.

## **Non-recent abuse**

Safeguarding concerns or allegations may be about something that is going on now and/or something that may happen in the future (recent) or something that happened in the past (non-recent). Non-recent allegations of abuse must be treated as seriously as recent allegations. Research evidences that it may take up to 25 years or longer for an adult to disclose sexual abuse that happened to him/her either as a child or younger adult. A victim/survivor needs to be aware that if a respondent is known to be currently working with children/vulnerable adults in either a paid or voluntary capacity a referral to the statutory services will be made. The Safeguarding Officer will make the referral.

## **Domestic abuse**

The welfare of the adult victim of domestic abuse is important, but where there are children in the family it must be understood that they too are victims of domestic abuse. Consideration of the child's welfare always comes first. In all circumstances, contact the Safeguarding Officer who will help clarify the issues and steps needed, which may involve contacting Children's Social Care. There may be a need for a risk assessment and for a Safeguarding Agreement to be put in place. The Safeguarding Officer will undertake this work in conjunction with the church and any statutory agencies.

## **Recommended good practice:**

- Encourage leaders and those who preach to speak against domestic abuse in teaching, sermons, prayers and parish magazines – remember that many of the congregation may have personal experience of domestic abuse.

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- Offer some awareness-raising activities e.g. invite speakers from local domestic abuse agencies.
- Consider including activities around healthy relationships within activities for children and young people.
- Develop links with local domestic abuse organisations.
- Organise courses in parenting and confidence-building.

## **7. Recording, data protection and information sharing**

### **Opening a church safeguarding case file**

Good record keeping is an important part of the safeguarding task. A record, called a case file, should be opened whenever a safeguarding concern or allegation occurs in a church. The record should include key contact details, dates of when the information became known and the nature of the concerns. The record should include ongoing actions with dates, other key documents on the case file (e.g. observation notes, reports, consent forms etc.) and the case closure date. Records should use straightforward language and be concise and accurate so that they can be understood by anyone not familiar with the case.

### **Data protection and information sharing**

In May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 replaced the Data Protection Act 1998. The DPR contains the principles governing the use of personal data. It should be noted that the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 place greater significance on organisations being accountable and transparent in relation to their use of personal data. Handling personal data needs to have the proper arrangements for collecting, storing and sharing information.

Personal information in relation to safeguarding will often be sensitive and is likely to be classed as what is called ‘special categories of personal data’ under the GDPR, which means extra care will need to be taken when handling such data. Nevertheless, it is important to be aware that the Data Protection Act 2018 includes specific reference to processing data in relation to the ‘safeguarding of children and individuals at risk’ and allows individuals to share, in certain situations, personal data without consent

*‘The GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children and young people safe’* and this can equally be said to apply to vulnerable adults.

### **Reporting concerns about adults**

Referrals of suspected abuse are made to Adult Social Services and the police. Where possible, for a person over 18, this should be done with their written consent.

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The starting point is the presumption that an adult can give consent and has the mental capacity to do so. The provisions of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 are complex and questions and concerns about consent and mental capacity should always be discussed with the Safeguarding Officer.

### **Sharing without consent**

Information can be shared legally without consent, if a person is unable to or cannot reasonably be expected to gain consent from the individual concerned, or if to gain consent could place somebody at risk. Relevant personal data can be shared lawfully without consent if it is to keep a child or vulnerable adult safe from neglect or physical, emotional or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental or emotional well-being.

Never make these decisions on your own. If you are going to share personal data, this should always be discussed with the Safeguarding Officer. Of course, you may be able to share data, at least initially, without identifying the individual concerned both within the church and with the statutory services.

Ultimately, the most important consideration is whether the sharing of information is likely to support the safeguarding of a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

## **8. Caring Pastorally for Victims/Survivors of Abuse and Affected Others**

Encounter Church will endeavour to offer care and support to all those that have been abused, regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred. Those who have suffered abuse within the church will receive a compassionate response, be listened to and be taken seriously. Our first response to those who have suffered abuse, especially abuse within the church, should be compassionate; we must listen and take what we are hearing seriously.

It may be likely that amongst the congregation there are children and young people who have been abused and/or adults who have experienced abuse, either as adults or when they themselves were children. Some may have been abused in the church.

Responding well to a disclosure of abuse is essential to being able to build trust and support. For some, just being able to talk to a trusted person about their experiences can be a powerful, healing event. Some may be seeking pastoral support from the church. Some may need advice about how best to seek professional help. This may involve support to access local specialist services. Victims/survivors who are children or young people will require specialist support. If you need any advice about how best to support a victim/survivor of abuse, please speak to the Safeguarding Officer.

We journey alongside those who have been abused; for some, forgiveness may be a part of that journey, while for others, it may not be so. In any event, there should not be any pressure or expectation from the church on the victim/survivor to forgive

### **Support following alleged abuse by a church officer**

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All concerns or allegations of abuse by a church officer must be reported to the Safeguarding Officer. They will arrange for a Support Person to be offered to all alleged adult victims/survivors.

What the Support Person offers will be agreed with the alleged victim/survivor, but it is likely they will:

- Listen to and represent the victim/survivor's pastoral needs.
- Identify any therapeutic or other needs and offer choices as to how these can best be met.
- Record any meetings or contact they have with the victim/survivor.
- Share relevant information with the DSA.

Victims/survivors who are children or young people will require specialist support. The Safeguarding Officer will seek advice from Children's Social Care to access support from a professional agency, as required.

Support for families of victims/survivors and for the parish is co-ordinated by the core group in conjunction with statutory agencies. This would involve discussion with the Safeguarding Officer.

## **9. Caring Pastorally for Church Officers who are the Subject of Concerns or Allegations of Abuse and Affected Others**

### **Support for the respondent**

Support for the respondent should be provided by the Safeguarding Officer. The statutory agencies, where involved, will inform the Safeguarding Officer about when and what they can tell the respondent about an allegation that has been made. It may be that the statutory agencies themselves inform the respondent as part of their own investigative practices i.e. where a voluntary interview or arrest is necessary.

Where the statutory agencies are not involved, the church leadership will determine when and what the respondent should be told. This will normally be done by the Lead Pastor and the Safeguarding Officer, at an arranged meeting with the respondent. At this meeting the respondent will also be offered an appropriate person for support and the support needs of the respondent's family will be considered.

The support person offers will for example:

- Keep the person up to date with the progress of their case.
- Help with access to advice and additional support.
- Make and keep a written record of any meetings or contact with the respondent and share relevant information with the Safeguarding Officer.

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## **10. Responding to Those who May Present a Known Risk to Children, Young People or Vulnerable Adults within a Christian Congregation**

Encounter Church believes that, based on the message of the gospel, it opens its doors to all. It will therefore endeavour to offer pastoral care and support to any member of the church community whom may present a known risk.

This means that there are likely to be those with criminal convictions for sexual offences and other forms of abuse attending church. In addition, there may be those who do not have convictions or cautions but where there are sound reasons for considering that they still might pose a risk to others. Where people may pose a risk to others, their position in a congregation will need to be carefully and sensitively assessed to decide whether they pose a present risk to others and to put in place arrangements to ensure that these risks are mitigated. In these circumstances it is not only about monitoring individuals but offering support to lead a fulfilled life. As such, Encounter believes it has an important role in contributing to the prevention of future abuse.

**Some examples of the risk that individuals may pose to children, young people and adults are:**

- Sexual offences–against both adults and children: this includes accessing indecent images of children on the internet.
- Financial abuse: targeting of vulnerable adults for financial gain, for example, asking for money, the acceptance of large ‘gifts’ or offering to do a job for someone at an extortionate rate of pay.

### **Take action**

Always contact the Safeguarding Officer as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours, if you learn that any of the following people worship in your church:

1. Anyone placed on the sex offenders register, with a violent offence or conviction and/or who is barred from working with children or adults by the Disclosure and Barring Service.
2. Anyone who admits to being an abuser including on-recent abuse.
3. Anyone who is subject to an investigation for suspected abuse, including possession of indecent images of children, and/or is suspended from their usual role.
4. Anyone who may pose a risk to other church members due to their behaviour, irrespective of their criminal status.

Category (4) may include a person in relation to whom:

- An allegation of abuse against a child or adult has been investigated, but the matter has not proceeded to court, or the person has been acquitted, or the matter is currently the subject of proceedings in the criminal or civil courts, but the person may still pose a risk.
- A complaint or grievance has been received alleging inappropriate behaviour, which is not criminal.

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- There have been concerns about the person's alleged abusive behaviour to a previous or current partner.

If anyone is made aware by any other source of any person in the above categories who is intending to or is worshipping at the church, he/she will notify the Safeguarding Officer in the first instance.

The Safeguarding Officer will determine the appropriate action to be taken to best safeguard the church and its congregation, based on the particular facts and circumstances of each case. They will undertake a risk assessment and the formation of a risk management plan.

This will involve the respondent and usually the Lead Pastor and the Safeguarding Officer and, if involved, statutory agencies e.g. police, National Probation Service and Children's Social Care. Who is involved will depend on the case.

If a person is assessed as posing a risk to children or adults, the Safeguarding Officer together with any statutory agencies involved, will support the church to:

1. Form a small group of people to offer pastoral support, friendship and to monitor the respondent.
2. Maintain the highest levels of confidentiality unless there is a breach of the agreement and it is necessary to inform others to protect a child or vulnerable adult.
3. Agree with the respondent that he/she worship elsewhere if his/her victim or their family worship at Encounter church.
4. Ensure the respondent is never offered any official role in the church or position of responsibility where he/she may be trusted by others.
5. Consider whether, with the person's agreement and that of any statutory authorities involved, the congregation should be informed.
6. Meet with the respondent to draft a Safeguarding Agreement setting out the parameters of his/her behaviour in the church setting.

**The Safeguarding Agreement may include the following elements:**

- Attend designated services or meetings only.
- Sit apart from children.
- Stay away from areas of the building where children or vulnerable adults meet.
- Attend a house group where there are no children or vulnerable adults.
- Decline hospitality where there are children or vulnerable adults.
- Never be alone with children or vulnerable adults.
- Never work or be part of a mixed group with children or vulnerable adults.
- Take no role or office in the church which gives him or her status or authority as others

**The Safeguarding Agreement will be monitored and reviewed at least annually.**

Should the respondent refuse to sign the agreement the Safeguarding Officer will advise the Lead Pastor and liaise with the police and other relevant agencies, as required, to seek a

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resolution. Any breach should be shared with the Safeguarding Officer immediately, who will liaise with the statutory agencies, as required. It should be remembered that it is not possible to prevent a parishioner from attending services, unless this is a condition included in a court order or his/her licence conditions upon release from prison. If a respondent parishioner wishes to attend any service, as part of the safeguarding arrangement (and this could be contained in his/her ongoing Safeguarding Agreement), it is possible for the church leaders to direct a person where to sit, put measures in place to closely supervise them (e.g. accompany the individual) and remove that person if they cause a disturbance. It is also possible to refuse access to other church activities (e.g. social activities such as tea/coffee after the service).

## **11. A Safe Environment for Activities**

Encounter Church will strive to create and maintain environments that are safer for all, that promote well-being, that prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within the Church for children, young people and vulnerable adults. The church will strive to support all church officers to adhere to safer working good practice and to challenge the abuse of power.

### **A. Code of safer working practice**

**All those working on behalf of the Church with children, young people and adults must:**

- Treat all individuals with respect and dignity.
- Ensure that their own language, tone of voice and body language are respectful.
- Ensure that children, young people and adults know who they can talk to about a personal concern.
- Record and report any concerns about a child, young person or adult and/or the behaviour of another worker with their activity leader and/or Safeguarding Officer. Sign and date the record.
- Obtain written consent for any photographs/videos to be taken, shown, displayed or stored
- Administer any First Aid with others around.

In addition, for children and young people must:

- Always aim to work with or within sight of another adult.
- Ensure another adult is informed if a child needs to be taken to the toilet. Toilet breaks should be organised for young children.
- Respond warmly to a child who needs comforting but make sure there are other adults around.

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- Ensure that the child and parents are aware of any activity that requires physical contact and its nature before the activity takes place.

**All those working on behalf of the Church with children, young people and adults must not:**

- Invade an individual's privacy whilst washing and toileting.
- Use any form of physical punishment.
- Be sexually suggestive about or to an individual.
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject an individual or group.
- Permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying.
- Show favouritism to any one individual or group.
- Allow an individual to involve you in excessive attention seeking.
- Allow unknown adults access to children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable. Visitors should always be accompanied by an approved person.
- Allow strangers to give children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable in the group, lifts.
- Befriend children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable on social media.
- Take photographs on personal phones or cameras as this means that images are stored on personal devices.

In addition, for children and young people, must not:

- Give lifts to children you are supervising, on their own or your own (unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g. in an emergency for medical reasons or where parents fail to collect a child and no other arrangements can be made to take a child home. In such situations, the circumstances and your decision must be recorded and shared with an appropriate person at the earliest opportunity).
- Smoke or drink alcohol in the presence of children and young people.
- Arrange social occasions with children and young people (other than events which also include adult family members/carers) outside organised group occasions.

## **B. Acceptable touch**

Sympathetic attention, humour, encouragement and appropriate physical contact are needed by children and adults. Some physical contact with children, particularly younger children, is wholly appropriate. The following guidelines regarding touching are suggested:

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- Always ask permission.
- Be mindful of your body position.
- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be in response to a child's needs and not related to the worker's needs. It should be age appropriate, welcome and generally initiated by the child, not the church officer.
- Avoid any physical contact that I so or could be construed as sexual and/or abusive/offensive.
- Allow the child to determine the degree of physical contact with others except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. when they need medical attention).

In addition:

- You can allow people you support to give you brief hugs if you feel comfortable with this.
- You can allow people you support to hold hands or link arms with you to help with travel and stability.
- You should discourage people you support from touching your face. You can offer your hand instead.
- You should discourage people you support from sitting on your lap. You can offer to sit side by side.

You should avoid using touch if the person you support is very distressed and is unlikely to tolerate it.

Ensure that church leaders at all levels take responsibility for monitoring one another in the area of physical contact. They should be encouraged to challenge one another if necessary. Concerns about possible abuse or inappropriate behaviour should always be reported.

### **C. Children's activities**

Church groups that involve children need to ensure good practice standards across a wide range of areas including: recruitment of activity leaders; DBS checking; staffing ratios; suitability of premises; health and safety arrangements; and facilities for children with special needs.

Each group should have at least two workers, even for smaller groups, and if possible one male and one female. Staff ratios for all groups should always be based on a risk assessment. For example, staffing numbers would need to be increased for outdoor activities and more so if that activity is considered higher risk, potentially dangerous or when children with disabilities or special needs are involved

For all groups and activities:

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- Undertake a health and safety risk assessment
- A registration form must be completed for every child or young person who attends groups or activities which should include up-to- date information on parents' contact numbers, medical information (e.g. allergies) and any special needs
- An attendance register must be kept and be available at all group meetings.
- A First Aid kit must be available on any premises that are used by children.
- An accident and incident logbook must be available, and all accidents recorded. The logbook should be stored in a secure place. Any significant incidents must be recorded (e.g. a fight between children).
- There should be access to a telephone, if possible.
- In premises where children's groups meet, the Childline and Family Lives telephone numbers should be displayed
- Parents must sign a consent form before children are transported in a private car, and before any photography or images are taken

In addition, when taking children offsite:

- The church leadership must be informed and agree to the activity
- Details of the activity and any itinerary must be given in advance to parent/s and consent forms received in advance of the activity taking place
- Details of the activity and a list of contacts must be left with someone in the church.
- Details of the activity and arrangements must be given to a church leader
- A risk assessment must be undertaken, and confirmation obtained that the activity is covered by Encounter's insurance
- A leader must be designated to take responsibility for First Aid.

Many of these items are equally applicable to groups involving vulnerable adults.

## **12. Visiting Adults**

Visiting vulnerable adults in their homes is an essential element of many church officers' roles. Many parishioners will be well known to the church officer and where there have been no previous concerns, the level of risk to the church officer or parishioner during visits will usually be low. However, unexpected circumstances can be encountered, some of which may place a church officer at risk. For example, the unexpected presence in the home of a relative or friend with a history of violence or threatening behaviour. Unfortunately, case histories also show that a parishioner may be at risk from a church officer. For these reasons it is very important for parishes to ensure their church officers and parishioners are as safe as they can

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be, and that there is accountability and transparency in the manner in which church officers engage in lone working or visits to homes.

To assure the person you are visiting of their safety, and for your own as a church officer:

- If possible, undertake a risk assessment before an initial visit, especially if you do not know the person. If there are any concerns or risks known before a visit is made, you are advised always to undertake a risk assessment. In these circumstances, consider whether the visit is necessary, or whether you should be accompanied by another church officer. In addition, visiting in pairs may be advisable, especially if the adult is perceived to be vulnerable.
- Do not call unannounced; call by appointment, if appropriate telephoning the person just before visiting.
- Be clear about what support you can offer and the purpose and limitations of any pastoral care/support that is available.
- Do not make referrals to any agency that could provide help without the adult's permission, and ideally encourage them to set up the contact, unless there are safeguarding concerns.
- Never offer 'over-the-counter' remedies to people on visits or administer prescribed medicines, even if asked to do so.
- Do not accept any gifts from adults other than token items, to avoid misunderstandings or subsequent accusations from the person or their family. If someone wants to make a donation to the church, put it in an envelope, mark it on the outside as a donation and obtain a receipt from the Treasurer.
- Make a note of the date when you visit people, report back about the visit to the agreed named person and say what is concerning or going well. They will report safeguarding concerns to the Safeguarding Officer.

### **13. Use of Social Media**

Social media sites enable users to create and share content and keep in touch with other users. They include maintaining a profile on a networking site such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat; writing or commenting on a blog, whether it is your own or the blog of another person; and taking part in discussions on web forums or message boards. For many, especially young people, using social media is an extension of physical face-to-face relationships. It is therefore important that Encounter Church also engage with their community and worshippers through these platforms. However, this must be done safely to avoid the risk of:

- Forming inappropriate relationships.
- Saying things you should not, such as offensive, sexual or suggestive comments.
- Blurring the boundaries between public work/ministry and your private life.
- Grooming and impersonation.

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- Bullying and harassment.

A church officer should be aware of the account name and password so that they can at any time log on to the account to monitor the communications. The named person should be proactive in fulfilling this role. Communications must be shared with the named person. Church officers remain bound by professional rules of confidentiality. Where there is concern that a young person or adult is at risk of abuse, or they themselves pose a risk of abuse to others, safeguarding procedures must always be followed.

(See also IT, Social Media & Data Security Policies)

### **Guidance for church officers**

#### **Do:**

- Have your eyes open and be vigilant.
- Maintain the upmost integrity – honesty, transparency, consistency and accountability are key. Treat online communication with children, young people and adults as you would communication that is face to face. Always maintain the same level of confidentiality.
- Report any safeguarding concerns that arise on social media to the Safeguarding Officer
- Always assume that everything you write is permanent and may be viewed by anyone at any time; and that everything can be traced back to you personally as well as to your colleagues or the church. Always think before you post.
- Draw clear boundaries around your social media usage associated with your private life and your use of different social media for public ministry. Keep church account/s and profiles separate from your personal social media account/s e.g. only use a Facebook page, Twitter or blogs for public ministry, while keeping a separate Facebook profile for private life.

#### **Always ask parents/carers for written consent to:**

- Use and store photographs of children/young people from activities or events in official church publications, or on the church's social media, website and displays.
- Use telephone, text message, email and other messaging services to communicate with young people.
- Allow young people to connect to the church's social media pages
- Only use an approved church/ministry account to communicate with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults. The named person should be able to access this and review conversations, and the account should be visible to young people and their parents. Young people must be made aware that any communication will be viewed by all users. Save any messages and threads through social networking sites, so that you can provide evidence to the named person of your exchange when required.
- Avoid one-to-one communication with a child or young person.
- Use clear and unambiguous language in all communications and avoid abbreviations that could be misinterpreted.

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- Save and download to hard copy any inappropriate material received through social networking sites or other electronic means and show immediately to the Safeguarding Officer
- Use passwords and log off promptly after use to ensure that nobody else can use social media pretending to be you.

**Do not:**

- Use a personal Facebook or any other social media account in your work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- Add children, young people or vulnerable adults as friends on your personal accounts.
- Facebook stalk (i.e. dig through people's Facebook pages to find out about them).
- Say anything on social media that you would not be happy saying in a public meeting, to someone's face, writing in a local newspaper or on headed notepaper.
- Comment on photos or posts, or share content, unless appropriate to your church role.
- Use visual media (e.g. Skype, Facetime) for one-to-one conversations with young people – use only in group settings.

**In particular, do not allow content to contain or share links to other sites that contain:**

- Libellous, defamatory, bullying or harassing statements.
- Breaches of copyright and data protection.
- Material of an illegal nature.
- Offensive sexual or abusive references.
- Inappropriate language.
- Anything which may be harmful to a child, young person or vulnerable adult, or which may bring the church into disrepute or compromise its reputation

## **14. Reporting Abuse**

Under no circumstances should a worker carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. Following procedures as below:

- The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse should report concerns as soon as possible to either the Church Manager, Ron Wienand, the Safeguarding Trustee, Michelle Dearman (hereafter the "Safeguarding Officer) or the Governance Trustee Malcolm Hayes who is nominated by the Trustees to act on their behalf in dealing with the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including referring the matter on to the statutory authorities.



- In the absence of the Safeguarding Officer or, if the suspicions in any way involve the Safeguarding Officer, then the report should be made to the Lead Pastor, Mark Bailey. If the suspicions implicate both the Safeguarding Officer and Deputy then the report should be made in the first instance to Malcolm Hayes (Governance Trustee). Alternatively contact Social Services or the police.
- Where the concern is about a child the Safeguarding Officer should contact Children's Social Services. Where the concern is regarding an adult in need of protection contact Adult Social Services.
- The local Children's Social Services helpdesk telephone number is 01452 426565 (0900h to 1700h) or out of hours 01452 614194
- The local Adult Social Services office telephone number (0900h to 1700h) is 01452 426868.
- If you have concerns about the immediate safety of the child or you believe a serious criminal offence has been committed, please contact the Police at any time on 101
- For advice the Safeguarding Officer or Deputy can contact the Thirty-One Eight helpline on 0303 003 1111 (Office hours only unless in emergency)

<b>Further Help and Guidance</b>	
<p><b>Helplines</b></p> <p><b>NSPCC</b> for adults concerned about a child – 0808 800 5000</p> <p><b>Childline</b> for children and young people – 0800 1111</p> <p><b>Action on Elder Abuse</b> helpline – 0808 808 8141</p> <p><b>24-hour National Domestic Violence</b> helpline – 0808 2000 247</p> <p><b>NAPAC</b> offers support and advice to adult survivors of childhood abuse – 08088010331</p> <p><b>Stop It Now</b> helps prevent child sexual abuse – 0808 1000 900</p> <p><b>Cruse</b> bereavement helpline – 0808 808 1677</p> <p><b>Family Lives</b> provides support and advice on family issues – 0808 800 222</p> <p><b>MACSAS</b> for people who have been abused by church officers – 0808 801 0340</p> <p><b>Samaritans</b> for people struggling to cope and needing someone to talk to – 116 123</p> <p><b>Sources of support for victims and families of abuse</b></p> <p><b>The Survivors Trust</b> – <a href="http://thesurvivorstrust.org">http://thesurvivorstrust.org</a></p> <p><b>Safeline</b> – <a href="http://www.safeline.org.uk/what-can-friends-and-family-members-do-to-support-survivors-of-sexual-abuse">www.safeline.org.uk/what-can-friends-and-family-members-do-to-support-survivors-of-sexual-abuse</a></p> <p><b>SupportLine</b> – <a href="http://www.supportline.org.uk/problems/rape_sexual-assault.php">www.supportline.org.uk/problems/rape_sexual-assault.php</a></p> <p><b>Victim Support</b> – <a href="http://www.victimsupport.org.uk/crime-info/types-crime/childhood-abuse">www.victimsupport.org.uk/crime-info/types-crime/childhood-abuse</a></p>	

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