



Children and Young People Safeguarding Policy	Approved by: River Church Trustees
Last Updated: June 2026	Review Date: May 2027

River Church Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and Procedures

All staff and volunteers must be made aware of this policy, and the process for reporting concerns, by issuing the policy at induction and having regular safeguarding training.

River Church has a responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people they come into contact with. The need for guidelines and procedures is important to ensure that this is done with understanding and clarity. The Leadership & Trustees of River Church fully endorse and support the safeguarding policies for children, and adults at risk, that are implemented across the Charity's churches' congregations and projects.

The definition of a child for this policy is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change his/her status or entitlements to services or protection.

We uphold the legislation regarding children such as:

- The Children Act 1989 and The Children Act 2004 and current government guidance
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018/2023 updates

[Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) also lays out responsibilities for the voluntary, charity and faith-based organisations to have appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place.

As of April 2022, it is illegal (England and Wales) for those in Positions of Trust in a faith setting to engage in sexual activity with a 16 or 17 year old under their care or supervision. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, has been broadened to include “sport” and “religion”. This includes anyone who: “coaches, teaches, trains, supervises or instructs someone under 18, on a regular basis, in a sport or a religion”.

We are a member church of 31:8, thirtyoneeight.org an expert source of help, resources and safeguarding advice in any given safeguarding circumstance.

Contents

1. Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children
2. Roles and Responsibilities
 - 2.1 Leadership & Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
 - 2.2 Safeguarding Coordinators, Children's Lead Workers / Youth Leaders
 - 2.3 Volunteer Workers
3. Definitions of Harm
 - Abuse
 - Physical abuse
 - Emotional abuse
 - Sexual abuse
 - Neglect
4. Other Forms of Abuse
5. Recognition of Harm
6. Acting on Concerns – recording what you see or are told by a child
 - Managing a Disclosure
7. Referring or Reporting Concerns About a Child
 - Completing Safeguarding Incident Report Form
 - Informing or not informing parents/carers
 - Consent
8. Recruitment and Selection & Recruiting Ex-offenders
9. Code of Practice/Behaviour Code
10. Managing Offenders Who Pose a Risk
11. Allegations Against Staff Members / Volunteers
12. Anti-bullying
13. Online and e-safety

Appendices

Appendix 1	Seven Golden Rules of Information Sharing
Appendix 2	Other Forms of Abuse
Appendix 3	How to Report a Concern – Flow Chart
Appendix 4	Safeguarding Incident Report Form
Appendix 5	River Church Safeguarding Code of Conduct
Appendix 6	Useful Contact Numbers and Websites
Appendix 7	Contextual Support for Children and Young People
Appendix 8	Guidelines for Praying with Children and Young People
Appendix 9	Declaration Form
Appendix 10	Safeguarding Team - Organisational Structure
Appendix 11	Allegations Against Key Employees and Volunteers
Appendix 12	Useful River Contacts

1. Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children

River Church is committed to keeping the welfare of any child or young person who is involved at any point of our services paramount, ensuring that they are valued, listened to and respected.

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

Everyone working or volunteering with us, including its trustees, employees, agency staff and volunteers is responsible for ensuring all children are safe.

We consider anyone aged under 18 to be a child for the purposes of this child protection policy.

We will promote the welfare of all children participating in our services and activities by:

- Implementing a robust recruitment and selection process with new staff or volunteers.
- Identifying a Safeguarding Coordinator (SC) in each church community for dealing with concerns or allegations of abuse and clear referral process.
- Providing annual training for all who work with us so that they are clear about their responsibilities especially regarding safeguarding best practice.
- Ensuring that any concerns of possible abuse are referred appropriately and co-operating with the work of statutory agencies as necessary.
- Structuring our services to help children to protect themselves and understand the importance of protecting others.
- Adults with responsibility for Children and Youth work will wear lanyards for easy identification
- Safeguarding information for the church will be clearly communicated, through poster/ slide.
- Identifying and implementing good practice in relation to the care, protection and welfare of children.
- Encouraging parents and carers to be involved with the programmes and develop a relationship with River Church which promotes their child's welfare.
- Providing a whistleblowing policy that allows for an open and well-publicised way for adults and young people to voice concerns about abusive or unethical behaviour.
- Developing a listening culture where children feel confident that if they have concerns someone will listen and take them seriously.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

River Church aims to establish clear roles and responsibilities for all its staff and volunteers, and clarify what is expected from **everyone** in the organisation regarding their safeguarding responsibilities.

2.1 The Church Leadership and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will provide:

- A Safeguarding policy for protecting children, and a procedure for what to do if there are concerns about a child's welfare.
- A named person for dealing with concerns or allegations of abuse and step-by-step guidance on what action to take. These should be the DSL or the DDSL and/or the SC.
- A rigorous recruitment and selection process for paid staff, contractors and volunteers who work with children.
- A written code of behaviour that outlines good practice when working with children, including praying with children – see Appendix 8.
- A training plan and regular opportunities for all those in contact with children to learn about safeguarding and health and safety.
- A whistle-blowing policy that allows for an open and well-publicised way for adults and young people to voice any concerns about abusive or unethical behaviour.
- Information for young people and for parents or carers about their safeguarding policy for protecting children, and where to go for help.
- A protective culture that puts children's interests first – children must feel confident that if they have concerns someone will listen and take them seriously.
- Guidance on taking children away on trips and on internet use: social networking policy, use of photographs and guidance on chatrooms, websites.
- Policies on bullying, cyberbullying and on health and safety.
- Policies and guidelines for those who may pose a threat to children and young people are effectively managed and monitored.
- Working practices when dealing with sex offenders in church.
- Pastoral support for those affected by abuse, including signposting.

2.2 Safeguarding Coordinators from each church, and if different, Children's Workers/Youth Leaders will ensure:

- All volunteers working with children and young adults are safely recruited, using DBS checks where appropriate.
- All volunteers have completed an application form and applied for 2 references.
- Adults awaiting DBS checks or references are sensitively supervised, never left alone with a child or children and always have a safely recruited/DBS cleared member of the team in the room or toilet area with them.

- Volunteers receive induction training regarding policies and specific group practices before they start on rota.
- All volunteers must complete Safeguarding training as soon as possible and ongoing training is monitored. This may be training received from other organisations, from the Safeguarding Coordinator or update training sessions from Children/Youth Leader. Training should be recorded for each volunteer. If training is not undertaken, then the volunteer will need to step back from the role until completed.
- 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 Registration and Consent 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- clear communication with parents/adult carers will be necessary.
- Incident log and registration forms for each session are kept up to date and any information that may be shared in Incident Log is monitored. Any safeguarding concerns/ niggles will be noted and shared with the Safeguarding Coordinator.
- Children's Workers/Youth Leaders attend further training regarding child protection. Recommended staffing levels are applied:
 - 0-2 years 1 adult for every 3 children 1:3
 - 2-3 years 1 adult for every 4 children 1:4
 - 3-8 years 1 adult for every 8 children 1:8
 - 8 years 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.

Sometimes, young people volunteer for eg. Duke of Edinburgh award or to assist in other areas of church life eg. worship team/ PA/ prophetic art. Church leaders must ensure that safeguarding principles are in place, risk assessments have been considered. If deemed necessary, a DBS may need to be in place for those with responsibility. In the main, most of these activities take place in the public space, but consideration must be made.

2.3 Volunteer workers must always:

- Abide by the policies outlined in this handbook, and by the specific guidelines of their groups individual working practices. The day-to-day practicalities will vary within different groups but will never conflict with the core values and guidelines contained in this handbook.
- Attend annual safeguarding training. This may mean attending a course run through the Pioneer Safeguarding Training or led by Safeguarding Coordinator and/or periodic training from the Children's Worker or Youth Leader. If you have attended safeguarding training in other organisations, then please inform your leader. This will assist us in tailoring training for you accordingly.
- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity befitting their age; watching their language, tone of voice, body language and non-verbal signals
- Control and discipline children and young people without using physical punishment or derogatory names. The behaviour policy or code of conduct will be adhered to and promoted with the children/youth.
- Report any concerns to a leader on team or to the leadership if necessary.
- Complete appropriate records for every activity undertaken.
 - 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 have been any accidents/incidents/concerns.
 - Store all completed sheets in the SharePoint folder for their church

3. Definitions of Harm

Reference from Working Together Guidance 2018/2023

Abuse

A form of maltreatment of 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 (eg. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical abuse

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.

These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.

They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

This is not an exhaustive list and it must be recognised that it is not the role of staff or volunteers to make an assessment of whether children or young people have suffered harm. Staff, volunteers and designated safeguarding leads do have a duty to report any concerns about harm in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Children Board, Guidelines and Procedures.

What is Spiritual Abuse?

Spiritual Abuse is not a separate category of abuse but is a form of psychological and emotional abuse. It is important when discussing such cases with statutory agencies to be clear that spiritual abuse is a form of psychological and emotional abuse within a religious context.

We must be aware that spiritual abuse is often an integral element of other experiences of abuse within the Christian and other faith contexts and must be considered when investigating disclosures of other forms of abuse.

In addition to the requirements and advice set out in Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse, in particular in relation to spiritual abuse, we must:

- i) Listen carefully, avoid interrupting and allow a full disclosure without feeling they must defend the Church or the individual.
- ii) Respond in a non-judgemental manner, demonstrating that the disclosure of spiritual abuse is being taken seriously.
- iii) Avoid minimising what they are being told or showing disbelief or denial.
- iv) Be aware that victims may have experienced harmful teaching. Avoid suggesting the use of Matthew 18 (resolving disputes by speaking directly to the person). It is harmful to suggest that someone speaks to their abuser about their abuse.
- v) Be aware that a disclosure of spiritual abuse may also be part of a disclosure of other forms of abuse.

Where abuse has involved use of scripture or prayer, think carefully and be judicious about whether it is appropriate to use this as a first response to a disclosure.

This is not an exhaustive list and it must be recognised that it is not the role of staff or volunteers to make an assessment of whether children or young people have suffered harm. Staff, volunteers and designated safeguarding leads do have a duty to report any concerns about harm in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Children Board, Guidelines and Procedures.

4. Other Forms of Abuse

There is a brief overview at the end of this policy of other forms of abuse* that can affect the children that come under our care and use our services. Having an awareness of these other types of abuse is useful, they are areas of abuse that are growing in significance as more cases come to light.

**See Appendix 2: Other Forms of Abuse for more information, along with contact numbers (see Appendix 6) to get specific help and support.*

5. Recognition of Harm

Recognising physical abuse

The following are often regarded as indicators of concern:

- An explanation which is inconsistent with an injury;
- Several different explanations provided for an injury;
- Unexplained delay in seeking treatment;
- The parents/carers are uninterested or undisturbed by an accident or injury;
- Parents are absent without good reason when their child is presented for treatment;
- Repeated presentation of minor injuries (which may represent a 'cry for help' and if ignored could lead to a more serious injury);
- Family use of different doctors and A&E departments;
- Reluctance to give information or mention previous injuries.

All bruising in non-mobile children should be considered non-accidental and should be referred for an assessment.

Bite marks, scars and fractures are all indicators of concern.

Burns and scalds can be difficult to distinguish between accidental and non-accidental and will always require experienced medical opinion. Any burn with a clear outline may be suspicious eg:

- Circular burns from cigarettes (but may be friction burns if along the bony protuberance of the spine);
- Linear burns from hot metal rods, radiators or electrical fire elements;
- Burns of uniform depth over a large area;
- Scalds that have a line indicating immersion or poured liquid (a child getting into hot water

- of its own accord will struggle to get out and cause splash marks);
- Old scars indicating previous burns/scalds which did not have appropriate treatment or adequate explanation.
- Scalds to the buttocks of a small child, particularly in the absence of burns to the feet, are indicative of dipping into a hot liquid or bath.

Recognising emotional abuse

Emotional abuse may be difficult to recognise, as the signs are usually behavioural rather than physical. The manifestations of emotional abuse might also indicate the presence of other kinds of abuse.

The indicators of emotional abuse are often also associated with other forms of abuse.

The following may be indicators of emotional abuse:

- Developmental delay;
- Abnormal attachment between a child and parent/carer e.g. anxious, indiscriminate or no attachment;
- Indiscriminate attachment or failure to attach;
- Aggressive behaviour towards others;
- Scapegoated within the family;
- Frozen watchfulness, particularly in pre-school children;
- Low self-esteem and lack of confidence;
- Withdrawn or seen as a 'loner' - difficulty relating to others.

Recognising sexual abuse and exploitation

Boys and girls of all ages may be sexually abused and exploited and are frequently scared to say anything due to guilt and/or fear. This is particularly difficult for a child to talk about and a full account should be taken of the cultural sensitivities of any individual child / family.

Recognition can be difficult, unless the child discloses and is believed. There may be no physical signs and indications are likely to be emotional / behavioural.

Some behavioural indicators associated with this form of abuse are:

- Inappropriate sexual conduct.
- Sexually explicit behaviour, play or conversation, inappropriate to the child's age.
- Continual and inappropriate or excessive masturbation.
- Self-harm (including eating disorder), self-mutilation and suicide attempts.
- Indiscriminate choice of sexual partners.
- Children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation.
- Children who have older boyfriends or girlfriends.
- An anxious unwillingness to remove clothes for - e.g. sports events (but this may be related to cultural norms or physical difficulties);

- Children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late;
- Children who regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education;
- Children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions;
- Children who misuse drugs and alcohol.

Some physical indicators associated with this form of abuse are:

- Pain or itching of genital area;
- Blood on underclothes;
- Pregnancy in a younger girl where the identity of the father is not disclosed;
- Physical symptoms such as injuries to the genital or anal area, bruising to buttocks, abdomen and thighs, sexually transmitted infections, presence of semen on vagina, anus, external genitalia or clothing.

A child under 13 years is not legally capable of consenting to sexual activity. Any offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 involving a child aged under 13 years is very serious and should be taken to indicate that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, **significant harm**. Cases involving children under 13 years old will always be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, penetrative sex with a child under 13 years old is classed as rape. Where the allegation concerns penetrative sex, or other intimate sexual activity occurs, there would always be reasonable cause to suspect that a child, whether girl or boy, is suffering, or is likely to suffer, **significant harm**. There should be a presumption that the case will be reported to Children's Services/MASH.

Sexual activity with a child aged **under 16 years** is also an offence. Where it is consensual it may be less serious than if the child were aged under 13 years but may, nevertheless, have serious consequences for the welfare of the young person. Consideration should be given in every case of sexual activity involving a child aged 13-15 as to whether there should be a discussion with other agencies and whether a referral should be made to Children's Services/MASH.

Sexual activity involving a **16 or 17 year old**, even if it does not involve an offence, may still involve harm or the likelihood of harm being suffered. It is an offence for a person to have a sexual relationship with a 16 or 17 year old if they hold a position of trust or authority in relation to them, that is any church leader, volunteer, employee, assistant, helper, trainee, contractor, sub-contractor, invited guest and more.

Recognising Neglect

Evidence of neglect is built up over a period of time and can cover different aspects of parenting. Indicators include:

- Failure by parents or carers to meet the basic essential needs, eg. adequate food, clothes, warmth, hygiene and medical care;
- A child seen to be listless, apathetic and unresponsive with no apparent medical cause;
- Failure of child to grow within normal expected pattern, with accompanying weight loss;
- Child thrives away from home environment;
- Child frequently absent from school;
- Child left with adults who are intoxicated or violent;
- Child abandoned or left alone for excessive periods.

The harm or possible harm of a child may come to the church's attention in a number of possible ways:

- Information given by the child, his/her friends, a family member or close associate.
- The child's behaviour may become different from the usual, be significantly different from the behaviour of their peers, be bizarre or unusual or may involve 'acting out' a harmful situation in play.
- An injury which arouses suspicion because;
 - it does not make sense when compared with the explanation given
 - the explanations differ depending on who is giving them (eg. differing explanations from the parent/carer and child)
 - The child appears anxious and evasive when asked about the injury.
- Suspicion being raised when a number of factors occur over time, for example, the child fails to progress and thrive in contrast to his/her peers.
- Contact with individuals who pose a 'risk to children' ('Guidance on Offences Against Children', Home Office Circular 16/2005). This replaces the term 'Schedule One Offender' and relates to an individual that has been identified as presenting a risk or potential risk of harm to children.
- The parent's behaviour before the birth of a child may indicate the likelihood of significant harm to an unborn child, for example substance misuse, or previous children removed from their carers.

6. Acting on Concerns – recording what you see, or are told by a child

If a member of staff or a volunteer has **minor concerns** about a child's welfare, they should record this following our **Reporting Concerns Procedures (see Appendix 3)**.

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. Concerns will be tracked by the DSL and the SC involved.

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 may need to be referred to Children's Services. **See Appendix 4 for Safeguarding Incident Report Form**, available via email from Safeguarding Coordinators and/DSL (see **Appendix 12** for named personnel).

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.

Managing a disclosure

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.
- Do not ask probing or leading questions designed to get the child to reveal more.
- Never stop a child who is freely recalling significant events.
- 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 designated lead for child protection in your church or project must be informed immediately, and/or a member of the leadership team.
- Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone 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.

If any member of the team believes a child is suffering or likely to suffer harm, then they should record the information on a **Safeguarding Incident Report Form** and share the information with the local authority Children's Services (Working Together 2018). This may be reported by any member

of the team, but normally our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) / Deputy (DDSL) will take this forward.

See Appendix 4 - Safeguarding Incident Report Form

For confidentiality reasons, these forms will not be accessible via the general Safeguarding route but will only be provided by the DSL and/or the SC's. Please email the appropriate member of safeguarding personnel (see Appendix 12). This form will be personalised by the nominated safeguarding member and sent to the person reporting the incident via secure email. The completed form must be returned to the same secure safeguarding email address(es). Any subsequent written communication will need to be part of the email trail.

7. Referring or reporting concerns about a child

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)/Deputy (DDSL) will act on behalf of the River churches in referring concerns or allegations of harm to the **Local children's services**:

Contact numbers:

MASH - Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
LADO - Local Authority Designated Officer

Windsor and Maidenhead

MASH: 01628 683150
LADO@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Marlow (Bucks)

Telephone: 01296 382 070
Secure email: secure-LADO@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Englefield Green: Surrey

Duty LADO please call 0300 123 1650 (option 3) or email LADO@surreycc.gov.uk

Slough

Email: LADO@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk
Phone: 07927 681858 / 01753 690906

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

Urgent referrals relating to Child Protection

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

It is not the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to undertake an investigation into the concerns or allegation of harm. It is the role of the DSL to collate and clarify details of the concern or allegation and to provide this information to local children’s services whose duty it is to make enquiries in accordance with Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

If there are situations where the nominated people are not available to take the concern to the relevant agencies, then every member of the public has a duty to report a concern, so please feel free to contact Children’s Services or the Police directly.

Seeking Medical Attention

If a child has a physical injury and there are concerns about abuse:

If medical attention is required then this should be sought immediately by phoning for an ambulance, attending the Emergency Department or Minor Injury Unit depending on the severity of the injury. You should then follow the procedures for referring a child protection concern to Children’s Services as before. Any safeguarding concerns should be shared with the Ambulance staff/ Medical and Nursing staff in order that they can appropriately assess and treat the child and share relevant information.

Allegations of physical injury, neglect or emotional abuse

If a child has a physical injury, a symptom of neglect or where there are concerns about emotional abuse, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)/Deputy (DDSL) will contact Children’s Services as before but will not tell the parents or carers unless Children’s Services have advised the Church to do so.

Allegations of sexual abuse

If there are concerns regarding sexual abuse or a disclosure from a child regarding sexual abuse, then the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)/Deputy (DDSL) 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.

If there is concern about an adult also suffering from abuse in the situation you are dealing with for the child, then the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)/Deputy (DDSL) must be informed and if necessary, will contact Adult Safeguarding Services in the appropriate area, below.

Windsor and Maidenhead	To make a safeguarding referral about an adult at risk in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, or for advice about an adult who may be being abused, report to Adult Social Care Services at the earliest opportunity using our online Safeguarding Report Form . 01628 683744 . Emergency Duty Team on 01344 786543
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	If the adult is not in immediate danger, but the abuse is of a criminal nature, call the Thames Valley Police Non-Emergency number on 101.
Marlow (Bucks)	Safeguarding Adults Team: 0800 137 915 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm) * safeguardingadults@buckscc.gov.uk Out of Hours Service can provide help with urgent social care if that is required 0800 999 7677.
Slough	Call 01753 475111 (option 1) Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm Email safeguarding.adults@slough.gov.uk . Emergency duty team on 01344 351999
Englefield Green (Surrey)	Emergency duty team on 01344 351999 Online: Make a safeguarding referral Telephone: 0300 200 1005 Domestic Abuse concern Telephone: 01483 776 822 (available 9am to 9pm, 7 days a week)

If the allegation or suspicion involves either a care home, domiciliary care (home care) agency or NHS hospital trust, contact the Care Quality Commission on 03000 616161.

The procedures remain the same for recording and reporting: a record must be made of the concerns seen, or of the disclosure of abuse recorded. A call must be made to the Adult Safeguarding Team, or the emergency services if they need medical attention or a crime has been committed.

Please refer to our Safeguarding Adults Policy for further information under the Care Act 2014. This also includes the many different forms of abuse adults face such as domestic violence, financial abuse, hate crime and institutional abuse, and others.

Consent

See Appendix 1 - 7 Golden Rules on Information Sharing

Professionals should seek to discuss any concerns with the family (including the child where appropriate) and where possible seek their agreement to making referrals. This should only be done where such discussion and agreement seeking will not place the child at an increased risk of significant harm.

It should be noted that parents, carers or child may not agree to information being shared, but this should not prevent referrals where child protection concerns persist. The reasons for dispensing with consent from the parents; carer or child should be clearly recorded.

In cases where an allegation has been made against a family member living in the same household as the child and it is your view that discussing the matter with the parent would place the child at risk of harm, or where discussing it may place a member of staff / volunteer at risk, consent does not have to be sought prior to the referral being made.

8. Recruitment and selection

It is important when recruiting paid staff and volunteers to adhere to River Church's recruitment policy. This will ensure potential staff and volunteers are screened for their suitability to work with children and young people.

River Church recognises its staff and volunteers being essential to its success. As well as appointing staff and volunteers with the right skills and attributes to fulfil our aims and values, we also provide a robust recruitment and selection process to ensure all who are appointed are safely recruited to work with both vulnerable adults and children.

We work with the standards and processes outlined by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children.

A person who is barred from working with children or adults will be breaking the law if they work or volunteer or try to work or volunteer with those groups.

River Church understands it should never knowingly employ someone who is barred to work with these groups as they would be breaking the law. If there is an incident where a member of staff or volunteer has to be dismissed because they have harmed a child or adult, or would have been if they had not left, the DSL will notify the DBS. Our full recruitment and selection process is available on request.

Recruiting ex-offenders

We do not discriminate against those who have other criminal offences that do not bar them from working with children. We will always assess the risk in any situation and look to place those that have previous convictions or cautions in roles that best suit them.

9. Code of Practice/Behaviour Code

River Church issues a Code of Conduct to all staff and volunteers during their induction period outlining expectations of conduct during their time serving or ministering. The Code of Conduct we adhere to is at **Appendix 5 - Pioneer Safeguarding Code of Conduct and River Church Code of Conduct**

10. Managing offenders who pose a risk

For those that do pose a risk to children or adults through convictions that include sexual or violent crimes, the River churches will work with all agencies and the advice given either by police or probation, or Multi Agency Public Protection Agency advice (MAPPA). Each offender will be issued a behaviour contract confirming how their attendance at church will be managed. This will involve a

risk assessment signed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) /Trustee approval. This might involve having an escort, restrictions on movement around the building along with further assessments made for other events such a church BBQ's or home groups.

11. Allegations against staff members/volunteers

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 he/she is unsuitable to work with children the nature of the allegation or concern should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)/Deputy (DDSL) for dealing with allegations within the organisation immediately
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

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 Lead (DSL) 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.

12. Anti-Bullying

Please refer to our Anti-Bullying Policy.

13. Online and e-Safety

Please refer to our Online, e-safety and social media policy.



River Church Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

Appendices

Appendix 1: Seven Golden rules of Information Sharing

In July 2018, 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 in line with the new data protection laws.

1. Remember that the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 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. Where possible, share information with consent, and where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to having their information shared. Under the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 you may share information without consent if, in your judgement, there is a lawful basis 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 clear of the basis upon which you are doing so. Where you do not 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.

Section 68 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 came into force on 5 April 2023 and removed the 'living together' requirement for the controlling or coercive behaviour offence, which means that the offence applies to partners, ex-partners or family members, regardless of whether the victim and perpetrator live together.

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 Abuse

Honour-based abuse 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 abuse 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 abuse 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

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 and Child Criminal 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.

County Lines

County lines is a form of criminal exploitation where urban gangs persuade, coerce or force children and young people to store drugs and money and/or transport them to suburban areas, market towns and coastal towns (Home Office, 2018). It can happen in any part of the UK and is against the law and a form of child abuse.

Children and young people may be criminally exploited in multiple ways. Other forms of criminal exploitation include child sexual exploitation, trafficking, gang and knife crime (see below). County lines gangs are highly organised criminal networks that use sophisticated, frequently evolving techniques to groom young people and evade capture by the police.

Perpetrators use children and young people to maximise profits and distance themselves from the criminal act of physically dealing drugs (National Crime agency, 2018). Young people do the majority of the work and take the most risk.

Dedicated mobile phone lines or "deal lines" are used to help facilitate county lines drug deals. Phones are usually cheap, disposable and old fashioned, because they are changed frequently to avoid detection by the police. Gangs use the phones to receive orders and contact young people to instruct them where to deliver drugs. This may be to a local dealer or drug user, or a dealer or drug user in another county.

Phrases that young people may use to refer to county lines include:

- 'running a line',
- 'going OT/out there'
- 'going country'
- 'going cunch'

These all refer to going out of town to deliver drugs or money.

Once a child is part of a county lines gang their loyalty and commitment will be tested. The gang will begin to trap the child by making them feel powerless to leave. This might include threats of violence if they leave, making the child feel like they are betraying their new 'family', or telling the child they will get in trouble if they seek help because they have committed a criminal offence (Children's Society, 2019).

For more information on these and other related abuses go to the NSPCC website link below [Protecting children from county lines | NSPCC Learning](#)

Gangs and Gang Crime

If there is reason to believe children and young people are involved in criminal gang activity, they need to be told if they carry a gun or a knife they could be arrested; also that a court appearance and a criminal record could jeopardise their chances of employment, going to university or college, or even travelling abroad. The best way workers can help prevent children getting involved in a gang is to talk openly about it, finding out what they think about gangs and warning them of the dangers of becoming involved

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 organs¹.

[Modern slavery: how to identify and support victims - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

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

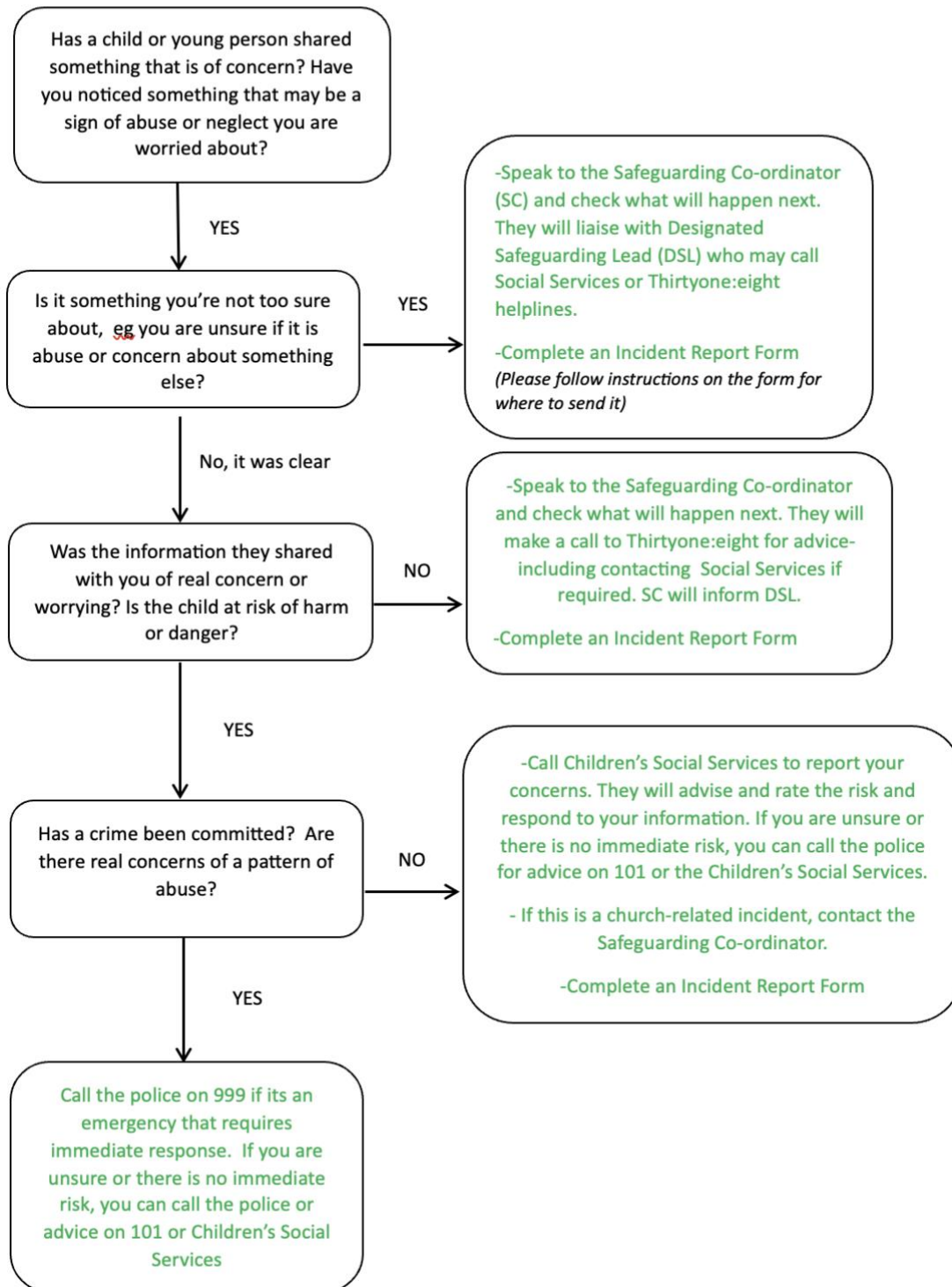
people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It is the preventative strand of the government's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST.

[Prevent duty guidance: England and Wales \(2023\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/prevent-duty-guidance)

[CONTEST 2023 leaflet \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115422/contest_2023_accessible.pdf)

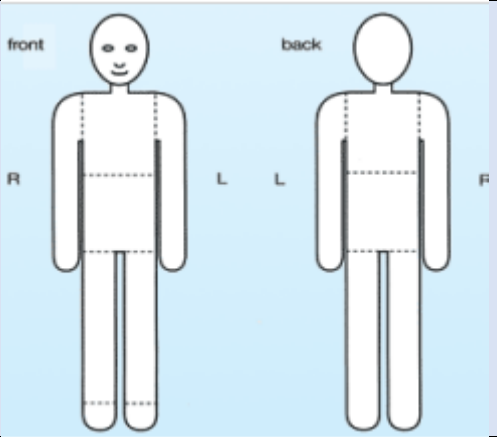
Appendix 3: How to report a concern - Flow Chart

Reporting a Concern or Disclosure about a Child



Appendix 4: Safeguarding Incident Report Form

Please contact the Church Safeguarding Coordinator or Designated Safeguarding Lead for a copy of this form and complete, sign and date. On completion, the form should be emailed to safeguarding@riverchurch.org.uk

Details of Child/Children and their parents/Carer			
		Name of child:	
Gender: Male/Female	Age:	Date of birth:	
Parent's/ Carer's names(s):			
Home Address:			
Contact numbers:			
Your Details:			
Your name:	Your Position	Date and time of incident:	
Report:			
Are you reporting your own concerns or responding to concerns raised by someone else?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Responding to my own concerns <input type="checkbox"/> Responding to concerns raised by someone else	If responding to concerns raised by someone else, give their name and position within church/group:		
Please provide details of the incident or concerns you have, including times, dates or other relevant information (describe and injuries) and whether fact, opinion or hearsay:			
The child's account of what has happened and how:			

Please provide details of the person alleged to have caused the incident/injury including where possible any details:
Please provide details of any witnesses to the incident(s):

River Church Safeguarding Disclosure forms

Have you spoken to the parents? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If yes please provide details of what was said:
Have you spoken to the child? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If yes please provide details of what was said:
Have you spoken to the person against whom the allegations are being made? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	If yes please provide details of what was said:
Further action taken to date:	
What other agencies are you aware of that are involved with the family, and have you contacted any of them? E.g. school, GP, Health visitor, preschool etc.	

Have you informed the statutory authorities?

Children's Social Care:

Yes If yes, please provide name and number of person contacted:

No

Police:

Yes If yes, please provide name and number of person contacted:

No

Any Further Comments:

Signature

Your signature

Date

Time

DSL Use Only

Are there identifying risks related to:

CSE PREVENT FGM

Please circle

Remember to consider specific recording procedures for these risks.

Is there a history of safeguarding concerns (NB check electronic and hard copy files)

Yes

No

DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING RECORD OF ACTION / CONTACTS/ CHRONOLOGY OF INCIDENT

Name:		
DATE	DETAILS	SIGNATURE

Appendix 5: Pioneer and River Church Safeguarding Code of Conduct

Appendix 5a - PIONEER SAFEGUARDING CODE OF CONDUCT

Pioneer takes the safeguarding of children and adults who may be 'at risk' seriously. Although the governance and responsibility lie with individual churches, Pioneer is committed to provide as safe an environment as possible for those using our services across the network.

All leaders, trustees, staff and volunteers have a duty of care to adults who might be 'at risk', and any child that they serve or work with. This includes taking responsibility for your own behaviour and attitude at all times. Remember, as a leader, trustee, staff or volunteer this gives you a position of power and trust, so you need to be transparent and accountable in all that you do.

Alongside the practical issues of making sure your church or project provide safe activities and ministry, you also need to ensure your behaviour and actions are reflecting safe practice too. Our suggested code of conduct goes some way to outline practical examples of what we would expect to see in place as a minimum. However, this list is not exhaustive and needs to be applied to each organisation's ministry or project.

Always ensure you:

- **Remain fair in all your dealings with everyone** and do not show favouritism to any particular child or adult either with words, gifts, or extra attention.
- **Support and encourage adults** who may be more vulnerable at times, to be independent and to make their own choices.
- **Treat all people with respect.** Some adults 'at risk' may need different help at times, but all of it should value them as adults with choice and capability wherever possible.
- **Avoid lone working where possible.** If this is unavoidable due to the nature of your project work then follow the guidelines for lone working and take advice. Pioneer or ThirtyOne:Eight can help you with this.
- **Remain in the sight or hearing** of other staff or volunteers.
- **Work within ratio guidelines for children's work** and have more than one member of staff or volunteer present during activities and ministry,

Recommended staffing levels are applied:

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

- **Minister with appropriate physical contact and verbal comments**, age and gender appropriate and sensitive to ethnic/cultural boundaries.

Do not allow your boundaries to blur by:

- **Messaging individuals privately** on social media or mobiles unless there is a policy stating otherwise, or full accountability to another leader is in place.
- **Becoming intimate with anyone you have a position of trust over.** Intimacy can be emotional as well as physical.
- **Carrying out personal care** such as toileting or dressing those you serve. If this type of help is needed someone else will be responsible for supporting them in this area, i.e. their parent/carer.
- **Accepting any type of financial reward or gift** of any kind for any service or ministry provided or enter into any agreement to handle money on behalf of the service user.

Report or challenge the following:

- **Abusive activities such as ridiculing or bullying.** Educate where you can, report where you need to.
- **Suggestive, aggressive or derogatory remarks or gestures.** Model best practice of respect, choice and empowerment of individuals.
- **A colleague's behaviour or boundaries** that may have become a concern.
- **Report all concerns, allegations or suspicions of abuse.** They must be recorded and passed on.

Remember you have a position of power and trust serving as a member of a church or Christian project and must remain above reproach. Safeguarding does not stop appropriate care and support for the people you serve. It ensures they receive the best care and activities we can provide and protects your reputation and the projects you volunteer or work in.

Appendix 5b - RIVER CHURCH SAFEGUARDING CODE OF CONDUCT (Children & Youth)

Guide

The following are guides to helping create a safe and protective culture for young people, staff and volunteers. For full guidance in relation to child protection procedures please refer to the RIVER CHURCH Child Protection Policy.

Practice to be encouraged:

- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity
- Involve young people in the decisions that affect them
- Always work in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with young people (e.g. not sharing tents, shower facilities or having an inappropriate or intimate relationship)
- When organising events and meetings for children and young people, or their attendance at events/meetings, the following information/documentation should be requested by RIVER CHURCH staff in relation to each child or young person attending the event/meeting:
 - A Consent Form for all events or specific activities;
 - Contact details for the family/guardians, including emergency contact numbers;
 - Information relating to any special issues, needs or requirements (e.g. medical, health, diet, language assistance)
 - Use a reporting form to keep a clear note of any incidents or concerns
 - If physical contact is necessary (e.g. in an emergency), tell the young person clearly what you are doing and why, seek their permission and give choices where possible. If possible have another worker present.
- Every activity, event or session should be risk assessed to maintain the safety of young people
- When working with a mixed gender group there should be staff/volunteers of both genders to manage all activities

Practice to be avoided:

- You should not give lifts in your car to individual children or young people or travel alone with young people. Where not doing this would compromise Health and Safety Policy (eg. leaving a young person alone at a venue) you should attempt to phone the parent/guardian of the young person to confirm what you will be doing. You should also ask the young person to sit in the back seat.
- Workers should avoid situations where they are alone with young people. Where a private meeting with a lone child/young person is unavoidable it should be held in an open place in view of others or in a room visible to those outside and where a colleague has agreed to visually monitor the meeting. If a young person participates in a review of their involvement in a programme as a result of disruptive or unacceptable behaviour, it is advisable that this review is witnessed by a second staff member/volunteer
- Workers should not use their own 'personal' electronic communications (eg. mobile phones, social networking sites) for contacting young people, unless agreed by the River church leaders.

Unacceptable practice:

- Invading the privacy of children and young people when they are toileting or showering, changing or dressing
- Inappropriate physical or sexually provocative games
- Sharing sleeping accommodation with an individual child or young person
- Making sexually suggestive comments about or to a child or young person even in fun
- Inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form
- Scapegoating or ridiculing a child or young person
- Allowing inappropriate, foul, sexualised or discriminatory language to remain unchallenged
- Any form of physical punishment
- Illegal use of drugs
- Use of alcohol during an event
- Bullying of any form, including name calling or constant criticism
- 'Picking on' a young person because of their family background, manner of dress or physical characteristic
- Racism or sectarianism of any form
- Favouritism and exclusion - all young people should be equally supported and encouraged
- Abusive language or gestures

Statement:

I am signing this Safeguarding Code of Conduct to agree that I have read and understood what is expected of me.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 6: Useful Contact Numbers and Websites

<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	help@nspcc.org.uk	24 hour line for adults worried about the safety of a child
Thirtyone:eight	0303 003 1111	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 Honour-Based Violence (HBV)	Forced Marriage Unit	020 7008 0151	Safe.met.police.uk fmufcdo.gov.uk	Website has links to other support organisations
Female Genital Mutilation	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	0207 008 1500	fgm@fco.gov.uk	If you are concerned that a British citizen may be taken overseas for the purpose of FGM
Female Genital Mutilation	NSPCC FGM helpline	0800 028 3550	fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk	
Female Genital Mutilation	Forward		www.forwarduk.org.uk	Provide support, counselling and safe space for girls and women to talk about their FMG experiences.
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	www.salvationarmy.org.uk/rescue	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

Appendix 7: Contextual Support for Children and Young People

Special Needs and Disabilities

Workers should be aware that any child, young person or vulnerable adult attending an activity who has a special need or disability may need extra help in areas such as communication and mobility (e.g. use of sign language and assistance in going to the toilet). They may behave in a non-age-appropriate way. Appropriate boundaries will be set that take their needs into account, but also protect workers from false accusation. This is a conversation that will need to occur before a child is left in our care and if necessary, their adult may need to remain with the child until this can be provided. If so, the adult will be advised about their role, and always in the presence of a DBS cleared adult whilst in the activity.

The organisation will:

- Ask the child, young person or vulnerable adult attending the activity, and parents or carers how their needs can be met, ensuring all workers involved with them are aware of their expectations. This includes the number of workers needed to assist for a specific activity to prevent injury.
- Endeavour to listen, and give feedback to the person, family or carer as to what can or can't be achieved and the reasons why.
- Ideally ensure that a worker of the same gender assists if they need help with toileting, but again, discuss with the person, their family or carer, their preference and your ability to provide this.
- Make buildings accessible (e.g. ramps, toilets for the disabled and hearing loop system) and encourage integration within the group.
- Train the workers in appropriate disability awareness including the use of different forms of communication (e.g. sign language) and language etiquette.

Intimate care.

Workers involved with intimate care need to be sensitive to the individual needs of each person and that some care tasks could be open to misinterpretation.

Crèche workers will obtain permission from the parents with regard to changing nappies. If the parent wishes to change their child's nappy, then they will be contacted in the adult venue and asked to come to the crèche.

Regular Children Events (eg. River Maidenhead, Ladybirds carer & toddler group)

When we operate and regular children's events linked to River Church, the leadership will:

- Conduct regular fire drills to ensure that the building is evacuated completely and

within a set time scale.

- Ensure all the users only have access to specific areas of the building that they are allowed in.
- Have sufficient workers to supervise the activities.

Outings

If outings are arranged, eg. day trips or visits for children and young people under 18, parents or carers should complete and sign a consent form for the activity. A risk assessment of the activity will be carried out, to ensure all eventualities are covered and all adults in the team know what to do in the event of an accident or emergency.

On the day it is important to remember to take a fully charged mobile phone, all essential records and equipment and allocate named children to named pairs of adults.

Transportation

The Leadership will adopt the following advice for transporting children, young people or vulnerable adults:

- Driving should be restricted to those who have gone through the organisation's recruitment procedures for workers.
- All drivers must have read the safeguarding policy of the organisation and agree to abide by it
- Parents / carers should be asked to sign a Transportation Consent Form
- The driver should hold a full driving licence, the vehicle must be adequately insured and the vehicle road worthy
- As a general rule, 2 leaders should be in each vehicle. Consideration should be given to dropping off the least vulnerable last and plan routes accordingly
- Drivers should not spend unnecessary time alone in the vehicle with someone they are transporting. If, for example, a child wants to talk to a driver about something and has waited until other children have been dropped off, the driver should explain that it isn't convenient to talk there and then, but arrange to meet them at a location where there are other adults around with the knowledge of the group leader. (Remember they may want to talk to the driver about an abusive situation)
- When travelling in groups with more than one vehicle it is good practice to insist those being transported stay in the same groups on the outgoing and return journey. This will avoid anyone, at worst, being left behind
- At collection or dropping off points no child or young person should be on their own and the driver should make sure they are collected by an appropriate adult. This may also

apply to a vulnerable adult, depending on the nature of their vulnerability and/or disability

- It is advisable to be aware of instances where it may be unwise for a particular driver to transport a particular individual e.g. where there has been a disagreement or they have romantic feelings for a driver

- If parents or carers do some transporting, ensure they are made aware that such arrangements are their own responsibility and not the Organisation's

Water Activities

Appropriate risk assessments should be made prior to any water-based activity

Swimming: Prior to the trip the swimming ability of a young person should be established. A swimming consent form for each young person should be taken by the group leader on the trip. A copy should also be retained and stored on SharePoint.

The young people youth workers should follow the rules of the pool. Group leaders should supervise behaviour at all times. Whilst the pool's lifeguard will be on duty to supervise swimmers this does not reduce the duty of care of leaders and workers, including being able to account for the whereabouts of all those participating in the event.

If other swimming activities are arranged in open water, a risk assessment must be completed before organising such an activity. Prior to organising a visit to open waters, group leaders can look on local websites or contact the local tourist information to make sure the area is safe. Leaders must ascertain the level of the young people's swimming ability and ensure adequate, increased supervision ratios for the particular group.

Baptisms

It must be clearly stated that Children are the responsibility of their parents/ carers/ guardians in any swimming activity that follows baptisms in a pool and must be watched by their responsible adult.

Filming and taking photographs

Permission must be obtained of both children and adults before a photograph is taken or film footage recorded. However, it is perfectly acceptable to ask parents/carers to let the organisation know if they do NOT want their child photographed or filmed. The worker should write to parents or carers to explain what is happening and leave the onus on the parent/ carer to contact them if they have any objections. In addition to this:

- It must be made clear why the image(s) or film is being used, what it will be used for and who might want to look at the pictures

- When using photographs of children and young people, use group pictures and never identify them by name or other personal details. These details include e-mail or postal addresses, telephone numbers
- Obtain written and specific consent from parents or carers before using photographs on a website

Image use consent to be part of a registration form.

Staff/volunteer use of social media

All team members must use social media with discretion and wisdom. Photos of children, young people or vulnerable adults (where their faces are recognisable) **MUST NOT** be posted on social media by team members. Only photos which are anonymous and do not show recognisable individuals can be posted on social media and used for publicity. Children and young people should never be named or “tagged” in team members’ posts on social media.

Appendix 8: Guidelines for Praying with Children and Young People

1. Introduction

Some of the main ingredients that underpin any effective ministry to children and young people, including prayer, are:

- acceptance
- respect
- non-judgemental listening,
- sensitivity
- discernment
- patience

In applying these values in the area of prayer, not only will you build trust and respect, but you will also be providing a good 'prayer' model so that children and young people can learn how to pray for others in a sensitive and responsible way.

Although it may seem obvious, it is important parents/carers are aware that prayer is an integral part of church life (particularly if they don't attend church themselves), and that on occasions you may pray with their child either corporately or individually at the child's request.

You can reassure any concerned parent/carer with the principles contained in these guidelines, or if a child is part of a club or Sunday school within the church this could be mentioned, for example, on the information leaflet given to parents/carers when the child joins the group.

In the unlikely event of a parent/carer requesting that their child does not participate in individual prayer, this must always be respected.

2. Prior to praying, always make sure you have the child's permission and always pray in an open area where other leaders and/or children are around. If there is a general invitation to come forward for prayer in or after a family service, then it will be helpful to have children's workers available to pray with the children/young people rather than relying on other leaders who may be used to dealing with adults. Only those authorised by the church leadership should be involved in this ministry.

The child should be asked if there is anything specific they are requesting prayer for and listen to their reply. Speak quietly and calmly, never shout or raise your voice. Don't laugh at or dismiss out of hand if they want to pray for something you consider trite or irrelevant (e.g. my cat's poorly). If they do not have specific needs or requests then simply ask God to bless them.

Those praying with children and young people should always be alert to child protection issues and other concerns such as bullying. In these circumstances do not forget about or delay taking appropriate action because you are caught up with praying!

If you have prayed about a specific issue, it may be helpful to write it down afterwards and give it to the child so that, if they want, they can let their parents/carers know and remember it themselves.

If a child/young person becomes distressed, stop praying. Stay calm and gently ask them if they would like to say what has caused their distress. Depending on the child's response you could consider whether there are any gender issues or whether they would feel more comfortable with someone else. If unsure or the child/young person remains distressed do not continue praying but stay with them until they are calm, offering them reassurance and complete acceptance. Then talk to the child's parents/carers, assuming you have no child protection concerns.

If prayer is occurring more generally in the congregation eg. separating into groups, if children or young people are present, ensure that children are in the same group as their parent/carer.

3. Practicalities

When it comes to praying, consider your body language, particularly in relation to things like your height and the height of the child/young person. Try to ensure you are on their level rather than towering over them perhaps by both of you sitting down; but do avoid crowding.

Refrain from placing your hands on a child/young person's head as they may find this frightening or threatening. If you think they may appreciate something like an arm round a shoulder or their hand being held, always ask them if this is what they would like before doing it.

Sometimes substances such as oil on the forehead is used when praying for healing. Bear in mind that a child/young person may be uncomfortable with the use of anointing oil so it is important to only go ahead with the child and parents' agreement.

Remember also that a child/young person may not, for example, understand things like 'speaking in tongues' and it is important therefore not to do anything that may cause confusion or distress.

14. Language

Use clear uncomplicated language. Reflect back what the child has said to you, to show you have understood their prayer request. If a child says they are feeling tired, you could reply "let us pray for you as you are feeling tired" not "I think you are depressed, let's pray about that". Keep the prayers simple and short so you can then be confident your prayers have been understood by the child.

15. Giving Advice

Avoid giving specific advice about problems involving decisions. A child or young person could be very susceptible to suggestion, particularly if they are distressed. Even if you believe you have heard from God about their situation, it would be far wiser to pray this through on your own or with another leader. Never advise a child/young person to stop taking medication or cease seeing professionals involved in their care or welfare.

16. Confidentiality

Never promise total confidentiality. Should a child/young person wish to disclose to you a situation such as abuse within a prayer ministry context, you have a duty to pass this on to your church's child Safeguarding Coordinator and possibly Children's Social Services or the police. You may need to gently give clear boundaries but reassure the child that if you share anything about their situation with someone else it will be on a 'need to know' basis only and you will make sure they are supported and cared for.

17. Deliverance / Exorcism

Any religious, traditional or cultural practice that causes significant harm to a child is a criminal offence and cannot be justified. One example of this is when children have been subjected to horrific abuse following accusations they are witches or possessed by evil spirits. When practices such as these come to light, the statutory authorities may investigate and take appropriate action to protect the children involved.

Some places of worship believe that a child can have an evil spirit or is possessed when they display behavioural problems or are different in some way. The child may have learning difficulties, mental health issues, copied or unconventional behaviours, or be experiencing some kind of trauma such as culture shock at coming to live in a different country.

Children are easily frightened and very susceptible to suggestion. They may also be upset by shouting and will easily believe they are bad, wicked etc. A child should never be told they are demonised, possessed or oppressed by the devil or evil spirits.

Prayer for children should therefore always be carried out using the guidelines above.

PROPHETIC WORDS/ ENCOURAGEMENT

We value the culture of prayer and prophecy across Pioneer/River Church and many of us have been blessed by receiving prayer or prophetic words of encouragement from both speakers and fellow delegates at our annual leadership conferences.

We want to create an environment where ministry operates safely so we're therefore asking everybody to observe the following guidelines:

- Please be sensitive about who you are praying for. In some situations, for example with people of the opposite gender or when there aren't lots of people around, it may be better to have someone else with you.
- Please make sure you always ask permission before praying with the laying on of hands. Please be sensitive about where you place your hands on a person, particularly with people of the opposite gender. Heads, shoulders and arms are usually safe options.
- When bringing prophetic words, please ask yourself whether it is strengthening, encouraging or comforting in keeping with 1 Corinthians 14:3. Never insist that a word you have brought is a word from God and encourage the person to reflect on it and 'weigh it.'

Make sure you communicate in such a way that the person understands that you could be wrong. You could begin by saying, "I think God might be saying..." or "Please weigh what I'm about to say..." Or you could end by saying, "It's important that you weigh that as we can only prophesy in part and we can get things wrong."

- When people are responding to the Holy Spirit, remember to consider their safety and their dignity. In certain situations, a person might need help to sit or lie on the floor safely.

If you have a word for a particular child, ensure their parent/ carer is involved and agrees to its delivery to the child.

Appendix 9: DECLARATION FORM



Registered Office: River Church, 1 Meadlake Place, Egham, Surrey TW20 8HE
Registered Charity: 1146525

DECLARATION

River Church is fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of children by protecting them from neglect, physical, sexual and emotional harm.

Working as an employee or volunteer of River Church, it is important that you have taken time to thoroughly read the **Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and Procedures** document. By being made aware of the policy, it is our intention to ensure that all are proactive in providing a safe and secure environment for adults and children/youth and all who use our service.

.....

Declaration: I have read and understand the River Church Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures and I accept the principles therein.

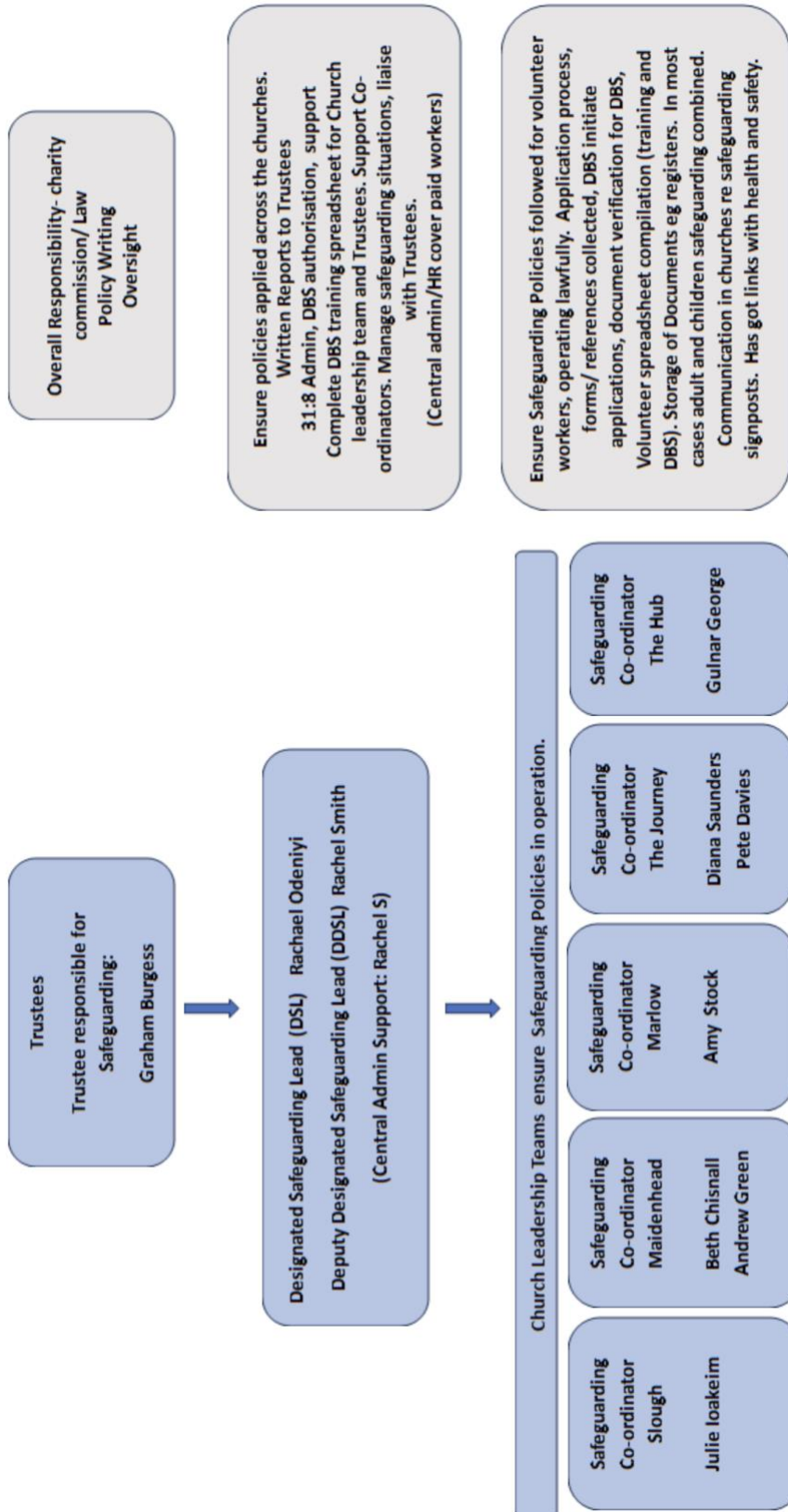
Signed: _____ Date: ___/___/20__

Name: _____ (Please print)

Position: _____

Appendix 10: Safeguarding Team – River Church Organisational Chart

River Church Safeguarding Organisation Chart



May 2025

Appendix 11: Allegations against key employees and volunteers

For these purposes:

An 'investigation' means many things depending on the content of the disclosure. Trustees and/or the leadership of River Church may need to gather accounts from all involved, and may result in no further action, the involvement of external agencies for resolution, or external agencies to support with the planning and next steps of the process. At all times, confidentiality, appropriate information sharing and a duty of care to all individuals must be guiding practices.

Appendix 11a: Disclosure against Designated Safeguarding Lead

1. The disclosure should be reported to the Chair of Trustees
2. The disclosure should follow usual reporting procedures (including contacting the LADO if appropriate)
3. The Chair of Trustees should suspend the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) from duties relating to Safeguarding
4. The Chair of Trustees should inform the Church Leader
5. The Chair of Trustees and Church Leader should appoint a relevant interim
6. The Chair of Trustees should oversee, or appoint an appropriate person to oversee, an investigation into the disclosure. This includes gathering accounts from all involved.
7. Seek external support with the investigation, bearing in mind a duty of care for all involved.
8. Upon resolution of an investigation, there are many options:
 1. NFA (No further action) and reinstatement
 2. Discussion with Trustees or Leaders about appropriate conduct and the provision of the code of conduct
 3. Involvement and engagement with outside agencies who will suggest or direct a resolution

Appendix 11b: Disclosure against the Church Leader

1. The disclosure should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
2. The disclosure should follow usual reporting procedures (including contacting the LADO if appropriate)
3. The DSL should inform the Chair of Trustees
4. The Chair of Trustees should consider safeguarding arrangements relating to the Church Leader for this period: suspension from employment (paid), the use of a risk assessment, the inclusion of a chaperone. This will depend on the severity and content of the disclosure.
5. The Chair of Trustees should appoint a relevant interim Church Leader, if required.
6. The Chair of Trustees should oversee, or appoint an appropriate person to oversee

(such as the DSL), an investigation into the disclosure.

7. Seek external support with the investigation, bearing in mind a duty of care for all involved.
8. Upon resolution of an investigation, there are many options
 1. NFA (No further action) and reinstatement
 2. Discussion with Trustees or Leaders about appropriate conduct and the provision of the code of conduct
 3. Involvement and engagement with outside agencies who will suggest or direct a resolution

Appendix 11c: Disclosure against the Chair of Trustees

1. The disclosure should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
2. The disclosure should follow usual reporting procedures (including contacting the LADO if appropriate)
3. The DSL should inform the Church Leader(s)
4. The Church Leader(s) should approach the Trust Board to appoint a relevant interim Chair of Trustees - this would routinely, but not necessarily, be the Vice Chair
5. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should oversee, or appoint an appropriate person to oversee, an investigation into the disclosure.
6. Seek external support with the investigation, bearing in mind a duty of care for all involved.
7. Upon resolution of an investigation, there are many options
 1. NFA (No further action) and reinstatement
 2. Discussion with Trustees or Leaders about appropriate conduct and the provision of the code of conduct
 3. Involvement and engagement with outside agencies who will suggest or direct a resolution

It may be the case there are multiple accusations, each will be dealt with separately and reported separately.

Please note, for the 2024 policy:

Church Leaders see [HERE](#)

Appendix 12: Useful River Church Contacts

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) within River Church

Rachael Odeniyi safeguarding@riverchurch.org.uk

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) within River Church

Rachel Smith safeguarding@riverchurch.org.uk

Trustee contact for Safeguarding within River Church:

Graham Burgess graham@riverchurch.org.uk

Church Safeguarding Coordinators:

Maidenhead:

Beth Chisnall

safeguardingmaidenhead@riverchurch.org.uk

Marlow:

Amy Stock

safeguardingmarlow@riverchurch.org.uk

Slough

Julie loakeim

safeguardingslough@riverchurch.org.uk

The Journey:

Catherine Foster

safeguardingjourney@riverchurch.org.uk

The Hub:

Gulnar George, Hub Manager

safeguardinghub@riverchurch.org.uk