

Welcome to **Network Church**

**Safeguarding Practice Guidelines
for those working with
Children and Young people.**

2026

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INTRODUCTION

We are privileged to have a great team who serve our children and young people. We appreciate the time and commitment, the effort and enthusiasm and above all the love and care that you give. The following information is aimed to give confidence to everyone working as part of this team. It sets out guidelines that ensure the best possible standards of safety and protection for everyone. The guidelines outlined in this booklet form the core policies for Network Church and should be adhered to at all times.

As the leadership of Network Church we want to say thank you for serving in this way and we hope you will find the information, training and support helpful in your role as children or youth workers. It is important that you feel well informed, trained and supported in the area of safeguarding. If you have any queries or concerns you should contact your children's group leader or the Safeguarding Coordinator for Network Church (see Appendix G).

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY STATEMENT

Our commitment

As the Leadership of Network Church, we recognise the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children, young people and adults. We acknowledge that children, young people and adults can be the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and neglect. We accept the Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that children should be able to develop their full potential, free from hunger and want, neglect and abuse. They have a right to be protected from "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person who has care of the child."

As a Leadership we have therefore adopted the procedures set out in this safeguarding policy in accordance with statutory guidance. The Leadership undertakes to:

- Value, listen to and respect children and young people as well as promoting their welfare and protection.
- Ensure the safe recruitment, supervision and training for all the children's/youth workers within the church.
- Provide on-going safeguarding training for all its workers and will regularly review the operational guidelines attached.
- Adopt a procedure for dealing with concerns about possible abuse.
- Encourage and support parents/carers.
- Support those affected by abuse in the church.
- Endorse and follow all national and local safeguarding legislation and procedures.
- Ensure that the premises meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and all other relevant legislation, and that it is welcoming and inclusive.
- Support the Safeguarding Coordinator(s) in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children and adults with care and support needs.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Our safeguarding responsibilities

Churches and groups often fail to provide guidelines in relation to the general supervision of children and specific activities. It is easy to assume that everyone knows what is appropriate supervision and is working to the same end. Therefore, clear guidance of expectations needs to be given to all workers in order to promote excellence in childcare, protect children from possible abuse and workers from false accusation.

We will issue a Code of Conduct to all those serving children or young people to ensure they understand any expectations for their behaviour **(see Appendix A)**

All volunteers working with children and young adults are safely recruited, with DBS checks.

Volunteers receive induction training regarding policies and specific group practices before they start on rota.

All volunteers complete Level 1 Safeguarding training as soon as possible and ongoing training is monitored. This may be training received from other organisations, or in-house. Training is recorded for each volunteer.

Records of DBS dates, and training received by volunteers, are up to date.

Adults are not alone with a child where their activity cannot be seen. This may mean leaving doors open, or two groups working in the same room.

Parents/carers are clear when responsibility for their child's care transfers from them to the children's worker and is returned to them at the end of the session.

Parents of all children attending our groups complete a Health and Information Form giving contact details, outlining medical needs, any food allergies, and giving consent, or denying permission, for photographs to be taken.

Parents can nominate other adults to collect their child if they are unable to collect them.

Children with special needs are fully integrated and protected within the church community.

Registration forms for each session are kept up to date and any information that may be shared for concerns is monitored.

Children's Workers/Youth Leaders attend regular training regarding safeguarding.

GUIDELINES & POLICIES

The following guidelines cover the main issues and practical management of children and youth activities carried out on a weekly basis and ensure we provide a safe and secure environment for our groups, but also for the staff and volunteers managing the activities.

General Guidelines

Please ensure you have planned the activities you are providing with a risk assessment to ensure the health and safety of all concerned.

This would include the usual health and safety issues to prevent accidents, but should also include any issues around safeguarding and protecting children/youth from harm or abuse. Do ensure the team are safely recruited/DBS checked where possible and that you have enough members of the team to supervise children properly.

Adult to child ratios must be followed

- Children aged less than 2 years, 1 adult: 3 children
- Children 2-3 years, 1 adult: 4 children
- Children 3-11 years, 1 adult: 8 children
- We would advise a ratio of 1 adult:8 children for young people 11-14 years

Should you find yourself in a position where there are not enough workers on team, report this concern immediately to the Children or Youth Leader or the leadership if needed. They must find someone who can come on the team and assist, or children will need to be taken back into the meeting. In the case of youth groups you may need to telephone others to help, or contact parents to come and collect young people if the ratios are insufficient to keep the group operating safely.

Ideally a parent/carer will tend a young child who has soiled their underclothes and needs to be thoroughly washed. If they are not available make sure another adult is with you and at least one of whom must be DBS checked.

Promoting Equality in our Children & Young Peoples Work

Network Church is committed to providing equality of opportunity for our children, young people and their families.

All children, whatever their sex, disability, racial or ethnic background, religious beliefs or sexual orientation, have a right to be in a safe and caring environment when participating in any activities run by Network Church and to equal protection from any form of exploitation or abuse.

We are committed to keeping the welfare of any child who is involved with any of our activities paramount and ensuring that young people are valued, listened to and respected. They are actively encouraged to take part in all activities and partner us in the decision making of their programmes. We are committed to eliminating unfair or unlawful discrimination wherever we see it in our procedures or practices. Children and young people will be actively encouraged to report anything they view as discriminatory.

Behaviour Policy

We aim to provide an environment in which there are high expectations of behaviour and where children learn to love and honour themselves, other people and God and to respect their environment.

Leaders and Helpers will:

- provide a positive model of behaviour by treating children, parents and one another with friendliness, care and courtesy.
- use positive strategies for handling any conflict, helping children find solutions in ways which are appropriate for the children's ages and stages of development - for example distraction, praise and reward.
- work in partnership with children's parents. Parents are informed about their children's behaviour, both positive and negative.

Leaders and Helpers never:

- send children out of the room by themselves.
- use physical punishment, such as smacking or shaking, or threaten children with these punishments.
- use techniques intended to single out children to humiliate them.
- shout or raise voices in a threatening way to respond to children's behaviour.

All volunteers and staff only use physical restraint, such as holding, to prevent physical injury to children or adults and/or serious damage to property. Details of such an event (what happened, what action was taken and by whom, and the names of witnesses) are brought to the attention of Children or Youth Leaders and recorded in the Incident Form. A parent or carer should be informed on the same day.

Rewards and Sanctions system

Individual groups have a variety of ways in which they encourage good behaviour as this can be age dependent, from toddlers to teenagers. Check with your Children or Youth Leader about their system of managing behaviour.

Anti Bullying Policy

Definition of bullying

The Office of Children and Young People's Services' Anti-Bullying Strategy defines bullying as **a persistent, deliberate attempt to hurt or humiliate someone.**

There may sometimes be misunderstanding about the meaning of the term 'bullying': one-off incidents, whilst they may be very serious and must always be dealt with, do not fall within the definition of 'bullying'.

Types of bullying

There are various types of bullying, but most have three things in common:

1. It is deliberately hurtful behaviour.
2. It is repeated over time.
3. There is an imbalance of power, which makes it hard for those being bullied to defend themselves.

Bullying may take various forms, including:

- Physical e.g. kicking, hitting, pushing, intimidating behaviour or interference with personal property
- Verbal/Psychological e.g. threats, taunts, shunning/ostracism, name-calling/verbal abuse or spreading of rumours
- Racist Bullying e.g. physical, verbal, written, on-line or text abuse or ridicule based on differences of race, colour, ethnicity, nationality, culture or language
- Faith-based Bullying e.g. negative stereotyping, name-calling or ridiculing based on religion
- Sexist Bullying e.g. use of sexist language or negative stereotyping based on gender
- Sexual Bullying e.g. unwanted/inappropriate physical contact or sexual innuendo
- Homophobic Bullying e.g. name-calling, innuendo or negative stereotyping based on sexual orientation or use of homophobic language
- SEN / Disability Bullying e.g. name-calling, innuendo, negative stereotyping or excluding from activity based on disability or learning difficulties
- Gifted/Talented Bullying e.g. name-calling, innuendo, ostracism or negative peer pressure based on high levels of ability or effort
- Cyber Bullying e.g. abuse on-line or via text message, interfering with electronic files, setting up or promoting inappropriate websites and inappropriate sharing of images from webcams/mobile phones

Prevention

Strategies can be adopted to prevent bullying before it starts. We suggest:

- Writing a set of group rules that are issued to the group at the beginning of each new intake setting out a clear message of zero tolerance for bullying
- Having discussions about bullying and why it matters
- Signing a behaviour contract with those that do not cooperate, ensuring that the safety of the children is paramount, and that help is offered to address the attitudes of the bully

Leaders and Helpers will:

- report any concerns regarding bullying incident to children's or youth leaders
- ensure that details are carefully checked before action is taken
- record all the facts around the incident and keep on record for further action

Procedure

- The children's or youth worker involved in dealing with the incident will issue a warning to the child or young person concerned
- An apology should be given by the child or young person who has bullied another wherever possible.
- If possible, those involved need to be reconciled
- After the incident has been investigated and dealt with, the situation should be monitored by the team and children/youth leaders to ensure repeated bullying does not take place
- After the incident/incidents have been investigated, parents/carers should be informed of the action taken
- All incidents, follow up and action must be recorded.

All children, workers, parents and carers should be aware of this anti-bullying policy within Network Church and what they should do if bullying arises.

Children and parent/carers should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

Social Networking Policy

This policy aims to give guidance to people who are in contact with young people using social networking sites. Communication over the internet by these sites are used by young people and children as a normal way of life and connection to their peers.

Network Church recognises that there will be benefits associated with the team of youth leaders and church staff using social networking to support and communicate with young people. There are, however, some safeguarding issues and other risks involved, e.g. such websites can be used for grooming, sharing of inappropriate images or bullying.

Policy and principles

The use of social networking sites or other web-based forms of communication with young people fall within the remit Network Church's Safeguarding Children Policy.

Staff and approved youth and children's workers are asked to set a godly example in the way in which they communicate, including in relation to social networking. They should challenge inappropriate communication in relation to those seeking to follow Christ.

Communication with young people should be accountable and transparent and the use of instant messaging is discouraged.

If on Social Networking sites, a member of staff or leader is friends with someone aged under 18, then they should ensure all communication that is visible (e.g. on their wall) is appropriate.

Areas that require care:

- Ensuring groups you have joined are appropriate
- Appropriate status updates and comments
- Inappropriate posts by friends to you that are then visible to young people

Unacceptable use of online networking

- Use of offensive language including anything that constitute bullying or harassment
- Compromising photos of yourself or others accessible to young people
- Posting photos of young people at organised youth events
- One on one private messages with young people

Accountability

If you have any concerns or are encountering challenges or difficulties in any of the areas in this policy, please let a church leader know as soon as possible so that they can support.

WhatsApp

It is church policy that WhatsApp groups are not used for children aged under 16, in line with NSPCC guidance and the Terms and Conditions of WhatsApp.

There is a Network Church WhatsApp group and church members who choose to be part of it are reminded not to share personal information or images, especially of children, outside of the group or in any way which may be searched online. The same guidelines apply to chat groups used by Network small groups and rota groups.

Meeting one to one with young people

Youth workers often need to meet young people for mentoring, sharing and supporting them differently to younger children. This can be done safely by following the guidelines below. You should also make yourself open and accountable to whoever you are responsible to, and to the parents wherever possible:

- Ensure that you are not meeting one particular young person more regularly than another, unless it's short term due to a stressful time they are going through. This could be viewed as favouritism at best or that you are showing too close an interest in that young person.
- It is good practice to encourage openness with parents where practical. Undisclosed regular meetings could cause more problems than you set out to solve. You don't need to share what their child is chatting to you about but most parents will appreciate your involvement and be supportive.
- Diarise the appointment on a calendar with someone else so that the time and location is recorded.
- Ensure the public meeting place is appropriate - meeting alone in a cinema for example would not be a wise choice. A busy public café is a better choice. The more public and open the better.
- Keep a notebook specifically to record meetings that are held 1:1. The entries do not have to be long and labourious, but they should include a few bullet points covering the main discussion points.
- If any distress or real difficulty was discussed, or they perhaps acted strangely or out of character during the meeting that should also be noted and flagged up to a line manager/team member as soon as is practicable.
- If during a 1:1 meeting they disclose abuse that is physical or sexual then you have a duty to report that. See 'What to do if abuse is disclosed'.

Praying with children and youth

We believe that prayer ministry in the body of Christ is important - we want to be free to pray for the children when appropriate in our groups, and to encourage them to pray with each other.

1. Make sure that parents know that prayer - by the children, for the children and among the children - is part of your programme. If you are dealing with subjects where prayer ministry is definitely involved, e.g. the baptism of the Spirit, or spiritual gifts, parents should know this, and know that they are welcome to be there. They then have the option of keeping their children away that week if they don't feel it is appropriate for them.
2. Always pray in an open area with other children and adults around.
3. Always have the child's permission to be specifically prayed for.
4. Don't crowd the child when praying. Get down on their level - don't tower over them. It is often good to sit down on the floor together. If you feel it is appropriate to pray whilst holding the child's hand do ask their permission. Avoid placing hand(s) on a child's head as they may find this overpowering.
5. Listen to what the child wants prayer for. If they have no specific needs or requests, simply ask the Holy Spirit to come and bless them.
6. If you pray for a specific area, or if a word of knowledge, encouragement or prophecy is received by an adult or a child, this should be written down so that the child can let their parents know (and remember it themselves!).
7. Keep language simple and short when praying, and generally keep prayer times short too.
8. If a child becomes distressed, consult the leader in charge before continuing to pray with them. Discernment is important - the child may be being touched by the Spirit and responding with tears of repentance or joy and relief - or they may be feeling confused and afraid. If you are unsure, stop and talk to the parents later.
9. Never allow any adult or child to get into anything like "deliverance" ministry - it is inappropriate in the context of a children's group.

Photographing – general guidelines

There is often confusion about the permission needed for taking photographs of children. However, common sense should be used alongside the following guidance. The main aim is that children should not be identifiable as individuals who can be traced and the information connected to a place where it can be used for grooming purposes.

Photographs taken purely for personal use are exempt from the Data Protection Act (DPA). In the very small number of circumstances where the DPA does apply, if permission is sought by the photographer, this will usually be enough to ensure compliance.

The Data Protection Act has always given advice to say organisations/churches must be very careful if they use photographs, videos and webcam use of clearly identifiable people. There are several issues to be aware of:

- Permission (verbal or written) must be obtained of all the people (children and adults) who will appear in the photo, video or webcam image before the photograph is taken or the footage is recorded.
- It must be made clear why that person's image is being used, what you will be using it for, and who might want to look at the pictures. (It would be advisable once photos have been taken that the parent and child are contacted and the detail of how it is going to be used discussed.)
- If photographs or recordings of children's/youth groups are made and individual children cannot be easily identified, children's/youth leaders must find out whether any parents do not want their children to be in the photograph. (Again it is best to keep parents informed of photos/videos that may be made more public before they are used, asking if they have any objection to their child appearing in it.)
- If images are being taken at an event attended by large crowds, such as a sports event, this is regarded as a public area and permission from a crowd is not necessary.
- Children and young people under the age of 18 should not be identified by surname or other personal details. These include e-mail or postal addresses, telephone numbers, date of birth, etc.
- When using photographs of children and young people it is preferable to use group pictures.
- Obtain written and specific consent from parents or carers before using photographs on a website or in published materials.

Filming/Photographing meetings or events

Meetings should be places where all can come safely to worship and fellowship, but for some members of our congregations they may be fleeing domestic violence or abusers and their identity needs to remain confidential. Taking photographs of them could jeopardise their safety.

At events where we have asked a nominated photographer to take photos or film parts of the service, we will inform the congregation this will be taking place.

If photos will be taken of a crowd on occasions that may arise, we will inform people that certain sections of the seating are identified as being out of shot and unlikely to be photographed.

No person in the congregation should be posting photos or videos of others in the congregation, especially children, onto social media outside of the church channels unless they have been given permission by the church to do so.

Out and About

Organised Trips

These require extra planning.

- Parental consent is required when taking children/young people on ALL trips.
- A risk assessment must be carried out and passed to the Safeguarding Coordinator.
- An information handout should be issued to everyone explaining what is expected, what to do if they get separated from the group and other contingency plans.
- With mixed gender groups you must have both male and female helpers.
- Ensure you do not invade the privacy of children/young people e.g. showering or toileting.
- You must not share sleeping accommodation with children or young people.
- Medical details should be known about each child and the appropriate medication taken with you, along with normal first aid requirements.
- Registers are very important on trips. Ensure there is an accurate register taken at the start of the trip, that there is adequate supervision on any transport used and that register checks are made regularly.

Transport and lifts

If your group needs to organise transport for a trip or outing, ensure this is checked out with the church leadership first. A reputable firm must be used, use of seatbelts is obligatory, and permission gained from parents. Ensure supervision on transport is adequate for the numbers, age of children/young people present.

Transport in your own vehicles can run into difficulties. Please gain advice from leadership before you commit to doing this. Generally we have a policy that workers do not give lifts to young people, especially on their own.

However, if a child or young person is left in a vulnerable situation with no transport home, the risk is greater to the child to leave them on their own travelling or walking home unaccompanied.

If you should ever find yourself alone in a vehicle with a child or young person, ask them to sit in the rear of the car and use a mobile phone to call their parents so they can be on the phone for the entire journey. If their parents are not available on the phone, call a member of your team, your spouse or a church leader.

Finally you could let the child/young person call a friend and chat to them whilst you drive. If you are still a little concerned (some children/young people can build close attachments to their workers that cause concern) then make a note of the time you left, miles covered and time you arrived. Write up a report of the journey noting any concerns/conversations that may be needed later should an accusation or misunderstanding arise.

Your protection as a children's helper or youth helper is very important too, so do please read and sign the Code of Conduct at Appendix A. Generally you should ensure you are never alone with a child or young person that could be misconstrued or put you in danger of an accusation.

Working on the Streets

For some youth outreach work or special events you may be connecting with young people that you do not know well, if at all. Your safety is very important in these situations.

Always work in pairs, be aware that both helpers and young people can be vulnerable whilst working on the street.

You are never to knowingly participate in the taking of any drug including alcohol with any young person. Young people should be encouraged to be smoke and drug free.

Wherever we are working with young people we should always try to provide a safe environment for them e.g. no bullying, verbal or physical.

From the streets

Children may wander in from outside and want to join in with church activities (e.g. children's club, Sunday school, outreach events) without their parent's knowledge:

1. On arrival, welcome the child/ren and try to establish their name, age, address and telephone number. Record their visit in a register.
2. Try to establish if a parent/carer knows where they are and the time they are expected home. If this is before the session ends encourage them to return home and ask their parent/carer for permission to return the following week.
3. Link the child with 'a buddy' who can introduce them to the group and show them the ropes.
4. On leaving, give the child information about the group with contact phone numbers and a standard letter inviting the parent/carer to make contact if they wish. For children's clubs this will include details of any 'Home Visits' that will be made during the week to the child's home.

Without interrogating the child you will need to find out ASAP if they have any special needs, (e.g. medication), so an appropriate response can be made in an emergency.

Responsibilities towards Colleagues

If you see another helper acting in ways that might be misconstrued, be prepared to speak to them or to your leader about your concerns. Leaders should encourage an atmosphere of mutual support and care which allows all helpers to be comfortable enough to discuss attitudes or behaviour which they think are, or might be, inappropriate. For example you may have a fellow helper who seems to be giving more time and attention each week to one specific child or group of children. This can cause other children to feel left out and undervalued. If it goes on over a prolonged period of time it could give an impression that something more sinister may be occurring such as 'grooming'. Before it gets to a major concern we should all be able to chat to one another and offer supportive advice. If that doesn't work then having a chat with your leader is the next step.

Whistle Blowing Policy

Whistle blowing is the formal procedure for reporting more serious concerns.

You have an individual responsibility to report to the children's work/youth leader the improper actions of any member of staff or youth/child's work volunteer. This might include suspicions of abuse, acts of discrimination and omissions. This is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk. If you have concerns about the children's work/ youth leader you should report to the Safeguarding Coordinator or Church Leader. Be assured that all suspicions and accusations will be taken seriously, investigated and if necessary acted upon and you need not fear repercussions.

We will follow the principles contained in the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Complaints policy

This procedure is for dealing with complaints about how a safeguarding concern has been dealt with.

Introduction

Network Church aims to ensure that all safeguarding concerns are dealt with well, in line with UK legislation, Pioneer and ThirtyoneEight guidance, and our own Safeguarding Policy.

We are committed to doing all that we reasonably can to promote and maintain a safer culture within our church community, ensuring that safer recruitment practices are in place and that safeguarding training is made available to all staff and volunteers working with children.

We are also committed to ensuring that we respond promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation, that those who are the subject of safeguarding concerns are treated with respect and dignity and receive appropriate care and support, and that we respond well to those who may pose a present risk to others.

We take complaints about any aspect of safeguarding seriously. We view complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve our policy and procedures and the support we offer.

What to do if you have a complaint

If you are not satisfied with the handling of a safeguarding concern or allegation, please speak to the church leader or Safeguarding Coordinator (see Appendix G).

Network Church will always work with and take the advice of the police and Children's Services.

Each case is individual, and we will work with all parties to offer any pastoral support where that is helpful.

Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, once the complaint has been investigated the Safeguarding Coordinator will meet with the complainant to tell them the outcome.

Should you be unhappy with the outcome of the action taken with your complaint then you will be able to put your complaint to the church Trustees who will take the complaints process further.

Please note that this procedure is not intended to provide a process for the resolution of safeguarding concerns or allegations. These should be reported to the Children's Group Leader, or if they can not be contacted immediately, speak to your church leader or Safeguarding Coordinator (see Appendix G).

TYPES & INDICATORS OF ABUSE

Physical Abuse	Includes....	Some of the key indicators
Physical abuse is anything that causes physical hurt or harm to a children's or young people's bodies	• Hitting, slapping and beating. • Shaking, pinching, throwing and pushing. • Kicking, biting, burning, drowning and hair pulling. • Squeezing, suffocating, poisoning and using inappropriate restraint. • Parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. • Inappropriate use of restraint techniques or other physical sanctions. • Isolation or confinement.	• Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them. • Cuts, lacerations, puncture wounds, open wounds, welts. • Bruising and discolouration, particularly if there is a lot of bruising of different ages and in places not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc. • Bruising in unusual places (e.g. around the mouth), in unusual patterns (e.g. symmetrical) or in particular shapes (e.g. fingertip bruising or belt marks). • Black eyes, burns, broken bones and skull fractures. • If the person is seen to have injuries that recur or are in the same place on more than one occasion or are without plausible explanation. • Any injury that has not received medical attention or been properly cared for. • Poor skin condition or poor skin hygiene. • Loss of hair, loss of weight and change of appetite. • Repeated or unexplained tummy pains. • Person flinches at physical contact and/or keeps fully covered, even in hot weather. • Person appears frightened or subdued in the presence of a particular person or people.
Emotional Abuse	Includes....	Some of the key indicators
The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.	• Mocking, coercing, threatening or controlling behaviour. • Bullying, intimidation, harassment or humiliation. • The lack of privacy or choice, denial of dignity, deprivation of social contact or deliberate isolation. • Making someone feel worthless, a lack of love or affection or ignoring the person. • Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. Emotional abuse may well be indicative of other forms of abuse.	• Changes in mood, attitude and behaviour. • Becoming quiet, clingy or withdrawn or conversely becoming aggressive or angry for no apparent reason. • Denial and hesitation to talk openly. • Excessive fear or anxiety • Behaviour such as rocking, hair twisting or thumb sucking. • Changes in sleep pattern or persistent tiredness. • Loss of appetite. • Low self-esteem, helplessness or passivity. • Confusion or disorientation. • Implausible stories and attention seeking behaviour. • Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults.

	All forms of abuse have an emotional component.	Running away, school non-attendance, stealing or lying.
Sexual Abuse	Includes....	Some of the key indicators
Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. No one should enter a sexual relationship with someone for whom they have pastoral responsibility or hold a position of trust.	- Rape, sexual assault or sexual acts to which the person has not consented, could not consent or was pressurised into consenting. - Indecent assault, incest, being forced to touch another person in a sexual manner without consent. - Making sexual remarks, suggestions and teasing. - Indecent exposure, being forced to watch pornographic material or sexual acts. - Filming or photographing a child in sexual poses or acts. - Enforced or coerced nakedness or inappropriate photography of a person in sexually explicit ways. - Being spied on while a person is undertaking or receiving personal care activities. 'Sexting', grooming and using social media to share inappropriate content.	- Emotional distress. - Preoccupation with anything sexual and age-inappropriate knowledge of sexual behaviour. - Mood, attitude or behaviour changes. - Expressions of feelings of guilt or shame. - Itching, soreness, bruises or lacerations, particularly around the genital areas. - Difficulty in walking or sitting, or unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding. - Unexplained venereal disease or genital infections. - A child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults. - Disturbed sleep patterns. - Torn, stained or bloody underclothing. - Significant changes in sexual behaviour or outlook. - A very young girl or a woman who lacks mental capacity to consent to intercourse becomes pregnant. - Underage Pregnancy/Termination.
Neglect	Includes....	Some of the key indicators
A person's wellbeing is impaired and their care needs (physical and/or psychological) are not met. In a child, neglect is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.	- Failing to provide access to appropriate health, social care or education services. - Failing to provide a warm, safe and comfortable environment. - Ignoring medical or physical care needs, including not providing adequate food or or appropriate clothing. - Leaving alone or unsupervised.	- Looking unkempt or dirty and has poor personal hygiene. - Malnourished, has sudden or continuous weight loss and is dehydrated – constant hunger, stealing or gorging on food. - Dressed inappropriately for the weather conditions. - Dirt, urine or faecal smells. - Developmental delay. - Home environment does not meet basic needs (for example no heating or lighting). - Untreated medical conditions

AWARENESS OF OTHER FORMS OF ABUSE OR EXPLOITATION

There are many other types of abuse to be aware of, we list some of these below. Do chat to a team member if you are unsure about anything. Please remember you do not have to be an 'expert' and identify the type of abuse, you are only responsible for seeing some sign of abuse and then reporting that to someone on your team. These indicators of abuse are to raise your awareness.

Domestic Abuse	Includes....	Some of the key indicators
Any threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults or young people, who are or have been intimate partners, family members or extended family members, regardless of age, gender or sexuality or social status. Rarely is domestic abuse a one-off incident.	- Physical, psychological, sexual or financial abuse. - Patterns of controlling and coercive behaviour. - Child to parent/carer abuse. - Abuse towards elderly family members. - Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). - Honour based violence, committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and community. - Forced marriage. - Children can experience it by seeing and/or hearing the abuse, or seeing the injuries or distress afterwards, as well as being directly targeted.	- Unexplained bruises or injuries. - Unusually quiet or withdrawn. - Fear, anxiety or panic attacks. - Frequent absences from work or other commitments. - Stops talking about their partner/family member. - Is always accompanied by their partner/family member. - Becomes isolated and withdrawn from friends and other family. - Doesn't have control over possessions or money. - Anxious about being away from home and rushes to get back.
Radicalisation	Includes....	Some of the key indicators
The process that moves a person to legitimise their support for or use of violence. The promise of an ideology which gives purpose and belonging. Can take place over a long time period or happen quickly. The person may not understand that they have been radicalised.	- Exposure to violent and inappropriate material. - Being recruited in person – online or face-to-face. - Joining extremist organisations. - Justifying the use of violence to solve societal issues. - Seeking to recruit others to an extremist ideology. Extremist recruiters speak directly to the vulnerabilities people experience at times in their lives, e.g. sense of not belonging, low self-esteem, issues at home, involvement with gangs/criminal groups or identity crisis with their cultural heritage.	- The expression of extremist views - Accessing extremist websites/social networks or possessing extremist, violent literature. - Behavioural changes, anger and use of inappropriate language. - Becoming disrespectful and intolerant of others. - Using words and phrases that sound scripted, talking about 'us' and 'them'. - Sympathies, admiration or associations with known extremists. - Advocating violent actions or means. - Changing name or friends.

Child Sexual Exploitation	Includes....	Some of the key indicators
A type of sexual abuse. The child is given gifts, drugs, money, status and affection, in exchange for performing sexual activities. The tricking or grooming of children to believe they are in a loving and consensual relationship. Can be both in person or online. The child may not understand that they have been abused. They may seem to be condoning or even encouraging the abusive behaviour.	• The use of violence, coercion and intimidation to force the child into sexual activity. • Invitations to parties where drugs and alcohol are freely given in exchange for sex. • Deceiving children into producing online indecent images/films of themselves. • Children being used to recruit other children into sexual exploitation. • Children being trafficked into or within the UK to be sexually exploited. • Sexual exploitation as part of gang initiation, status, protection or punishment.	• Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc. they can't or won't explain. • Unhealthy or inappropriate sexual behaviour. • Swings and changes in mood or character, being secretive. • Gang-association and/or isolation from friends and social networks. • Relationships with controlling or significantly older individuals or groups. • Sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy. • Being frightened of some people, places or situations. • Physical signs of abuse, like bruises or bleeding in their genital or anal area. • Alcohol or drug misuse. • Going missing for periods of time. • Skipping school.
Self-Harm	Includes....	Some of the key indicators
The intentional damage or injury to a person's own body. It is often used as a way of coping with, expressing or releasing overwhelming emotions and distress. It may also be about converting emotional pain into physical pain, expressing something that is hard to put into words or feeling that they are in control.	• Cutting • Burning • Bruising • Scratching • Hair pulling • Poisoning • Overdosing • Intentionally putting themselves in risky situations • Overeating or undereating • Inserting objects into their own body • Hitting themselves or walls • Exercising excessively • Self-neglect (adults) Some may self-harm to create a reason to physically care for themselves, or to feel something instead of numbness or disconnection.	• Unexplained cuts, bruises and burns, which are likely to be on wrists, arms, thighs and chest. • Keeping themselves fully covered, even in hot weather. • Signs of depression, including low mood, tearfulness and a lack of motivation or interest. • Becoming withdrawn and a reluctance to speak to others. • Weight loss or weight gain due to changes in eating habits, including being secretive about eating. • Low self-esteem, such as an inclination to blame themselves for external problems and expressing that they are not good enough. • Alcohol or drugs misuse. • Bald patches from pulling out hair.

Spiritual Abuse	Includes....	Some of the key indicators
The inappropriate use of religious belief or practice. Coercion and control of one individual by another in a spiritual context. The abuse of trust or misuse of power by someone in a position of spiritual authority (such as a minister).	• Forcing religious ideas or practices on to people, particular those who may be vulnerable to such practices. • Extreme pastoral interference in personal matters – reducing individual choice and responsibility. • The misuse of scripture or power to control behaviour and pressure to conform. • Oppressive teaching and isolation from others. • The requirement of obedience to the abuser, or the suggestion that the abuser has a “divine” position. • Intrusive healing and deliverance ministries, which may result in people experiencing emotional, physical or sexual harm. • The denial of the right to have a faith or the opportunity to grow in the knowledge and love of God.	It is often difficult for churches to identify spiritual abuse because its definition may be more an issue of personal interpretation of common practices in the church or denomination. • Pastoral practices that ‘force’ people into accepting religious values or ideas. • A feeling of confusion and uncertainty as to who, what or why they believe any more. • Deeply scarred – emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. • Feelings of betrayal leading to deep distrust, self-isolation and powerlessness. • A changed and damaged view of church – loss of church as a safe space.

Who may abuse?

- The people who tend to abuse children are often known to that child, either related, or known to them as a friendly adult or in a position of trust. It is VERY RARELY A STRANGER
- Often it is someone who knows the child/young person, e.g. parent, carer, baby-sitter, sibling, relative, or friend of the family.
- Sometimes it is someone in authority; such as a teacher, youth leader, children's worker or a church worker. All these are positions of trust!
- Sometimes it is paedophiles and others who set out to join organisations -often churches- to obtain access to children. Remember that such people are often very plausible and may outwardly seem to be the last person you would suspect.
- It can be men and women, other children and young people.

The church may have a significant role of pastoral care for the abuser, and those close to him or her, as well as support for the leader/person who has disclosed the abuse. But the primary concern is ALWAYS the safety of the child/young person.

What to do when abuse is disclosed

How to react when a child/young person wants to talk about abuse

General Points

- Accept what the child/young person says (however unlikely the story may sound)
- Keep calm
- Look at the child/young person directly
- Be aware that the child or young person may have been threatened
- Listen to the child – DO NOT directly question him/her.
- Watch your body language, try not to look shocked or move away from the child.
- Above all listen. Stay calm and don't act shocked and horrified
- Show acceptance and belief of the child
- Reassure them you will help
- Don't offer confidentiality
- Don't ask leading questions like 'Did he do X Y etc?'
- Do try to reflect back what they say to check you have heard correctly

Do not say

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it
- Are you sure this is true?
- Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- Never make statements such as "I am shocked - don't tell anyone else" or "do you realise you could get (name of alleged perpetrator) into a lot of trouble about this." This is a matter for others to deal with.

Concluding

- Again, reassure the child/young person that they were right to tell you.
- Let the child/young person know what you are going to do next, and that you will let them know what happens
- Immediately refer to the Children's Group Leader, or if they can not be contacted immediately, speak to your church leader or Safeguarding Coordinator (see Appendix G).
- All suspicions, observations and investigations should be kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know.

DO NOT inform the parents/carers of the disclosure when they come to collect their child.

Although this may be very difficult for you, especially if you know the family, you must not tell them. There are many reasons for this:

- Trained personnel will be better placed to inform the family of what has happened. This is devastating news for a family to receive. As a parent they may be so distressed by the news that it compromises their driving, or they could go to the accused and take matters into their own hands and find themselves on the wrong side of the law rather than the abuser.
- You could compromise the case should it go to court.
- The child may have been too scared to give the real name and used a different name to protect the identity of the parent or other person. Children who are being abused are blackmailed and threatened with harm to themselves and people they love if they tell anyone the identity of their abuser.
- Cases have been compromised by parents/carers going back to their home, destroying evidence and silencing their child/ren.

Remember to make notes as soon as possible - (preferably) within an hour of the interview, writing down exactly what the child/young person said and when he/she said it, what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. description of activity). Use the language they did – do not change what they may have called particular body parts to a grown up medical version, stick as closely to the real conversation as possible.

Record dates and times of these events and when you made the record.

Give your record to the person you are accountable to who will then contact the relevant people.

Last but not least you may need to chat to someone pastorally about what you have experienced. Whoever you feel most appropriate for you to go to and share this with is fine, however we would ask that you do not use the real names of the people involved. You can also meet with the Safeguarding Coordinator (see Appendix G)

Remember

- Do not panic. Do not delay. Do not start to investigate.
- In most scenarios, you will just have collected a small piece of information. It will be for others, with more training and experience, to evaluate this information.
- Over reaction can be extremely harmful to the child or young person, the accused, the group, the authorities and yourself!
- Your immediate responsibility is to contact the Children's Group Leader, or if not available contact the church leader or Safeguarding Coordinator (see Appendix G).
- Do not do anything by yourself.
- Following the correct procedure is vital to the child's best interests. A record should be made as soon as possible, giving accurate details of what the child said, when and to whom.
- If you are concerned that one of the children's group leaders are involved in any of the allegations, you should approach the church leader or Safeguarding Coordinator (See Appendix G).

- Only in a case where serious and recent physical or sexual abuse is talked of and you suspect the child is in immediate danger, and you cannot contact the children's leaders, church leader or safeguarding coordinator (or you feel the situation has not been dealt with appropriately) should you directly contact the local social services or the police.

How the church will respond

As soon as one of the above people have been informed, he/she will collate the information to assess what action should be taken.

In cases where there is possible 'suspicion' of abuse the church will often take advice from their team of specialist child protection advisors. Local Children's Services will be contacted to seek advice if needed.

If there is a real cause for concern regarding abuse, it's important to remember that all types of abuse are considered a crime. Church leaders and the Safeguarding Coordinator have a responsibility to take action and not leave this 'inside' the church. Police or local Children's Services will be contacted and their involvement requested.

Any pastoral or counselling support will be offered to the parties involved.

Supporting known offenders in the church

Faith communities are unique in that they are one of the few places where those who have sexually offended against children are in the same building as children themselves. Known offenders have been successfully integrated into the life of faith communities where they have received support and guidance, agreed to abide by certain boundaries and are welcomed and accepted. Where a place of worship knows about a person's past offending behaviour this will make it easier to safeguard children and adults who might be at risk of harm.

Organisations are not expected to be able to carry out a professional risk assessment on a sex offender. This will have been carried out by the Prison or Probation services or other professional agency. However key people within the organisation can contribute to the discussions for management of risk if requested.

If the person does not keep to the boundaries set, the police will be contacted for advice. If the person leaves the organisation, the statutory agencies, such as probation, police child protection team, or Children's and Adult Social Services, will be informed.

Risk Management Meeting

For any individual who poses a risk to be allowed to attend activities run by Network Church, it is vital that robust measures are put in place to ensure that children, young people and adults are safeguarded.

It is our policy that each person will meet with a church leader and the Safeguarding Co-ordinator to review both the support they need and the activities they wish to attend. The details of previous offending behaviour must form part of the assessment and may need to be obtained from police, probation etc. The meeting may include the probation officer or other agencies involved.

The outcome of this meeting will be a written contract setting out behavioural boundaries they sign and agree to abide by, as well as the provision of appropriate supervision and support. These safeguards are in the interests of everyone - those at risk, the offender who may be making strenuous efforts to change, and the organisation.

At all times the safety of the child or young person is paramount when assessing the risk an individual may pose. No one has an automatic right to work with or have access to children or young people.

Once a contract or 'Care Plan' is in place this is regularly reviewed to see if it is achieving the aims set out in it. We will work closely with the police and probation services to review progress and contribute information.

Appendix A *Code of Conduct - Working with Children & Young People*

This Code outlines the expectations of Network Church for all those who work or volunteer with children/young people, as they are acting in a position of trust. We want to ensure that our church is a place where children and young people can not only be safe but feel safe. Following this code will help to protect children and young people from abuse and inappropriate behaviour from adults. It will also help staff and volunteers maintain the standards of behaviour expected of them and will reduce the possibility of unfounded allegations of abuse being made against them.

When working with young people, it is important to:

- Treat all children/youth with respect and dignity.
- Ensure that your own language, tone of voice and body language is respectful.
- Respect a child's/young person's right to personal privacy.
- Always aim to work within sight of another adult.
- Ensure that children and young people know who they can talk to about a personal concern.
- Respond appropriately to a child or young person who needs comforting, but make sure there are other adults around.
- Administer any necessary First Aid with others around, by the designated trained First Aider.
- Obtain consent for any photographs/videos to be taken, shown or displayed.
- Record any concerning incidents and give the information to your group leader.
- Always share with your group leader and/or the safeguarding coordinator any concerns about a child or young person or the behaviour of another worker.

When working with children or young people, you should not do any of the following:

- Do not initiate physical contact such as hugs. If comfort is needed a hand on the shoulder is appropriate.
- Do not encourage any child/young person to behave in sexually provocative or suggestive ways.
- Do not engage with a child/young person privately in calls, texts, social media platforms. Always message in groups or with another adult copied in. Do not contact young people after 8pm unless there is a concern about their safety – but still copy in another adult.
- Do not act, speak, or conduct yourself in a sexually provocative or suggestive way, either directly towards children, or with other adults when you are with youth, or engage in any sexual behaviour at all with children/young people.
- Do not invade their privacy while washing or going to the toilet or act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive.
- Do not use any form of physical punishment, scapegoating, ridiculing or rejecting of a child, group or adult.
- Do not permit abusive peer activities, e.g. Initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying.
- Do not show favouritism to any one child/young person or group.
- Do not allow a child/young person to involve you in excessive attention seeking, attention that is overtly physical or sexual in nature. It is always your responsibility to maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Do not give lifts to under 18's on their own or on your own. If this is absolutely necessary, phone the parent, guardian or another team member and leave the call going for the duration of the lift.
- Do not smoke/drink alcohol when responsible for young people, or offer to give/buy them cigarettes/alcohol.
- Do not share sleeping accommodation with children/young people (on camps/retreats for example).
- Do not invite a young person to your home alone – anything hosted at your home should be a group activity.
- Do not allow unknown adults access to youth. Visitors should always be accompanied by a known person.

Please sign to confirm that you have read this leaflet and are willing to abide by this Code of Conduct.

Full name:

Group you volunteer with:

Signed:

Date:

Appendix B *Incident Form*

This form should be completed immediately after any accident or significant incident. The worker should discuss with the Group Leader what follow up action is necessary.

Day, date and time of incident:

Name, address and age of those involved in the incident:

(use extra sheet if necessary and attach to form)

Name:	Name:
Age:	Age:
Address:	Address:

Location of incident: _____

Name of the group: _____

Person(s) normally responsible for the group: (Name, address and telephone number):

Person(s) supervising the group at the time of the incident (names, addresses and telephone numbers):

Name:	Name:
Tel No:	Tel No:
Address:	Address:

Who witnessed the incident? (Names, addresses, telephone numbers and ages if under 16. Normally only two witnesses would be needed.)

Name:	Name:
Tel No:	Tel No:
Address:	Address:
Age if under 16	Age if under 16

Describe the accident/incident including injuries received and any first aid or medical treatment given:

Has any defective equipment been retained:

YES NO None involved (Please tick)

If YES, where is it being kept and by whom:

What action has been taken to prevent a recurrence of the incident:

Is the room still safe to use: YES NO (Please tick)

Is the equipment still safe to use: YES NO (Please tick)

Who else should be informed: _____

Have they been informed: YES NO (Please tick)

If so, when and by and whom:

Signature of person in charge of group at time of accident/incident:

Signed: _____ Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Form seen by Group Leader:

Signed: _____ Print Name: _____

Date: _____

CONFIDENTIAL

Name of Child/Young Person: _____

Address: _____

Date of Birth: ____ / ____ / ____

Name of Person Reporting Incident: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____ **Time of incident:** _____

Sequence of Events/Actual Words Used/Observations:

Action taken (including person(s) contacted):

Date: ____/____/____ Time: _____

Notes: _____

Appendix D *Childrens Groups Register example sheet*

Date:			
Theme:			
Helpers:			
Name of child:	Tick if attended	Tick if attended	Tick if attended
Remarks: e.g. any visitors, more detail on the theme, activities undertaken, response from children.			

Appendix E *Health and Information Form for Children and Young People*

Childs Name.....

Date of Birth.....

Address

.....

.....

Name of
Parents/Guardians.....

Phone Number

Email address

Allergies and treatment

.....

.....

.....

Medical Conditions we need to be aware of and treatment

.....

.....

.....

Anything else we need to know that will help us to make your child feel safe and settled in our children’s groups ie: fears, phobias, concerns, likes, interests etc

.....

.....

.....

.....

Signed Date.....

Relationship to child/young person

If you have anything else you wish to talk to us about, please do not hesitate to contact the children’s group leaders.

*Please see the Network Church website for details of our **privacy statement**. www.networkchurch.org*

Appendix F *Activity Risk Assessment*

Title of activity	
Date of activity	
Location of activity	
Responsible leader of activity	
Other helpers involved	
Date of Risk Assessment	
Person completing Risk Assessment	

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you doing already?	Do you need to do anything else to manage this risk?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Date Completed

Appendix G *Network contact numbers*

Children's Groups Leaders:

Rock Club:

- Nina: 07879 817531
- Pam: 07875 621401

Boulders:

- YanYan: 07722 094297
- Eileen: 07460 296617

Asteroids:

- Peggy: 07877 007408

Church Leader:

- Trevor: 07934 530473

Safeguarding Coordinator:

- Elizabeth:

Email: elizabethharris05@gmail.com

Telephone: 01727 812288 / 07950 462518

Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator:

- Nina:

Email: ninaviljoen@gmail.com

Telephone: 01727 848804 / 07879 817531

Hertfordshire Social Services 24 Hour Emergency Helpline:

- Telephone: 0300 123 4043

Appendix H *Useful organisations*

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Tel</u>	<u>Website/ Email</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Childline	0800 1111	www.childline.org.uk	24 hour line for children and young people to talk about things worrying them
NSPCC – Child Protection helpline	0808 800 5000	www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline	24 hour line for adults worried about the safety of a child
ThirtyoneEight	0303003 1111	www.thirtyoneeight.org	Offers help, information and advice to churches and other faith organisations.

Type of Abuse	Organisation	Number	Email/ Website	Notes
Domestic Violence	Women's Aid	0808 2000 247	Womensaid.org.uk	24 hour National DV helpline
Forced marriage and HBV	Forced Marriage Unit	020 7008 0151	Haloproject.org.uk/forced-marriage-unit-W21page-31	Website has links to other support organisations
Female Genital Mutilation	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office	0207 008 1500	fgmenquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk	If you are concerned that a British citizen may be taken overseas for the purpose of FGM
Female Genital Mutilation	Forward	0208 960 4000 ext 1	www.forwarduk.org.uk	Provide support, counselling and safe space for girls and women to talk about their FMG experiences.
Female Genital Mutilation	NSPCC	0800 028 3550	fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk	If you are concerned that a child is at risk of, or is a victim of, FGM
Human Trafficking	NSPCC Child Trafficking Advice Centre	0808 800 5000	help@nspcc.org.uk	Monday – Friday 09:30am - 4:30pm
Human Trafficking	Salvation Army Trafficking helpline	0300 3038151		24 hour/ 7 days a week. Call this number if you suspect someone is a victim of Human Trafficking.
Human Trafficking	NRM – National Referral Mechanism for Human Trafficking		www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk	National Crime Agency gives more details on their website of referral agencies that can be used to support those affected by Human Trafficking
Modern Slavery	The Modern Slavery Helpline	0800 0121 700	www.modernslaveryhelpline.org	Arm of the anti-slavery charity Unseen.