

COPE Ministry

Safeguarding & Compliance Protocol Manual

For UK Church Workers, Volunteers & Outreach Teams

Introduction

This manual provides safeguarding, compliance, and incident management guidance for all workers and volunteers serving within **COPE Ministry**.

Its purpose is to:

- protect vulnerable adults and children
- protect volunteers and church leaders
- ensure lawful and ethical practice
- establish clear reporting procedures
- create safe ministry environments

This document is designed for use within the United Kingdom and aligns with core principles found within:

- The Care Act 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- GDPR/Data Protection principles
- Charity Commission safeguarding expectations

This manual should be used alongside:

- church safeguarding policies
 - DBS procedures
 - local authority safeguarding guidance
 - denominational safeguarding frameworks
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Section 1 — Safeguarding Foundations

What Is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding means:

- protecting people from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harm
- preventing risk where possible
- responding appropriately to concerns
- promoting wellbeing and dignity

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Who Is a Vulnerable Adult?

Under UK safeguarding guidance, a vulnerable adult (often called an “adult at risk”) is someone aged 18+ who:

- has care or support needs
- may be unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect
- may be vulnerable due to mental health, disability, addiction, homelessness, illness, trauma, or dependency

This includes many individuals encountered during:

- street outreach
 - addiction recovery ministry
 - food support programmes
 - pastoral care settings
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Section 2 — Types of Abuse

Church workers must recognise common forms of abuse.

Physical Abuse

Examples:

- hitting
- assault
- restraint
- rough handling
- misuse of medication

Possible indicators:

- unexplained injuries
 - repeated bruising
 - fearfulness around others
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Emotional/Psychological Abuse

Examples:

- intimidation
- humiliation
- coercion
- threats
- controlling behaviour

Indicators:

- anxiety
 - withdrawal
 - low self-worth
 - fear of speaking openly
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Sexual Abuse

Examples:

- unwanted touching
- sexual exploitation
- coercion
- grooming
- inappropriate sexual language

Indicators:

- distress
 - fearfulness
 - sudden behavioural change
 - disclosures
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Financial Abuse

Examples:

- theft
 - coercion involving money
 - exploitation of benefits
 - manipulation for financial gain
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Neglect

Examples:

- lack of food
 - unsafe living conditions
 - lack of medical care
 - abandonment
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Spiritual Abuse

Particularly important within church settings.

Examples:

- manipulation using Scripture
 - coercive prayer practices
 - controlling behaviour disguised as “discipleship”
 - shaming or threatening individuals spiritually
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Domestic Abuse

Can include:

- coercive control
 - violence
 - intimidation
 - emotional manipulation
 - financial restriction
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Section 3 — Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

If Someone Discloses Abuse

DO:

- stay calm
- listen carefully
- believe them
- reassure them they did the right thing by telling you
- explain you may need to report concerns
- record accurately

DO NOT:

- promise secrecy
 - investigate yourself
 - interrogate them
 - express shock or disbelief
 - confront the alleged abuser yourself
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The Immediate Response Process

Step 1 — Ensure Immediate Safety

If someone is in immediate danger:

- call 999
 - seek emergency support
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Step 2 — Report Internally

Report immediately to:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- deputy safeguarding lead
- church leadership according to policy

Never keep safeguarding concerns to yourself.

Step 3 — Record the Concern

Record:

- date/time
- exact words used where possible
- observations
- names of those present
- actions taken

Avoid:

- opinions
- assumptions
- diagnoses

Records should be:

- factual
 - signed
 - dated
 - securely stored
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Step 4 — External Referral

The safeguarding lead may refer concerns to:

- local authority safeguarding team
- police
- NHS services
- social services

Volunteers should not make independent public accusations or investigations.

Section 4 — Confidentiality & Data Protection

Confidentiality Principles

Information should only be shared:

- on a “need to know” basis
 - with safeguarding personnel
 - with relevant authorities where necessary
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GDPR/Data Protection Guidance

Sensitive personal information must:

- be stored securely
 - not be shared casually
 - not be discussed publicly
 - not be posted online
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Social Media Rules

Volunteers must never:

- post photos of vulnerable individuals without written consent
 - share testimonies without permission
 - publicly discuss safeguarding incidents
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Section 5 — Volunteer Conduct Policy

COPE Volunteer Code of Ethics

All volunteers representing COPE Ministry must:

- act with integrity
 - treat people with dignity
 - maintain professional boundaries
 - follow safeguarding procedures
 - avoid exploitative behaviour
 - avoid discriminatory language or conduct
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Expected Volunteer Behaviour

Volunteers should:

- work respectfully
 - dress appropriately
 - remain calm under pressure
 - avoid intoxication
 - represent the ministry positively
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Prohibited Conduct

Volunteers must never:

- engage in sexual relationships with service users
 - use threatening behaviour
 - use degrading language
 - exploit vulnerable individuals financially or emotionally
 - provide illegal substances
 - engage in vigilantism
 - misuse ministry authority
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Lone Working Policy

COPE outreach should operate using:

- minimum two-person teams
- check-in systems
- agreed meeting points
- emergency contact procedures

Lone outreach is strongly discouraged.

DBS & Safer Recruitment

All relevant volunteers should:

- complete safeguarding training
 - undergo appropriate DBS checks
 - provide references where required
 - agree to the code of conduct
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Section 6 — Boundaries & Appropriate Relationships

Maintaining Healthy Boundaries

Volunteers should avoid:

- dependency relationships
 - becoming sole support figures
 - excessive personal contact
 - rescuing behaviour
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Financial Boundaries

Volunteers must not:

- lend significant money personally
 - enter private financial arrangements
 - co-sign agreements
 - house vulnerable adults privately without formal approval
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Physical Contact Guidelines

Appropriate contact should:

- be minimal
- be non-intrusive
- respect personal space

Always avoid:

- unwanted touch
 - forceful physical interaction
 - overly familiar behaviour
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Section 7 — Incident Management

What Counts as an Incident?

An incident may include:

- accidents
 - falls
 - overdose
 - violent behaviour
 - self-harm
 - medical emergencies
 - safeguarding disclosures
 - property damage
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Responding to Medical Emergencies

Step 1 — Assess Immediate Danger

- Is the area safe?
- Is emergency support needed?

Step 2 — Call Emergency Services

Call 999 immediately for:

- unconsciousness
 - overdose
 - chest pain
 - severe bleeding
 - breathing difficulties
 - seizures
 - suicide risk
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Step 3 — Provide Appropriate Assistance

Only provide aid within your training level.

Step 4 — Stay Calm

- reassure others
 - create space
 - reduce panic
 - assign someone to direct emergency services if needed
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Accident & Incident Recording

Every serious incident should be documented.

Incident Report Template

Essential Information

Date & Time

Location

Individuals Involved

Witnesses Present

Description of Incident

Write:

- factual observations only
 - chronological account
 - actions taken
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Medical Action Taken

Record:

- first aid given
 - ambulance called?
 - hospital attended?
 - emergency contacts informed?
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Safeguarding Concerns

Were there:

- abuse concerns?
- mental health concerns?
- intoxication concerns?

Follow-Up Actions

Document:

- who was informed
 - referrals made
 - review required
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Section 8 — Risk Assessments

Outreach Risk Assessment Areas

Consider:

- weather
 - violence risk
 - intoxication
 - traffic hazards
 - isolated locations
 - biohazards
 - crowd behaviour
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Venue Safety Checklist

Church venues should ensure:

- fire exits accessible
- first aid kits available
- accident book maintained
- emergency contacts accessible
- food hygiene standards followed
- safeguarding posters visible

Section 9 — Managing Challenging Situations

Aggressive Behaviour

If someone becomes aggressive:

- stay calm
- lower voice
- avoid confrontation
- create distance
- leave if unsafe

Never:

- physically restrain unless immediate lawful necessity exists
 - retaliate aggressively
 - escalate arguments
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Intoxicated Individuals

You may:

- offer water
- provide calm support
- call emergency help if necessary

You must not:

- provide alcohol/drugs
 - allow unsafe behaviour to continue unchecked
 - transport highly intoxicated individuals alone
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Section 10 — Safeguarding Culture

Healthy safeguarding culture means:

- concerns are taken seriously
 - volunteers feel supported
 - reporting is encouraged
 - accountability exists
 - no one is “above” safeguarding procedures
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Section 11 — Final Guidance for Leaders

Church leaders should ensure:

- annual safeguarding training
 - clear reporting structures
 - updated DBS records
 - written policies
 - incident review procedures
 - volunteer supervision
 - pastoral support for workers
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Final Reminder

Safeguarding is not an obstacle to ministry.

It is part of loving people responsibly.

Strong safeguarding:

- protects vulnerable people
- protects volunteers
- protects churches
- strengthens trust
- allows ministry to operate safely and sustainably

Every worker representing COPE Ministry carries both:

- spiritual responsibility
- legal responsibility

Wisdom, accountability, compassion, and professionalism must work together at all times.