



CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

June 2024

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Charity number: 1052692

Company number: 3150244

Insurer: Congregational & General | Policy number: RC01003820

HISTORY

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V. Szczerbicki	0.1	1st Nov. 2023	First draft for review
V. Szczerbicki	0.2	17th June 2024	First draft approved by trustees

This policy will be reviewed at least annually. It is based on a model safeguarding policy supplied by Thirtyone:eight and The City Church Canterbury. This policy must not be copied by other churches/organisations without the written agreement of Thirtyone:eight.

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KEY INFORMATION

The Beacon Church (hereafter, 'the Church') meets on Sundays for public Christian worship and Bible teaching at Vibe, 55 Central Parade, Herne Bay, CT6 5JG. The Church also organises midweek groups and social opportunities in homes and at The Beacon Centre, 78 Sea Street, Herne Bay, Kent, CT6 8QE.

The Church is part of *Relational Mission*, a part of *Newfrontiers*, a world-wide family of churches, and is a member of *The Evangelical Alliance*.

Address: The Beacon Centre, 78 Sea Street, Herne Bay, Kent, CT6 8QE

Phone: 01227 361336

General Email: info@beaconhernebay.org.uk

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Company number: 3150244

Insurer: Congregational & General | Policy number: RC01003820

Senior Leader Name: Steve Dunn

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Safeguarding Officer Name: Vanessa Szczerbicki

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INTRODUCTION

- For the purpose of this policy, a child is defined as any person under the age of 18, or 18-years-old and still in full-time education.
- The use of the term 'parent' should be understood to include legal guardians or any other person who has the care of a child.

Good governance helps an organisation prevent abuse and means it can respond quickly and with integrity when concerns arise. Central to this, is the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees is appointed to have independent authority and legal responsibility for an organisation or charity and have a critical role in decision making and compliance as well as setting the values, standards and behaviours of the organisation.

The standards and behaviours may be referred to as the culture of the organisation or “the way we do things around here”. Culture can be shaped in both negative and positive ways.

“The culture of a charity goes beyond mere compliance with legal and regulatory demands. Charity governance is most effective when it provides assurances not just that legal requirements are met, but that the behaviour of people working for the charity, and those who come into contact with it, is proper and ethical. Culture, alongside good governance, can be pivotal to whether a charity achieves its stated object” (ICSA The Governance Institute, 2017).

POSITIONS OF TRUST

All adults working with children are in a position of trust. All those in positions of trust need to understand the power this can give them over those they care for and the responsibility they have because of this relationship. It is vital that all workers ensure they do not use their position of power and authority inappropriately. They should always maintain professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which could be misinterpreted.

As of April 2022, it is illegal 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.

CHURCH STATEMENT

- The Church holds children's work in high regard; children are recognised as a valuable part of the church today and not just the church of tomorrow.
- The Church aims to provide children with an environment of fun and friendship where they are encouraged to personally know and follow Jesus.
- We take seriously our responsibility as leaders and members of the Church to support parents in their God-given role of 'training a child in the way he should go' (Proverbs 22:6), but recognise that it is primarily the parents' responsibility to teach and model Christian values at home as well as in church.
- The Church understands the shared responsibility of the whole congregation in safeguarding children and the leadership aims to continually teach and increase awareness of this.

CHURCH MISSION

As part of our mission the Church is committed to:

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

AREAS OF POLICY

- The Church recognises that many children are the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and neglect. The Church therefore has adopted the procedures contained in this document (hereafter 'the policy'). The policy is based on a model published by Thirtyone:eight.
- Whenever this policy is updated, before distribution it is approved by the Church Elders and Trustees. The Safeguarding Officer provides a written report to the Trustee responsible for Safeguarding at least annually.
- The Church has appointed a Safeguarding Officer (SO) and Deputy Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and the leadership undertakes to support them in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children.

- The Church is committed to ongoing Safeguarding training for all children's workers and will regularly review the practice guidelines.

APPOINTMENT, TRAINING, SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION OF WORKERS

The Church will ensure that all workers will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with the principles set out in the government guidelines '*Working together to safeguard children*' (HM Government 2018), the '*Disclosure and Barring Service Codes of Practice*' and Thirtyone: eight guidance.

FOR MINISTRY ROLES (Roles that require a Christian faith e.g. teaching/preaching, leading of prayer or pastoral care):

- Only Church members will be considered. This is because a relationship between a member and our leadership has already been built, and therefore a greater level of trust and understanding of that individual's beliefs, character and values.
- An exception to the rule above exists solely in the case of ministries that The Beacon Church runs in partnership with other churches but for which The Beacon Church still formally takes safeguarding responsibility. In this circumstance, The Beacon Church may be willing to recruit a non-member on the formal recommendation of the leader of another church.

FOR NON-MINISTRY ROLES (Roles that do not require a Christian faith and are purely practical in nature e.g. setting up/down or serving refreshments):

- Non-members, including those who are not Christians will be considered.

SAFE RECRUITMENT PROCESS:

- Before working with children an individual will be required to:
 - Complete an informal interview with the appropriate team leader.
 - Complete a 'Volunteer Application and Self Declaration form'.
 - Complete an enhanced DBS check (Disclosure and Barring Service). It may be possible to complete the check via 'The DBS Update Service' if the applicant has previously registered with this.
 - Confirm that they have read this policy.
- The team leader will have conversations with the Elders and other relevant individuals before final agreement on serving.
- Once approved the worker will be overseen by a more experienced worker and given a clear line of accountability with opportunities for them to discuss any concerns and give feedback.

- The worker should regularly attend team meetings and preparation times and be given regular training to equip them to serve to the best of their ability.
- Teams will be reviewed regularly.
- A new DBS check will be carried out every 3 years in accordance with guidelines from The Charities Commission.
- Once it's confirmed they are a member, a potential worker may attend one session as an 'observing visitor' at any point during the safe recruitment process. They must wear a badge stating they are a visitor and although they may interact with the children (under the supervision of the team) they must not be left alone with the children and must not assist in toileting. They also don't contribute to the adult to child ratio.

SUPERVISING ACTIVITIES

In order for the church to provide the range of children's activities currently available, it is necessary to use a variety of venues and teams of workers. It is the responsibility of all workers to ensure that the following is implemented effectively in all settings:

- All children under the age of 18 who attend any Church activity/club must be registered to do so. To register, the parent must complete a form providing each child's name, age, relevant medical/dietary information and emergency contact details.
- For children over 13, if after every effort has been made to gain parental consent in advance, it has not been possible (e.g. child has attended alone, provided parent contact details, but parent can't be reached), then providing the child can give at least the full name and a contact number for their parent, then they may attend the activity. The Youth Coordinator will then continue trying to reach the parent after the activity. If the parent still cannot be reached, the SO must be consulted as to next steps.
- An online log must be kept that contains a register of workers and children and keeps detailed records of any unusual events, incidents or conversations that occur during the activity. Of course, a worker may witness or experience an incident of concern before or after the supervised activity, for example during registration, be that involving the behaviour of a parent or child. If this is the case the worker must inform their team leader and still record the incident in the log. If the incident is of serious concern the worker must also inform the person with overall responsibility for that Sunday service or event (such as the Lead Elder) as soon as possible in case any immediate action needs to be taken.
- Leaders must ensure that the ratio of adults to children is maintained as follows:

AGE/GROUP	ADULTS	CHILDREN
Crèche (6 months to 3 years old)	Parent supervision required	
Trailblazers (3 years - 11 years)	1	5
Youth (11-18 years)	1	6

- When running activities and events with children, two adults must be present.
- Workers must ensure that children are supervised at all times. The only context in which this isn't possible and therefore does not apply is at some large events that Beacon Youth attend (such as Newday). These events must be considered as safely stewarded and to have appropriate safeguarding and health and safety protocols in place.
- Children must not be permitted to enter a venue without a worker being present.
- Workers must ensure that the environment they are using is safe at all times.
- Workers must treat all children with dignity and respect in attitude, language used and actions.
- Workers must respect the privacy of children and avoid questionable activity (e.g. rough/sexually provocative games or comments).
- Physical contact through things like hugging and playing must be related to a child's needs, not the workers. Physical contact must be age appropriate and generally initiated by the child. It should be kept public. Workers should take responsibility for monitoring each other in this area.
- Workers must always work in pairs except for when toileting (page 11) or in special circumstances such as working with disruptive behaviour (page 14) or discipleship (see next paragraph). Leaders should make every effort to have male and female workers present at all activities, except single sex meetings, however, leaders must consider the needs of each child in the group when deciding if a session may go ahead with leaders of only one sex. If a leader is unsure, the SO should be consulted.
- When it is necessary to have a lone worker for discipleship (for purposes of confidentiality or a safe setting for the child/ren to be open and honest) the worker must always ensure in advance that the parents and the Youth Team Leader know that the meeting is taking place. Ideally the worker will arrange the meeting to happen in a public place where others are around. If this is not possible/appropriate the worker must ensure that someone else is on the premises and that doors are left open if possible. A record of all discipleship meet ups that occur must be kept.

- When praying with children, workers should choose an open area with others around. Ask permission from the child before praying. Where possible/appropriate, any prophetic words or pictures should also be shared with the parent at the earliest opportunity.
- Workers may only contact children via phone, text, email, post or social media if it has been formally permitted by the parent. It's important to be aware that many apps/social media platforms have a minimum legal usage age of 13. Do not communicate with a child on a platform for which they are too young to be using. Note that the minimum age to use WhatsApp is 13. There's more on social media on page 16.
- Parental consent must be formally obtained before using a child's image for promotional purposes. Once a child is over 13 years old the consent of both the child and parent must be obtained before using the child's image for promotional purposes. No publication or internet transmission will identify an individual child either by full name, address or school.

TOILETING GUIDELINES

- Children under the age of 11, in the care of the Church's children's workers, must always be accompanied by a worker to the toilets.
- For sites with toilet blocks (as opposed to individual rooms with a single toilet), a worker must first enter the toilet block, checking there are no adults present and that all is safe, including in the cubicles, before allowing the children to use the toilets.
- For sites with toilets that are individual rooms with a single toilet (as opposed to part of a toilet block with cubicles), a worker should first check the room is vacant and safe before allowing the child to enter. The worker should then remain outside of the toilet unless assistance is required (more guidance below).
- In certain circumstances children may need physical assistance with toileting. If a worker does not feel comfortable in providing this assistance they may request the child's parent to do so. Workers must ensure that the level of assistance given is appropriate and related to the age of the child, accepting that some children have special needs. To give assistance in a single toilet cubicle the worker should close the door to protect a child's dignity but should make another worker aware they are doing so. When a worker has to physically assist a child with toileting, if anything unusual occurs the worker must make the parent aware of this.
- Children aged 11-17 should be encouraged to use the toilets before or after their activities whilst still under the responsibility of their parents. However, should the situation arise, they may leave their

meeting to use the toilets, but must go to and from the toilets in same sex pairs. Workers must check that the young people return within a reasonable length of time.

- Care of babies and toddlers in nappies should be agreed with the parent at registration.

JUNIOR VOLUNTEERS IN TRAILBLAZERS

A young person may serve as a junior volunteer in Trailblazers if they have a heart for serving, until the 31st August in their school Year 13. They must be invited by the elders and TB team leader to serve in this role. They must also:

- Be at least 13 years old
- Have parental consent
- have parental and Beacon Youth leadership affirmation of a hunger to grow in understanding the things of God and to be seeking after Him.
- be of responsible character.
- be under the supervision of the adult workers at all times.
- not be factored into the adult to child ratios. They must not be considered an adult, but have been deemed responsible, so neither do they count towards the number of children.
- not be left on their own with the children.
- not assist with toileting or nappy changing.

JUNIOR VOLUNTEERS IN THE WORSHIP TEAM

A young person may serve as a junior volunteer in the Worship Team until the 31st August in their school Year 13. They must be invited by the elders and worship team leader to serve in this role. They must also:

- be at least 11 years old.
- have a parent who is a member of The Beacon Church.
- have parental and Beacon Youth leadership affirmation of a hunger to grow in understanding the things of God and to be seeking after Him.
- be of responsible character.
- be supervised by an adult worker.*

JUNIOR VOLUNTEERS IN OTHER SUNDAY TEAMS

A young person may serve as a junior volunteer in other Sunday teams until the 31st August in their school Year 13. They must also:

- be at least 11 years old.
- be of responsible character.
- be supervised by an adult worker.*

*An adult team-member with a valid DBS check will take responsibility for supervising Junior Volunteers in most cases and are therefore subject to our

safe recruitment process (described on page 8). Other non under 18s team leaders may also be subject to our safe recruitment process if it is deemed necessary by the SO. Those supervising Junior Volunteers should attempt to minimise the time in which a child is left in one to one/isolated situations as much as possible.

JUNIOR VOLUNTEERS OUTSIDE OF THE SUNDAY MEETING CONTEXT

If a child volunteers in a team that also meets outside of the Sunday meeting context (e.g. worship team practice) a parent may be asked to accompany them. The child would therefore remain in the care of the parent. If this is not practical/possible, a nominated adult will be appointed to act as a chaperone and will be subject to our safe recruitment process and must adhere to this policy.

TRANSPORTING CHILDREN

No child may be transported by any means unless formal consent has been provided by a parent. Where consent HAS been given the following rules apply:

- Ensure that arrangements for transporting children are with the knowledge of the leader(s).
- When transporting children for Church activities, there must be at least one DBS checked adult present in the vehicle.
- Drivers of private vehicles must ensure that they have adequate insurance and vehicles must be roadworthy.
- Seat belts must be worn at all times.
- Children must NOT under ANY circumstances be left unattended at drop-off points unless formal parental consent has been obtained beforehand.

CAMPS AND OTHER RESIDENTIAL ACTIVITIES

No child will be permitted to participate in any such activity without EVENT-SPECIFIC formal parental consent to do so.

HANDLING DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR

If a child is regularly disruptive, a team leader must discuss this with the parent/s of the child and appropriate plans should be agreed with them. These plans should be logged and communicated with all the appropriate workers and the SO.

It will sometimes be necessary to gather key workers together in order to agree specific approaches to handling a child that is regularly disruptive. Minutes must be taken at these meetings and those minutes must be shared with all the appropriate workers and the SO.

If a worker is designated to supervise one specific child (due to that child's disruptive behaviour or additional needs) then they only contribute to the adult to child ratio so far as they take the child they are supervising out of the ratio equation. Because they're not supervising any other children they cannot be counted towards the overall ratio. Time spent alone between the adult and child must be minimised as much as possible and they should remain in the group context unless it becomes too disruptive for the other children. Parents may be asked to stay with their child if the child has additional needs and the ratio cannot be met with workers.

If a child is seriously threatening the safety of themselves or others, in exceptional circumstances only, it may be necessary to restrain them. In this exceptional circumstance, the minimum amount of force possible must be used and restraint should last only as long as is necessary to regain control of the situation. Parents may be asked to stay with their child if the child has additional needs that need specific management so as to ensure their safety and that of the other children.

The workers involved should always record what happened as soon as possible after the incident. This record should include the following:

- What activity was taking place.
- The child's behaviour.
- What might have caused the disruptive behaviour.
- What was said and how others responded.
- A list of those who witnessed the incident.

The SO should be informed as soon as possible and a copy of the record provided to them.

VISITING CHILDREN AT HOME

- First consider if it is possible to meet in a public place as this is always preferable.
- Inform the Team Leader of the proposed visit.
- Never go into a child's home if a parent is absent.
- Keep a record of the visit.

INVITING A CHILD TO YOUR OWN HOME

- First consider if it is possible to meet in a public place as this is always preferable.
- The invitation of a child to a worker's home must be done with the knowledge of the Team Leader and with the permission of the parent.
- The worker should not be alone in the home with a child. There should be another adult in the home.
- Keep a record of the visit.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

As a Church we should be aware that children with disabilities can be vulnerable because of their needs and therefore at greater risk of abuse. They will often require more help with personal care, such as washing, dressing, toileting, feeding, mobility etc, may have limited understanding and behave in a non-age appropriate way. There is therefore a need for extra vigilance and understanding in these circumstances and one on one care may be required.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Risk:

- Risk assessments have been carried out for Sunday children's provisions and will be reviewed at least annually.
- A risk assessment will be undertaken prior to taking children on any outing e.g. ice skating, or residential activity. A copy of the risk assessment will be stored online.

Fire:

- All children's workers must familiarise themselves with, and follow when necessary, the fire procedures relating to the premises in which meetings are to be held.

First aid:

- Leaders must ensure that a properly equipped first aid kit is available at every activity. A list of trained first-aiders within the church will be kept near the kit.
- The Sunday Morning Meeting Leader must record the details of any injury and treatment in the accident book, which is kept with the first aid kit. The child's parent(s) will be informed and must read and sign the related entry in the book.
- If an incident of a more serious nature occurs (e.g. such as would require a child to be taken to hospital) then, as well as following the above procedures, the SO and an Elder must be informed immediately.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND VIDEO CALLS

- Interaction on social media (or any digital space) is just as real and can be just as damaging as physical interaction. It is often the platform for emotional or sexual abuse (definitions on page 22). Allegations or suspicions of abuse taking place on social media must be taken as seriously as any other.
- Workers must be very wise to the power of social media. They may send or accept friend/follow requests on social media platforms from children in or connected to the church only IF they are confident it is appropriate to do so, they have parental permission, and if the child

is of the minimum legal age to use that platform. If a worker chooses to do this they must accept a heightened responsibility that their visible online behaviour (such as posts, sharing, image/video uploads etc.) is appropriate to be seen by the children under their care in their role with Church. They must also accept that if their behaviour on social media with children/viewable to children is deemed to be inappropriate by a person in leadership (such as the Youth Team Leader or SO) then they will be challenged regarding this and may be asked to step down from their role.

- Children may be very open and inclined to share sensitive information via private messaging services on social media platforms, however workers should remember that tone of voice and emotional expression are lost in messages and what is said can easily be misunderstood, or can seem more or less serious than it actually is. Therefore, workers should attempt to minimise pastoral conversation via messaging platforms and be deliberate in arranging to meet with young people for this/discipleship.
- One to one video calls are not permitted. In the case of group video calls, waiting room settings must be applied and the worker/s must only allow the children into the call once more than one are present. Everyone must keep their cameras on at all times in order that the leader knows who they are speaking to. Of course all the other relevant rules and principles in this policy apply to video calls in the same way that they do for physical meetings.

FOR CHURCH ACTIVITIES WHERE CHILDREN REMAIN IN THE CARE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THEIR PARENTS AT ALL TIMES, E.G. PARENT AND TODDLER GROUPS

- All workers who will be interacting with the children and their parents will be appointed in accordance with page 8. A worker who has no contact with the children/parents (e.g. someone who simply comes to set up beforehand and then leaves) will not be subject to our safe recruitment process.
- Registration details will be required for each child as per page 9.
- An attendance register will be completed, and a log sheet available at each meeting as per page 9.
- Workers must familiarise themselves with, and follow when necessary, the fire procedures relating to the premises in which activities are being held.
- Leaders must ensure that a properly equipped first aid kit is available at every activity. Details of any injury must be recorded in the accident book, kept with the first aid kit.
- Parental consent must be obtained before using a child's image for promotional purposes. No publication or internet transmission will identify an individual child either by full name, address or school.
- If for any reason a child is permitted to attend one of these activities *without* a parent, a specific worker will be appointed to supervise that

child. In this case the appointed worker must ensure they follow the guidance listed in 'Supervising activities' (page 9) and 'Toileting guidelines' (page 11).

YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP TEAM

The aim of this team is to facilitate a safe framework in which young people are disciplined by adult members of the church. Those that join the team will be subject to this policy in the same way as any other children's ministry, going through our safe recruitment process and receiving ongoing training and accountability.

In those cases where a discipleship relationship is developing organically between an adult and child in the church, the adult will be expected to join this team. The child's parents are responsible for raising this with the adult concerned and the Youth Team Leader in order that this can occur. If the parent doesn't do this the Church cannot be held responsible for the outworking of that discipleship relationship. Similarly, if the adult concerned chooses not to join the Youth Discipleship Team but continues to disciple that child with the blessing of the parents, the Church cannot be held responsible for the outcome.

REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

If an allegation is brought to a worker, either by a child or an adult, the worker must not promise to keep anything a secret. The worker must be careful to avoid asking leading questions, but instead listen very carefully to what is being shared and then write it down at the soonest opportunity. It's easy to accidentally ask a child leading questions out of a desire to gain clarity from them and so it's important to be mindful of this. When trying to gain clarity simply ask the individual to repeat what they have just shared and encourage them to take their time. Record what they say in their own words.

Under no circumstances should a church worker carry out their own investigation into the allegation or suspicion of abuse. They must contact the SO whose role it is to collate and clarify precise details of the allegation or suspicion and if appropriate pass this information on to the Children's Social Services who will investigate the matter.

The experience will be difficult and emotional for the person bringing allegations or suspicions of abuse and naturally they will want to see positive progress in the situation. However, it is very important that they adhere to the instructions below. The SO will be as communicative as is appropriate with the person bringing allegations/suspicions, however, it must be remembered that the SO is responsible for only sharing

information on a need to know basis and that they must keep any information they gain as confidential as possible.

- Concerns must be reported as soon as possible to the SO (see page 21 for contact information) who is nominated by the Church to act on its behalf in dealing with the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including referring the matter on to the statutory authorities.
- The Church will support the SO/DSO 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.
- In the absence of the SO, or if the suspicions in any way involve the SO then the report should be made to the DSO. If the suspicions implicate both the SO and the DSO, then the report should be made in the first instance to Thirtyone:eight or alternatively the Children's Social Services and the advice of a church elder should be sought.
- Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the SO/DSCS, their absence should not delay referral to the appropriate services. The advice of a church elder should be sought.
- It is, of course, the right of any individual to make a direct referral to a child protection agency or seek advice from Thirtyone:eight, although the Church hopes that members will use this procedure. If the individual with the concern feels that the SO/DSO has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the SO/DSO as to the appropriateness of a referral they are free to contact an outside agency directly.

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 SO/DSO:

- May seek and follow advice given by Thirtyone:eight (who will confirm their advice in writing) if unsure whether or not to refer a case to Children's Social Services/Police.
- May contact Children's Social Services/Police for advice in cases of clear deliberate injury, if concerned about a child's safety or if a child is afraid to return home.
- May seek medical help for the child if needed urgently, informing the doctor of any suspicions.
- Will not tell the parents unless advised to do so by the Children's Social Services or Police.

ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the SO/DSO:

- May seek and follow the advice given by Thirtyone:eight (who will confirm their advice in writing) if they are unsure whether or not to contact Children's Social Services/Police.

- May contact the Children's Social Services or Police.
- Will not tell the parents unless advised to do so by the Children's Social Services or Police.

ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST A PERSON WHO WORKS WITH CHILDREN

If an accusation is made against a worker (whether a volunteer or paid member of staff) whilst following the procedure outlined above, the SO, in accordance with Kent Safeguarding Children Board procedures will need to liaise with Children's Social Services in regards to the suspension of the worker and making a referral to a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

SUPPORT FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY ABUSE

The Church is committed to offering pastoral care and support to those attending the church who have been affected by abuse, working with statutory agencies as and when appropriate. We are keen to support the whole family in these cases, be it children or adults.

WORKING WITH OFFENDERS

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

CONTACTS

Safeguarding Officer & Administrator – Vanessa Szczerbicki

Deputy Safeguarding Officer – John Way

Trustee with oversight of Safeguarding – Jennie Dunn

Elder with oversight of Safeguarding – David Horrell (Bob Benson on sabbatical until Sept 2024)

Thirtyone:eight - 03030 03 11 11

Children's Social Services

Daytime: 03000 41 11 11

Out of Hours: 03000 41 91 91

Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership - 03000 42 11 26

Local Authority Designated Officer - 03000 41 08 88

Police - Non-emergency: 101 / Emergency: 999

NSPCC ChildLine (Can be offered to children up until their 19th birthday and offers free, confidential advice and support) - 0800 1111

STATUTORY DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

Child protection legislation throughout the UK is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Each nation within the UK has incorporated the convention within its legislation and guidance.

The four definitions of abuse below operate in England based on the government guidance '*Working together to safeguard children* (HM Government 2018).

What is abuse and neglect?

Abuse and neglect are forms 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 a stranger, for example via the internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse 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

Emotional abuse is 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 children 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 the 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 cyberbullying), 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

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

Neglect is 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)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

SIGNS OF POSSIBLE ABUSE

When considering whether there is evidence to suggest a child or young person has been abused there are a number of possible indicators (listed below). However, there *may* be other explanations, so it is important not to jump to conclusions but rather seek advice from Thirtyone:eight or the Children's Social Services. There may also be no signs or symptoms, this does not mean that a report of abuse is false.

Signs suggesting physical abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries that occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc
- Injuries that have not received medical attention
- Neglect - under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care, etc
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc that do not have an accidental explanation*
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse*

Signs suggesting emotional abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy.
- Depression/aggression/extreme anxiety.
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

Indicators of possible sexual abuse

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders - anorexia, bulimia*

- Bed wetting and soiling

*These signs could also indicate the possibility that a child or young person is self-harming.