



Safeguarding Policy

1. River Church is committed to the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of all the children and vulnerable adults in their care and to provide a safe environment for them to thrive. All children and vulnerable adults will be valued, respected and listened to regardless of their gender, disability, race, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.
2. Safeguarding is the responsibility of every person in River Church.
3. The leadership and trustees fully endorse the safeguarding policies and procedures and support the safeguarding coordinators in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children and vulnerable adults.
4. We want all persons working with children and vulnerable adults in River Church to be supported to care for children in a way that promotes their health, well-being and safety.
5. We believe in working closely with Thirtyone:eight (formally known as the Church's Child Protection Advisory Service or CCPAS) and with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board of each congregation, in implementing any child protection plans.
6. If we discover or suspect a child is suffering harm we will notify children's social care (formerly social services) or the police so that they can take appropriate action to protect the child.
7. We will investigate all allegations that a worker or volunteer may have harmed a child or vulnerable adult, involving children's social care, adult social care and the police as necessary in line with this document.
8. We will review our policies and procedures at least every two years to make sure they are still relevant and effective.



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1. Child Safeguarding Procedures.

1. We consider anyone aged under 18 to be a child.
2. There will be a nominated person for child protection who will be responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection or welfare of children and adults at risk across River Church. This person will be known as the **Safeguarding Officer**. In addition, each River Church will have a nominated person to be known as the **Safeguarding Coordinator** and a deputy, responsible for the protection and welfare of the children in their church.
3. We will implement safe recruiting policies to ensure that workers and volunteers are suitable to work with children and vulnerable adults by following national and local guidance.
4. All persons working regularly with children and vulnerable adults will receive safeguarding training. This will include information on recognising where there are concerns, where to get advice and what to do and how to respond to disclosures of abuse.
5. We will do everything possible to make River Church a safe and caring environment by having a code of Good Practice which will be given to all workers and they will be expected to comply with it.
6. Every week each church will:
 - Ensure signing in sheets are available, completed and filed.
 - Check ratios of children to adults.
 - Make accident/incident forms available, and check they are filled in if necessary.
 - Inform the Church Safeguarding Coordinator if there has been any accidents /



- Incidents / concerns.
- Store all completed sheets in the church office.
- Display the information about who to talk to if there is a safeguarding concern.

7. Workers and volunteers will be given Job Descriptions highlighting their role and responsibilities including their responsibilities for safeguarding.

2. Code of behaviour when working with children

You should:

- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity.
- Watch your own language, tone of voice and body language.
- Aim to work within sight of another adult.
- Inform another adult when you take a child to the toilet. If possible arrange toilet breaks and go in groups.
- If possible ensure there are both male and female workers.
- Respond warmly if a child needs comforting, make sure there are other adults around.
- Administer any necessary first aid with other adults around.
- When it is necessary to restrain a child who is harming themselves or others, use the least possible force. Inform the parents as soon as possible.
- Record any concerns to your team leader. sign and date any records.
- Avoid being on your own with a child.
- Report any unsafe practices to the safeguarding Coordinator.

You should not:

- Use physical punishment. This is illegal.
- Invade a child's privacy whilst toileting.
- Touch a child inappropriately or obtrusively.
- Ridicule or reject a child.
- Show favouritism to one child or group of children.
- Invite a child or young person to your home alone.
- Allow unknown adults unsupervised access to the children.
- Permit abusive peer activity e.g. bullying.

Transporting children by private car:

- Children should not be transported in a private car without prior consent from their parent/carer.
- All drivers transporting children on church activities must be fully comprehensively insured and have checked with their insurer that they are covered for such activities.
- If a child is known to have a disability or special need consideration should be given as to whether a non-driving adult is needed to accompany them.



Recommended staffing levels

0-2 yrs	1 adult for every 3 children 1:3
2-3 yrs	1 adult for every 4 children 1:4
3-8 yrs	1 adult for every 8 children 1:8
8 yrs and over	1 adult for the first 8 children, with an extra person needed for each extra 12 children

However, each group should aim to have at least 2 adults, ideally 1 male and 1 female. Young people aged 16-17 may count as an adult helper but should not be left unsupervised. Young people under 16 may help out but do not count and may not be given responsibility for children.

Additional Guidance when working with the youth (11-18)

Communications:

There are many ways to communicate; texting, email, phone call, WhatsApp, Facebook etc. Permission needs to be obtained from parents / carers regarding which form of communication they are happy being used with their child.

The following notes should help to clarify what is appropriate when communicating with young people:

- Keep logistical messages short and to the point. e.g. Don't forget cell group on Thursday.
- More pastoral messages or matters of discipline should be between the same sex.
- Avoid ambiguity or unhealthy dependency. Do not end message with kisses.
- Be aware of the time you are sending the message. Make sure it is age appropriate.

Relationships:

It is understood that some youth leaders and young people will have friendships that have developed outside of Edge activities. However, a youth leader may not pursue a relationship with a Edge member i.e. under 18 year old, this is an abuse of trust. The relationship must wait until the child reaches 18 and then this needs to be open and accountable to the Edge leaders and the Safeguarding Coordinator.



3. Definitions of Child Abuse

River Church recognise the following as definitions of abuse:

Abuse

Any action by another person that causes significant harm to a child.

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse causes harm to the body. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning or suffocating. It may be done deliberately or recklessly, or be the result of a deliberate failure to prevent the injury occurring. It also includes FGM.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent or severe failure to meet a child/vulnerable adult's basic physical or psychological needs. It will result in the the serious impairment of the child's health and development.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves a child/vulnerable adult being forced or coerced into participating in or watching sexual activity, including watching pornography. It is not necessary for the child to be aware that the activity is sexual and the apparent consent of the child is irrelevant. This also includes sexual exploitation, trafficking and grooming.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse occurs where there is a persistent emotional ill treatment or rejection. It can be in person or online.

It causes severe and adverse effects on the child/vulnerable adult's behaviour and emotional development, resulting in low self-worth.

Some level of emotional abuse is present in all forms of abuse. This can also include witnessing domestic violence in the home.



Spiritual Abuse

As a faith organisation River Church is aware of the risk of spiritual abuse in its own membership, and in other churches and faith groups. Spiritual abuse can occur in a variety of ways between many different people and situations.

In 2013 spiritual abuse was defined as *“Coercion and control of one individual by another in a spiritual context. The target experiences spiritual abuse as a deeply emotional personal attack. This abuse may include: manipulation and exploitation, enforced accountability, censorship of decision making, requirements for secrecy and silence, pressure to conform, misuse of scripture or the pulpit to control behaviour, requirement of obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that the abuser has a ‘divine’ position, isolation from others, especially those external to the abusive context.”* (Oakley, 2013 in Oakley & Kinmond, 2013 p21) courtesy of CCPAS leaflet ‘Help . . . I want to understand spiritual abuse’.

4. Recognising signs of abuse

These signs do not necessarily indicate that a child has been abused, there may be perfectly innocent explanations for most of the following signs. However, they may help adults recognise that something is wrong. The possibility of abuse should be investigated if a child shows a number of these symptoms, or any of them to a marked degree:

Indicators of possible Sexual Abuse

Being overly affectionate or knowledgeable in a sexual way inappropriate to the child's age.

Medical problems such as chronic itching, pain in the genitals, venereal diseases.

Other extreme reactions, such as depression, self-mutilation, suicide attempts, running away, overdoses, anorexia.

Personality changes such as becoming insecure or clinging.

Regressing to younger behaviour patterns such as thumb sucking or bringing out discarded cuddly toys.

Sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating.

Being isolated or withdrawn.

Inability to concentrate.

Lack of trust or fear of someone they know well, such as not wanting to be alone with a babysitter or child minder.

Starting to bed wet again, day/nightmares.

Become worried about clothing being removed.



Suddenly drawing sexually explicit pictures.
Trying to be 'ultra-good' or perfect; overreacting to criticism.

Indicators of possible Physical Abuse

Unexplained recurrent injuries or burns.
Improbable excuses or refusal to explain injuries.
Wearing clothes to cover injuries, even in hot weather.
Bald patches.
Chronic running away.
Fear of medical help or examination.
Self-harming.
Aggression towards others.
Fear of physical contact - shrinking back if touched.
Admitting that they are punished, but the punishment is excessive. (such as a child being beaten every night to 'make him study')
Fear of suspected abuser being contacted.

Indicators of possible Emotional Abuse

Delay in emotional development.
Sudden speech disorders.
Continual self-deprecation. ('I'm stupid, ugly, worthless, etc')
Overreaction to mistakes.
Extreme fear of any new situation.
Inappropriate response to pain. ('I deserve this')
Abnormal behaviour. (rocking, hair twisting, self-harming)
Extremes of passivity or aggression.

Indicators of possible Neglect

Constant hunger.
Poor personal hygiene.
Constant tiredness.
Poor state of clothing.
Emaciation.
Untreated medical problems.
No social relationships.
Compulsive scavenging.
Destructive tendencies.



Note:

A child may be subjected to a combination of different kinds of abuse.

Nearly all forms of abuse include emotional abuse.

It is also possible that a child may show no outward signs and hide what is happening from everyone

5. Reporting concerns about a child.

Reporting minor concerns:

If a member of staff or a volunteer has minor concerns about a child's welfare they should record this on a Records of Concern form and give it to their Safeguarding Coordinator.

There will be children who are not suffering from significant risk of harm or abuse, perhaps you notice small one off concerns, but over time it might be that a pattern of small concerns become a worry. Those children who are in need of extra support and care can be helped through support offered to parents who may be struggling with a wide range of issues. Poor parenting can come from many pressures on families, and with the help of universal services in the area, go on to improve and provide a good home for their family. Tracking concerns in the Record of Concerns system will monitor this. However, if there is no improvement due to the parent not engaging, and a child continues to struggle and not thrive then this will need to be recorded more formally and referred to Children's Services.

No professional, staff or volunteer should assume that someone else will pass on information which they think may be critical to keeping a child safe.

Reporting serious concerns or managing a disclosure:

If anyone at River Church believe that urgent action is needed because, for example, a child is in immediate danger please call children's services or 999 if necessary.

If a child tells you they are suffering from abuse, then you will need to manage that disclosure sensitively and record what you were told ready to refer it to the police or children's services as needed. Remember to record what the child told you in their own words, stay as close to what you were told without adding your opinions.

- Listen to what the child has to say with an open mind, stay calm.
- Do not ask probing or leading questions designed to get the child to reveal more.
- Do not put words into the Childs mouth.
- Never stop a child who is freely recalling significant events.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling you.



- Make note of the discussion, taking care to record the timing, setting and people present, as well as what was said.
- Do not ask children to write a statement.
- Never promise the child that what they have told you can be kept secret. Explain that you have responsibility to report what the child has said to someone else.
- The safeguarding Coordinator in your church must be informed immediately, and/or a member of the leadership team.
- Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone, including parents, other than those nominated above. A written record of the concerns should be made in accordance with these procedures and kept in a secure place.

Under no circumstances should a member of staff carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse but should follow the procedures outlined below:

- The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse should record their concerns or the disclosure on a Record of Concerns form.
- They should report concerns as soon as possible to the Church Safeguarding Coordinator.
- The Coordinator along with the Safeguarding Officer shall seek advice from Thirtyone:eight and if necessary inform the local authority children's services.
- The Church Safeguarding Officer should then immediately inform the Trustee with responsibility for safeguarding.
- In the absence of the Church Safeguarding Coordinator or, if the suspicions in any way involve the Church Safeguarding Coordinator, then the report should be made to the River Church Safeguarding Officer or Trustee with responsibility for Safeguarding.
- It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make a direct referral to the safeguarding agencies or seek advice from Thirtyone:eight, although the Leadership hope that members of River Church will use this procedure. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Safeguarding Coordinator/Deputy has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Safeguarding Coordinator(s) as to the appropriateness of a referral they are free to contact an outside agency direct. We hope by making this statement that the Leadership demonstrate its commitment to effective safeguarding and the protection of all those who are vulnerable.
- All those involved in any allegation of abuse should not speak to anyone outside the investigation, including the parents/carers.

Local Authorities children's services:

Maidenhead: 01628 683150, out of hours 01344 786543

Marlow: 01494 475246

Slough: 01753 690898

The Journey: 0300 200 1006

Thames Valley Police, Non-emergency: 101



Thirtyone:eight: 0303 003 1111

We commit to ensure that any significant concern will be passed on to the appropriate agency, such as the police or Children's Services.

Allegations of sexual abuse

If there are concerns regarding sexual abuse or a disclosure from a child regarding sexual abuse then the Designated Safeguarding Officer/Deputy will immediately contact the police or children's services. This must not be shared with the parent/carer and the professional agencies will take over this process.

6. Allegations of abuse against a person working with children.

If any member of staff or volunteer has concerns about the behaviour or conduct of another individual working within the group or organisation including:

- Behaving in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to
- work with children the nature of the allegation or concern should be reported to the
- Safeguarding Coordinator for dealing with allegations within the organisation immediately.

The member of staff who has a concern about a team member, or to whom an allegation or concern is reported should not question the child or investigate the matter further.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer for River Church will report the matter to the Designated Officer within Children's Services at the Local Authority. This position was formally known as Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and the term is still often in use.

River Church will always report any member of staff or volunteer they have concerns about to the appropriate authorities depending on the seriousness of the situation. We will take all advice offered to us and co-operate fully.

All allegations must be made in writing, signed and dated.



7. Safe Recruitment

The Leadership will ensure all workers will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with government guidance on safe recruitment. This includes ensuring that:

- There is a written job description / person specification for the post.
- Those applying have completed an application form and a self-declaration form.
- Those short listed have been interviewed.
- Safeguarding has been discussed at interview.
- Written references have been obtained and followed up where appropriate.
- A DBS has been completed. (we will comply with Code of Practice requirements concerning the fair treatment of applicants and the handling of information)
- Qualifications where relevant have been verified.
- A suitable training programme is provided for the successful applicant.
- The applicant will be required to complete a probationary period.
- The applicant will be given a copy of the organisation's safeguarding policy and know how to report concerns.



Appendix 1: Seven Golden rules of information sharing

In March 2015, the government published revised practice guidance "*Information sharing Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers*". Below are the 7 golden rules of information sharing that this guidance recommends.

1. Remember that the Data Protection Act 1998 and human rights law are not barriers to justified information sharing, but provide a framework to ensure that personal information about living individuals is shared appropriately.
2. Be open and honest with the individual (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. Seek advice from other practitioners if you are in any doubt about sharing the information concerned, without disclosing the identity of the individual where possible.
4. Share with informed consent where appropriate and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, there is good reason to do so, such as where safety may be at risk. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case. When you are sharing or requesting personal information from someone, be certain of the basis upon which you are doing so. Where you have consent, be mindful that an individual might not expect information to be shared.
5. Consider safety and well-being: Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the individual and others who may be affected by their actions.
6. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure: Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those individuals who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely (see principles).
7. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.



Appendix 2: Other forms of abuse

Domestic Violence

Definition – (Home Office, 2013) *For the purpose of this policy domestic violence is defined as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional.*

Under the Serious Crime Act 2015, the government announced a new domestic violence law criminalising patterns of coercive, controlling and psychological abuse. The new offence carries a maximum sentence of 5 years' imprisonment, a fine or both.

Children are hugely affected by domestic abuse and violence, often going on to become victims of the violence themselves. However, the impact emotionally to children has been seen to cause significant harm to them. A high percentage of serious case reviews, and those children on child protection plans have domestic violence as a key concern.

Forced Marriage

Children from some communities in the UK are still being forced into marriage at a very young age and those of any age, especially those without mental capacity to make a choice. The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 makes it a criminal offence to force someone to marry. This includes taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the forced marriage takes place); marrying someone who lacks mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether they're pressured or not); Breaching a Forced Marriage Protection Order. Forcing someone to marry can result in a sentence of up to 7 years in prison.

Honour Based Violence

Honour based violence is a violent crime or incident which may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family or community.

It is often linked to family members or acquaintances who mistakenly believe someone has brought shame to their family or community by doing something that is not in keeping with the traditional beliefs of their culture. For example, honour based violence might be committed against people who: become involved with a boyfriend or girlfriend from a different culture or religion; want to get out of an arranged marriage; want to get out of a forced marriage; wear clothes or take part in activities that might not be considered traditional within a particular culture.

Women and girls are the most common victims of honour based violence however it can also affect men and boys. Crimes of 'honour' do not always include violence. Crimes committed in the name of 'honour' might include:



- domestic abuse
- threats of violence
- sexual or psychological abuse
- forced marriage
- being held against your will or taken somewhere you don't want to go
- assault

(Safe.Met.Police.UK)

Honour based violence will commonly start when children try to live and fit in a more westernised culture, starting relationships which causes shame and distress to the family. Take any concerns a person may have about their safety seriously and seek professional help immediately. Do not try to resolve this in anyway yourself.

Female Genital Mutilation

Between April and June 2015, there were 1,026 newly recorded cases of FGM in England, (Health & Social Care Information Centre). City University London figures suggest that nearly 10,000 girls under 14 years of age have undergone FGM in the UK. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 makes it illegal to: practice FGM in the UK; take girls who are British nationals or permanent residents of the UK abroad for FGM, whether or not it is lawful in the country of destination; aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad.

If you are concerned a child may be taken abroad for FGM, or that it may have already occurred please contact support helplines in Appendix 5.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Sexual exploitation can take many forms from the seemingly 'consensual' relationship where sex is exchanged for attention/affection, accommodation or gifts, to serious organised crime and child trafficking. What marks out exploitation is an imbalance of power within the relationship. The perpetrator always holds some kind of power over the victim, increasing the dependence of the victim as the exploitative relationship develops.

“Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive ‘something’ (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child’s immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person’s limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic



and/or emotional vulnerability". (From 'Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation', Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children.)

Trafficking

Human trafficking is essentially the recruitment, movement or receipt of a person by deception or coercion into a situation of exploitation, this may include:

- prostitution (or other forms of sexual exploitation)
- forced labour
- slavery
- servitude, or
- the removal of organs

Exploitation by radicalisers who promote violence involves the exploitation of susceptible people who are drawn into violent extremism by radicalisers. Violent extremists often use a persuasive rationale and charismatic individuals to attract people to their cause. The aim is to attract people to their reasoning, inspire new recruits and embed their extreme views and persuade vulnerable individuals of the legitimacy of their cause. The Prevent Strategy, launched in 2007, seeks to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It is the preventative strand of the government's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST.