
NORTHGATE CHURCH SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Introduction

Safeguarding is taken seriously by Northgate Church.

We acknowledge children's and adults right to protection from abuse, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. We consider that the welfare of children is paramount. We follow legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice in order to protect vulnerable people in our church and those we come into contact with.

We seek to establish a caring environment in which there is an informed vigilance about the dangers of abuse.

We implement, maintain and regularly review the procedures outlined in this policy, which are designed to prevent and to be alert to abuse.

We have appointed a Safeguarding Coordinator and Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator, who have specific responsibilities for safeguarding, although we recognise that safeguarding is a whole church responsibility. The Safeguarding Coordinator is the person to whom all concerns or allegations should be addressed. In the absence of the Safeguarding Coordinator, the Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator should be contacted.

We organise activities in such a way as to promote a safe environment and minimise the risk of harm to children and adults.

We follow a safer recruitment process for the selection and appointment of people to work with children or adults at risk, whether voluntary or paid, lay or ordained. We are committed to providing support, supervision, resources and training to those who work with children and adults.

We use rigorous and careful supervision to protect people from the risks associated with known offenders within the congregation, including implementing contracts with known offenders and those who have been assessed as posing a risk.

We believe that domestic abuse in all its forms is unacceptable and inconsistent with a Christian way of living and recognise that it can affect both adults and children. All concerns and allegations of abuse will be responded to appropriately, including referring to the statutory authorities if necessary.

We will always co-operate with the statutory authorities in any investigation, following multi-agency decisions and maintaining confidentiality of any investigations to those directly involved.

We will refer any concerns about staff - volunteers and paid - that meet the relevant criteria to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

We provide a Safeguarding Pack to all staff and volunteers who may work with children or vulnerable adults, which contains detailed procedures.

Our Safeguarding Policy Statement is attached as Appendix 1.

Aim and purpose of this policy

The aim of this policy is to provide procedures for promoting safeguarding, preventing abuse and protecting children, adults at risk and staff. This includes clear procedures for taking appropriate action when safeguarding concerns are raised involving children and adults that we have contact with.

Who this policy applies to

This policy is approved and endorsed by the Leaders and Trustees and applies to:

- all those who attend our church and those we have contact with
- our trustees, leaders and staff (both paid and voluntary)

Parents/carers are informed of this policy and our procedures. The term 'children' refers to those under the age of 18 years.

Duty of care and confidentiality

We have a duty of care to all whom we are in contact with, whether adults or children. We maintain confidentiality at all times, except in circumstances where to do so would place the individual or another individual at risk of harm.

Preventing abuse

The church has appointed Safeguarding and Deputy Safeguarding Coordinators for safeguarding children and adults. The job description is attached as Appendix 2. Activities are to be organised so as to promote a safe environment and healthy relationships, whilst minimising opportunities for harm, misunderstanding or false accusation. For each event, risk assessments are carried out, appropriate consent forms are used (for children's activities), appropriate records are kept and adequate insurance is in place. We are committed to safer recruitment and selection of all paid staff and volunteers and ensure that these procedures are followed, which include:

- asking applicants to complete an application form
- providing workers with job descriptions and person specifications
- completion of self declaration forms
- obtaining Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) wherever legally entitled to do so, and renewing this at least every 3 years
- taking up two references (not from family members)
- interviewing candidates

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- Providing a Working with Children & Young People Pack, which includes our Code of Conduct.

A Safeguarding Pack is provided and volunteers and paid staff are given support and supervision in their role. All trustees, leaders, paid staff and volunteers work within a code of conduct and understand that there may be action taken if this code is not followed, possibly involving suspension or termination of working with us. If we become aware of someone within our church known to have harmed children or adults in the past, we put in place a plan to minimise the risk of harm to children and adults, which may include contacting and cooperating with statutory authorities.

What are we protecting people from?

The definitions of abuse differ between children and adults. Definitions of abuse relating to children and adults are found in the relevant Safeguarding Pack.

How to recognise abuse

It is important to be aware of the possible signs and symptoms of abuse. Possible signs of abuse are found in the relevant Safeguarding Pack. Some signs could be indicators of a number of different categories of abuse. It is essential to note that these **are only indicators of** possible abuse. There may be other, innocent, reasons for these signs and/or behaviour. They will, however, be a guide to assist in assessing whether abuse of one form or another is a possible explanation for a child or adult's behaviour.

What to do if there is a disclosure or allegation of abuse

If a child, young person or adult makes a disclosure that they are being abused and / or an allegation of abuse against someone, it is important that the person being told:

- stays calm and listens carefully
- reassures them that they have done the right thing in telling
- does not investigate or ask leading questions
- explains that they will need to tell someone else if anyone is at risk of harm, in order to help them
- does not promise to keep secret what they have been told
- informs the church Safeguarding Coordinator as soon as possible (if they are implicated in the allegation, informs the Deputy and the Trust Chair)
- makes a written record of the allegation, disclosure or incident and signs and dates this record (see Safeguarding Pack). This should be provided to the church Safeguarding Coordinator, either in a sealed envelope or via email.

Procedure in the event of a concern of abuse

If there is an immediate threat of harm, the Police should be contacted without delay. Where it is judged that there is no immediate threat of harm, the following will occur:

- The concern should be discussed with the church Safeguarding Coordinator or Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator and a decision made as to whether the concern warrants a referral to the statutory authorities (see Key Contacts)
- A confidential record will be made of the conversation and the circumstances surrounding it in the Incident Form in the Safeguarding Pack, or by email. This record will be kept securely and a copy passed to statutory authorities if a referral is made.
- The person about whom the allegation is made must not be informed by anyone in the church if it is judged that to do so could place a child or adult at increased risk. If the statutory authorities are involved, they should be consulted beforehand.
- The Trust Chair should be kept informed of any serious concerns.

If the allegation concerns a church staff member or volunteer

For any concerns relating to children, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be contacted, along with the Chair of Trustees. The timing and method of any action to be taken will be discussed and agreed with the LADO. This will cover communication with the worker, suspension, investigation and possible strategy meetings. A decision will be taken by the LADO about when to inform the worker and the church will follow this advice. For LADO contact details, see Key Contacts. For concerns relating to adults, Adult Social Care will be contacted, see Key Contacts. In accordance with the law, a referral will be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) if the church withdraws permission for an individual to engage in work with children / adults at risk OR would have done so had that individual not resigned, retired, been made redundant or been transferred to a different position because the employer believes that the individual has engaged in relevant conduct, satisfied the harm test, or committed an offence that would lead to automatic inclusion on a barred list. In such cases, a report will also be made to the Charity Commission, as they deem such a referral to be a 'serious incident' and therefore require notification.

In the absence of the Safeguarding Coordinator or, if the suspicions in any way involve the Safeguarding Coordinator, then the report should be made to the Safeguarding Deputy. If the suspicions implicate both the Safeguarding Coordinator and the Deputy, then the report should be made to the chair of

trustees. Alternatively contact Children's Social Care / Adult Social Care, or the Police.

Historical allegations

Allegations of child abuse are sometimes made by adults and children many years after the abuse has occurred. Reports of historical allegations may be complex as the alleged victims may no longer be living in the situations where the incidents occurred or where the alleged perpetrators are also no longer linked to the setting or employment role. Such cases should be responded to in the same way as any other concerns and the referral procedure should be followed. It is important to ascertain as a matter of urgency if the alleged perpetrator is still working with, or caring for, children.

Organisational responses to allegations by an adult of abuse experienced as a child must be of as high a standard as a response to current child abuse because:

- There is a significant likelihood that a person who abused a child/ren in the past will have continued and may still be doing so;
- Criminal prosecutions can still take place despite the fact that the allegations are historical in nature and may have taken place many years ago.

Review

The Safeguarding Coordinator will review this policy annually, amending and updating it as required, and informing the Trustees that this has been done.

Date of the most recent review:

Date of the next review:

Signed: (on behalf of the Church Trustees):

Key Contacts - Sources of advice and support

- The church Safeguarding Coordinator is the person to whom all concerns or allegations should be addressed. They can be contacted by emailed safeguarding@northgate.org.uk.
- In the absence of the Safeguarding Coordinator, the Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator can be contacted.
- thirtyone:eight, formerly Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) (This should only be used for urgent advice if you are unable to contact your Safeguarding Coordinator or Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator). Telephone 0303 003 11 11 or email helpline@thirtyoneeight.org.
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – telephone contacts will not be accepted – there is a referral form which can be found on the Cheshire West and Chester Safeguarding Children Partnership website -

<https://www.cheshirewestlscb.org.uk/policy-and-procedures/allegations-management-lado/>.

- The Cheshire West and Chester Integrated Access and Referral Team (i-ART) phone number (office hours) is 0300 123 7047. The out of hours Emergency Duty Team number is 01244 977277.
- The local Adult Social Services office telephone number (office hours) is 0300 123 7034. The out of hours Emergency Duty Team number is 01244 977277.
- The Police Protection Team can be accessed by contacting 101. Alternatively Cheshire Police can be contacted on 0845 458 0000, or 01244 350000.

Safeguarding Policy Statement

(Appendix 1)

The following statement has been agreed by the Trustees and Leadership of Northgate Church. This church is committed to the safeguarding of children and adults at risk, and to ensuring their well-being. We recognise safeguarding is a whole church responsibility.

- We believe that all children and adults should know that they are valued and should safely enjoy and have access to every aspect of the life of our church and community.
- We respect the personal dignity and rights of children and adults at risk (for example, as set out in the Human Rights Act 1989 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) and will ensure that our policies and procedures reflect this.
- We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect of children under 18 years of age.
- We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, financial, discriminatory abuse and neglect of adults at risk.
- We recognise that domestic abuse affects both adults and children and believe that domestic abuse in all its forms is unacceptable and inconsistent with a Christian way of living.
- We report any abuse of children or adults at risk that we discover or suspect, in accordance with local guidelines.
- Where an allegation suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed, the police will be contacted as a matter of urgency.
- We recognise that Children's Social Care has responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse where there are concerns about a child; and that Adult Social Care do so for adults at risk.
- We acknowledge that the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) has responsibility for dealing with all allegations and concerns about people working with children, whether staff or volunteers.

We are committed to:

- The establishment of a loving environment, which is safe and caring, and where there is an informed vigilance about the dangers of abuse.
- Following the relevant legislation, statutory, denominational and specialist guidelines in relation to safeguarding children and adults at risk.
- Ensuring that we keep up to date with national and local developments relating to safeguarding.
- Building constructive links with the relevant Voluntary and Statutory Authorities.
- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure that as a church, everyone works within the agreed procedures of our safeguarding policies.
- Supporting the Safeguarding Co-ordinator and Deputy in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children and adults at risk.

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- Following safer recruitment principles in the appointment and selection of all those who work with children and adults at risk, be they volunteer or paid staff.
 - Supporting, supervising, resourcing and training all those who undertake work with children and adults at risk.
 - Ensuring that the children and adults we have contact with know that they are valued and feel empowered to tell us if they are suffering harm.
 - Reporting any abuse of children or adults at risk that we discover or suspect, in accordance with local guidance.
 - Supporting all those in our church who are affected by abuse.
 - Supporting and supervising those who pose a risk to children or adults at risk, implementing contracts of behaviour, whilst bearing in mind the overarching principle that the welfare of the child is paramount.
 - If an assessment is made that someone poses an unmanageable risk to those in need of protection and could not safely attend our church, we will ensure that they continue to be offered pastoral care and will signpost them to appropriate agencies for support.

The Role of a Church Safeguarding Coordinator or Deputy (Appendix 2)

Context

We believe that children and adults at risk deserve the best possible care that the church can provide and that the church should be a safe place for everyone involved.

Purpose of the role:

- To coordinate safeguarding policy and procedure in the church.
- To be the first point of contact for safeguarding issues.
- To be an advocate for good safeguarding practice in the church.

Responsibilities

- To coordinate safeguarding policy and procedure in the church.
- To familiarise themselves with church policies and procedures and good practice guidelines in safeguarding and to keep abreast of any changes and developments.
- To ensure that church policies and procedures are reviewed annually, kept up to date, and are fit for purpose.
- To make others in the church aware of the church safeguarding policies and procedures.
- To ensure safer recruitment practices are operated in the recruitment of all workers (both volunteers and paid) including, but not exclusively, ensuring that the relevant workers have up to date Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- To be the first point of contact for safeguarding issues.
- To be a named person that children / adults at risk, church members and outside agencies can talk to regarding any issue to do with safeguarding.
- To be aware of the names and telephone numbers of appropriate contacts within Social Care and the Police in the event of a referral needing to be made.
- To be aware of when to seek advice, and when it is necessary to inform Social Care, the Police or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) of a concern or incident.
- To take appropriate action in relation to any safeguarding concerns which arise within the church.
- To cooperate with Social Care or the Police in safeguarding investigations relating to people within the church, or whom we have contact with.

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- To ensure that appropriate records are kept by the church, and that information in relation to safeguarding issues is handled confidentially and stored securely.
 - To be an advocate for good safeguarding practice in the church.
 - To promote sensitivity within the church towards all those affected by the impact of abuse.
 - To promote positive safeguarding procedures and practice and ensure procedures are adhered to.
 - To arrange and/or promote opportunities for training in safeguarding to any relevant members of the Trustees, leadership team, paid staff and volunteers.
 - To update their own safeguarding training every three years.
 - To seek appropriate support and advice in carrying out this role.
 - To make arrangements for a suitable person to carry out this role should there be a prolonged period of time when they will be unavailable, and to publicise who this is and the dates of the alternative arrangements.