



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. MISSION STATEMENT

As members of this church, we take seriously the charge given by Jesus to welcome children (Luke 9:48), to protect them (Matt. 18:6-10), and to allow them free access to him (Mark 10:13-16).

Connect Church recognises the importance of its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults entrusted to the church's care.

As part of its mission, Connect Church is committed to:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting children, young people and vulnerable adults as well as promoting their welfare and protection.
- Safe recruitment, supervision and training for all the children's/youth workers within the church.
- Adopting a procedure for dealing with concerns about possible abuse.
- Encouraging and supporting parents/carers.
- Supporting those affected by abuse in the church.
- Maintaining good links with the statutory childcare authorities and other organisations.
- Following guidance on safe prayer ministry.

2. CHURCH POLICY

The Church Council recognises the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults. It also acknowledges that children, young people and vulnerable adults can be the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and neglect.

The Church Council has therefore adopted the procedures set out in this document. It also recognises the need to build constructive links with statutory and voluntary safeguarding agencies. This policy and the complimentary "How to Respond to a Disclosure" document are based on a model published by thirtyone:eight and we acknowledge the valuable part thirtyone:eight have played in helping Connect Church to produce this policy and our Online Safeguarding Policy (see Appendix A).

The Church Council is committed to on-going safeguarding training for all children/youth workers. The church will deliver Safeguarding Training every three years for all relevant staff and volunteers. The church will provide annual update training in support of the three yearly training.

DBS checks are carried out as part of the recruitment process for trustees and those aged 16 years and above working with children, young people or vulnerable adults. DBS checks are to be

renewed every three years. 16 and 17 year olds may lead a group, provided they are working with someone aged 18 years or above.

The Church Council also undertakes to follow the principles found within the Abuse of Trust guidance issued by the Home Office and it is therefore unacceptable for those in a position of trust to engage in any behaviour which might allow a sexual relationship to develop.

3. RECOGNISING ABUSE

Defining child abuse or abuse against a vulnerable adult is a difficult and complex issue. A person may abuse by inflicting harm, or by failing to prevent harm. Children and vulnerable adults may be abused within a family, an institution or a community setting. Very often the abuser is known or in a trusted relationship with the child or vulnerable adult.

The Church Council is committed to on-going safeguarding training and development opportunities for all workers, developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help protect everyone.

'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018) define four categories of abuse; Physical, Emotional, Sexual abuse and Neglect.

'No Secrets' guidance by the Department of Health define abuse against vulnerable adults in the following categories; Physical, Sexual, Psychological or Emotional, Financial or Material, Neglect or Act of Omission, Discriminatory, Institutional, Domestic abuse/violence, Modern Slavery, Organisational, Self-Neglect. The Assemblies of God (AOG) also highlight spiritual abuse which although not recognised as a category of abuse by statutory authorities, often co-exists with those accepted forms of abuse.

4. ONLINE SAFEGUARDING

Connect Church has adopted the thirtyone:eight Online Safeguarding Policy, with a number of Connect Church specific requirements and precautions. This policy is attached as Appendix A.

5. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

Under no circumstances should a church worker carry out their own investigation into the allegation or suspicion of abuse. The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse will do the following:

- Concerns must be reported as soon as possible to the **Safeguarding Coordinator** who is nominated by the Church Council to act on their behalf in dealing with the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including referring the matter on to the statutory authorities.
- The Coordinator may also be required by conditions of the Church Insurance Policy to immediately inform the Insurance Company. Without revealing the nature of the incident, the Coordinator will also undertake to inform all members of the Church Council and to

inform the Regional Leader of AOG and give a brief outline of the action taken to deal with the incident.

- In the absence of the Safeguarding Coordinator, or if the suspicions in any way involve the Coordinator then the report should be made to the **Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator**. If the suspicions implicate both the Coordinator and the Assistant Coordinator, then the report should be made in the first instance to Christian Safeguarding Services (CSS) Telephone Number: 0116 218 4420 (Open 8am-10pm 7 days a week) or alternatively contact the Multi Agency Referral Unit (MARU) on 0300 123 1116.
- If the person against whom an allegation is being made is in a position of trust, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) needs to be contacted within 24 hours. It may also be necessary to inform the DBS if the person is engaged with 'regulated activity'.
- Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. A written record of the concerns should be made in accordance with church procedures and kept in a secure place.
- Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Coordinator, the absence of the Coordinator or Assistant Coordinator should not delay anyone with concerns making a referral to the Multi Agency Referral Unit on 0300 123 1116.
- The Church Council will support the Coordinator/Assistant Coordinator in their role, and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need-to-know basis.
- 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 Christian Safeguarding Services although the Church Council hope that members of the church will use the procedure outlined in this policy. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Coordinator/Assistant Coordinator has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Coordinator(s) as to the appropriateness of a referral, they are encouraged to contact an outside agency direct. We hope by making this statement that the Church Council demonstrate the commitment of the church to effective safeguarding.

The role of the Coordinator/Assistant Coordinator is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information on to the Multi Agency Referral Unit.

6. CONCERNS FOR THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN

6.1 ALLEGATIONS OF PHYSICAL INJURY, NEGLECT OR EMOTIONAL ABUSE

If a child has a physical injury or symptom of neglect, the Coordinator/Assistant Coordinator will:

- Contact the MARU (or Christian Safeguarding Service) for advice in cases of deliberate injury, if concerned about a child's safety, or if a child is afraid to return home.
- Not tell the parents or carers unless advised to do so having contacted the MARU.
- Seek medical help if needed urgently, informing the doctor of any suspicions.
- For lesser concerns, (e.g. poor parenting), encourage parent/carers to seek help, but not if this places the child at risk of injury.

- Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, offer to accompany them. In cases of real concern, if they still fail to act, contact the MARU direct for advice.
- If unsure whether or not to refer a case to the MARU seek and follow advice given by the Christian Safeguarding Service.

6.2 ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Coordinator/Assistant Coordinator will:

- Contact the MARU or the Police Child Protection Team direct.
- NOT speak to the parent/carer or anyone else.
- Seek and follow the advice given by the Christian Safeguarding Service if, for any reason they are unsure whether or not to contact the MARU /Police.

7. CONCERNS FOR THE WELFARE OF VULNERABLE ADULTS

In the event of allegations or suspicions of physical or sexual abuse against vulnerable adults, the Safeguarding Coordinator/Assistant will:

- Discuss any concerns with the individual themselves giving due regard to their autonomy, privacy and rights to lead an independent life. Advice needs to be sought from the statutory agencies if it is felt that their choice might contradict their welfare needs.
- If the vulnerable adult is in immediate danger or has sustained a serious injury, contact the Emergency Services, informing them of any suspicions.
- For advice, contact the MARU who have a duty to investigate allegations of abuse.
- The Police Protection Unit will also provide advice and will need to be contacted where the concerns are of a serious nature. Alternatively, the Christian Safeguarding Service can be contacted for advice.

8. CONCERN ABOUT ABUSE BY THOSE WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN

If an accusation is made against a worker (whether a volunteer or paid member of staff) the Safeguarding Coordinator or Assistant will need to:

- Liaise with Children's Social Services in regards to the suspension of the worker, also making a referral to a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- Contact the Operations Manager at AOG National Office (if the allegations concern a status or probationary minister or other Senior Minister responsible for the church in question regardless of status).
- There may also be a requirement under law to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service. This will require discussion with the LADO.

9. MANAGEMENT OF RISK POSED BY KNOWN SEX OFFENDERS JOINING OR ATTENDING CONNECT CHURCH

Liaison and direct contact should be sought with the individual's probation officer or police risk management officer if appropriate.

Not all members of the leadership need to know full details or risks posed in all cases - it may well be appropriate in most cases for only the Safeguarding Coordinator and Church Pastor to be aware of details and other members of the Church Leadership simply aware of a concern and that it is being managed appropriately.

A written contract should be entered into between the organisation and the individual and this will be a non-generic agreement and reflect the individual risks identified.

This agreement which the individual signs, should set out behavioural boundaries that they agree to abide by.

In setting out this contract the following process should be undertaken:-

1. A meeting between the individual involved, a member of the Church Leadership and the Safeguarding Coordinator will be arranged, this meeting can also include the probation officer or other agencies involved if appropriate.
2. The Church Leadership will sustain open communication with any statutory or voluntary agencies involved with the individual.
3. The Church Leadership will identify any pastoral support able to be offered to the individual.
4. The contract will be agreed and signed by the church representative and the individual.
5. This contract will be held securely by the organisation and a copy given to the individual.

In addition to the written contract the Church Leadership will employ the following protective management methods to promote a safe environment for all.

1. Details about the individual should only be shared with key individuals.
2. The individual who poses a risk should never be on their own with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
3. Seating and activities should be planned to avoid unwittingly placing the vulnerable in the vicinity of the person who poses a risk.

Should the individual not keep to the agreed contract of behaviour then the police and/or Probation Service should be contacted for advice. Should the individual leave the church then any statutory agencies involved with the individual will be informed.

10. WORKING WITH OFFENDERS

When someone attending the church is known to have abused children, the Church Council will supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but in its commitment to the protection of children, set boundaries for that person which they will be expected to keep.

11. PRAYER MINISTRY - GUIDANCE ON TOUCH DURING PRAYER MINISTRY

The laying on of hands to pray is Biblical; we see Jesus touch a man to heal him of leprosy in Mark 1: 40-45, and He lays hands on the children to bless them in Matthew 19:13-15. However, not everyone is comfortable with this, and the AOG guidance around this issue will be followed by those in leadership and prayer ministry:

“Be careful where you place your hands to keep in line with safeguarding requirements and so that it doesn’t become a distraction for the person you are praying for. Only touch in a restrained and appropriate manner.

You should only lay your hands on shoulders, upper back, forehead or hold the person’s hands. Never place your hands in a personal area of the body and never under items of clothing. If the person requesting healing has an issue in a part of their body that is inappropriate for you to touch, then encourage them to place their hands on that spot whilst you lay hands appropriately.”
(AOG guidance).

12. APPOINTMENT, SUPPORT, SUPERVISION & TRAINING OF LEADERS & WORKERS

The Church Council will ensure all workers will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with the principles set out in government guidelines:

- “Working together to safeguard children” (HM Government);
- The Disclosure & Barring Service guidance;
- The Christian Safeguarding Service guidance.

The same principles will be applied to those appointed to work with vulnerable adults.

13. SUPERVISION OF GROUP/CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

Each Team Coordinator will provide details of the supervision for each specific activity.

14. SUPPORT TO THOSE AFFECTED BY ABUSE

The Church Council is committed to offering pastoral care, working with statutory agencies as appropriate, and supports those attending the church that have been affected by abuse.





APPENDIX A: ONLINE SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Connect Church Online Safety Policy

(Produced from the thirtyone:eight On Line Safeguarding policy template)

When responding to concerns of abuse please refer to our 'Responding to online concerns flowchart'.

Thirtyone:eight Online Safety definition:

Online safety is the collective term for safeguarding involving the use of electronic devices and applications to communicate and access the Internet; often referred to as Information and Communications Technology. An online safety policy should be adopted and adapted to reflect all communications between church/organisation's workers and children (those under 18 years of age).

Policy guidelines for Church Workers/Volunteers

- Generally, maintain good and open relationships with parents and carers regarding communication with them and their children.
- Use an appropriate tone: friendly, but not over-familiar or personal.
- Be warm and friendly, but do not suggest or offer a special relationship.
- Be clear and explicit about information that you need to share; don't abbreviate or short-cut your communications.
- Be aware in your communications with children to avoid any possible misinterpretation of your motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming.
- Do not share any personal information with children, or request, or respond to any personal information from a child other than that which might be appropriate as part of your role.
- Only give personal contact details to children that are within the public domain of the church, including your mobile telephone number.
- If children want you to have their mobile phone numbers, e-mail addresses or similar, and communicate with them this way, make sure that their parents know and have agreed.
- Only make contact with children for reasons related to the work of the church and maintain a log of all electronic contact with individuals or groups including messaging and texting.
- Where possible only use equipment provided by the church to communicate with children.
- Respect a child's right to confidentiality unless abuse/harm is suspected or disclosed.
- Ensure your church domain name/logo appears with every Internet post made by a church computer user. Any user may thus be viewed as a representative of your church while conducting business on the Internet.
- Email should only be used to communicate specific information. (e.g. times and dates of events). It should not be used as a relationship building tool.
- Email History should be kept and dated.
- When using email/internet for communication with children, it is advised that it should take place between the hours of 9am-5pm. Where working with children outside normal office hours workers should seek advice from their leader but there should be no email communication after 9pm.
- Video calling/conferencing platforms offer many benefits, and with the challenges being mitigated by a number of safeguards, the Church believes it can safely manage this type of

communication. To this end the following safeguards will be in place when using these type of web facilities. These include:

1. Where group activities involve access via a link or password (e.g. Zoom/Skype or any other equivalent video conferencing platform) sent from the host/group leader the link or password will not be placed on any open social media platform or forwarded to anyone other than the intended group member. A reminder to this effect should be placed in the email containing the meeting/activity joining details.
 2. Group members must not place details of any social media meeting activities onto their or another person's account.
 3. Where group members wish to invite a friend into the activity the group member will progress the invite by way of the host or group leader.
 4. The host will maintain a full working knowledge of the relevant platform's security and host management provisions.
 5. All members in the group will identify by their own name and not simply use the machine name/account they are using to access the video meeting when joining the meeting.
 6. Two group leaders will always host the meeting. If there is only one leader available, then the meeting should not take place.
 7. Person to person private chat will remain switched off.
 8. Connect Church membership of the relevant video conference meeting platform will be used for all meetings. At no time should a leader's free or private membership account be used.
- Workers should refrain from using such methods on a one-to-one basis as they cannot be recorded. (It can be used for conference calls and is considered appropriate if a project or group uses a web camera/Skype in a group environment for project purposes, and has clear aims and objectives for its use).

Social Media Policy

- All social media interaction between workers, paid or voluntary, and children under 18 shall be limited to monitored/administrated groups (members-only groups with at least two leaders (over 18 years of age as admins.)
- Text and any other media posted shall be subject to the Acceptable Use Policy (see below).
- All interaction on social media groups shall be recorded for safeguarding purposes.
- Any private messages shall be recorded for safeguarding purposes.
- Any safeguarding concerns/allegations arising from social media shall be referred onto the Safeguarding Coordinator.
- All users of social media must be above the minimum age limit e.g. 13 years of age for Facebook. (Connect Church acknowledge there are recommended age restrictions for app/platforms but are happy to include those under that age if they already have permission)
- Workers should ensure their privacy setting ensure the highest levels of security in order to restrict children being able to see any more than what is relevant to communication within the group.
- All social media groups should provide links to statutory authorities such as CEOP, to enable children to report online abuse.

Consent for photographic images and videos online

- Photographs that include children will be selected carefully and will endeavour to prevent children from being easily identified.
- Children's full names will not be used on the website in association with their photographs.



- Permission will be sought before any images are taken or displayed and images will only be used for the specific purpose for which permission was given. If the intention is to use an image on the internet this must be clearly stated, and further permission must be acquired if an image is to be used in a way not originally stated.
- Live streaming of events must be clearly advertised in advance.

Acceptable Use Policy

(This can be included with consent/registration forms for children and young people with a request for acknowledgement by both parent and child)

- Where access to the internet is provided on our organisation devices, or devices owned by an individual via Wi-Fi, we will exercise our right to monitor usage which includes access to websites, interception and deletion of inappropriate or criminal material or unlawfully copied text, video, images or sound.
- Wi-Fi Access will be via a password.

Children and Workers should not:

- Search for or download pornographic, racist or hate motivated content.
- Illegally copy or play copyrighted content where permission has not been given.
- Send, request or display offensive content.
- Harass, insult or bully others.
- Access the internet using another person's login details.
- Access, download, send or receive any content, which Connect Church considers offensive in any way, including sexually explicit, discriminatory, defamatory or libellous material.

Sanctions for violating the Acceptable Use Policy in the opinion of Connect Church may result in:

- A temporary or permanent ban on internet use.
- Additional disciplinary action in line with existing practice on inappropriate language or behaviour.
- Where applicable, police or local authorities may be involved.



Parent Carer Agreement

As the parent/guardian of _____ I declare that I have read and understood the Online Safety Acceptable Use policy for Connect Church and that my child/young person will be held accountable for their own actions. I understand that it is my responsibility to set standards for my child when selecting, sharing and exploring online information and media.

Child/Young Person Agreement

I understand the importance of safety online and the church guidelines on acceptable use.

I will share any concerns, where I or another person may be at risk of harm, with the Safeguarding Coordinator or a trusted adult.

Child Name (Please print)	Child Signature	Date
Parent/Guardian (Please print)	Parent/Guardian Signature	Date

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