FREE RECOVERY
SAFEGUARDING POLICY[1]

Free! Recovery (hereinafter "Free") exists to promote, deliver and present a rolling bible based, Christ-Centred recovery programme to help those who identify themselves as struggling with life-controlling addictive issues. Materials relevant to this course will be developed by Free and will be provided to organisations and churches who wish to run local recovery programmes, and Free will also offer training for those seeking to establish local support groups and run Free Sessions in their own community.

Part of this programme involves Free establishing an internet-based support group ministry involving the running of single sex, mixed-issue and single-issue groups online, plus 1-2-1 work as needed. It is possible that some of the adults who attend these online sessions will have care and support needs.

Section 1 - Our Commitment

As a Leadership (hereafter, 'Leadership' shall mean Trustees and Senior Staff of Free), we recognise the need to provide a safe and caring environment for participants in our online support groups. We acknowledge that adults who have care and support needs can be the victims of physical, sexual, psychological, spiritual and emotional abuse, and neglect. We accept the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant of Human Rights, which states that everyone is entitled to "*all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status*". As a Leadership we have therefore adopted the procedures set out in this safeguarding policy in accordance with statutory guidance. We are committed to building constructive links with statutory and voluntary agencies involved in safeguarding.

The policy is based on the ten **Safe and Secure** safeguarding standards published by thirtyone:eight.

[1] Produced using the safeguarding policy template provided by thirtyone:eight (https://thirtyoneeight.org/)

The Leadership commits to:

- endorse and follow all national and local safeguarding legislation and procedures, in addition to the international conventions outlined above;
- provide on-going safeguarding training for all its workers and regularly review any operational guidelines;
- support the Safeguarding Coordinator(s) in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect adults with care and support needs.

Section 2 - Prevention

Understanding abuse and neglect

Abuse of adults can occur through both action and inaction. It can take place in homes, institutions, or community settings and often involves someone the adult knows or trusts. In order to safeguard those adults who are participants in our online support groups, we affirm the inherent dignity of every individual.

We adhere to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with particular reference to Article 5: “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

We also recognise and uphold Biblical standards that affirm the value and care owed to every person. As written in Micah 6:8 (NIV): “And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

Safer recruitment

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

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

Safeguarding training

The Leadership is committed to:

- undertaking an induction;
- on-going safeguarding training and development opportunities for all workers and volunteers;
- promoting a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help protect everyone;
- be informed of external support options for vulnerable adults.

The Leadership will also ensure that adults with care and support needs are provided with information on where to get help and advice in relation to abuse, discrimination, bullying or any other matter where they have a concern.

Section 3 - Practice Guidelines

As an organisation which may work with adults with care and support needs, we wish to operate and promote good working practice. This will enable workers to run activities safely, develop good relationships and minimise the risk of false or unfounded accusation.

Working in Partnership

Free works across diverse contexts. Therefore, we establish clear safeguarding expectations with all partners, domestic or international, and formalise these through partnership agreements. We value clear, open communication to ensure that safeguarding is understood and upheld by all. This safeguarding policy is just one means of promoting safeguarding.

Section 4 - Responding to Allegations of Abuse

Under no circumstances should a volunteer or worker carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. Follow procedures as below:

- The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse should report concerns as soon as possible to:
  Name: Tim Archer (hereafter the “Safeguarding Coordinator”)
  Email: safeguarding@free-recovery.org

- The Safeguarding Coordinator is nominated by the Leadership 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 where necessary.

- In the absence of the Safeguarding Coordinator or, if the suspicions in any way involve

the Safeguarding Coordinator, then the report should be made to:
Name: John Childress (hereafter “the Deputy")
Email: johnchildress@free-recovery.org

- If the suspicions implicate both the Safeguarding Coordinator and the Deputy, then the report should be made in the first instance to:
  thirtyone:eight PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ
  Tel: 0303 003 1111
  Alternatively contact Social Services or the Police.

- The Safeguarding Coordinator may ring the thirtyone:eight helpline for advice, after which they should, if necessary, contact the appropriate agency, including social services in the area the adult lives.

- The Safeguarding Coordinator may need to inform others depending on the circumstances and/or nature of the concern. For instance, the Chair of the Board of Trustees, the trustee responsible for safeguarding, or other trustees who assist with safeguarding matters. The Safeguarding Coordinator may need to liaise with the insurance company or the Charity Commission to report a serious incident.

- 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.

- Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Safeguarding Coordinator, the absence of the Safeguarding Coordinator or Deputy should not delay referral to Social// Services or the Police where this is considered necessary or taking advice from thirtyone:eight.

- The Leadership will support the Safeguarding Coordinator/Deputy 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 thirtyone:eight, although the Leadership hope that
members of the organisation will use the procedure outlined above. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Safeguarding Coordinator/Deputy has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Safeguarding Coordinator as to the appropriateness of a referral, they are free to contact an outside agency direct. We hope by making this statement that the Leadership demonstrates its commitment to effective safeguarding and the protection of all those who are vulnerable.

The role of the Safeguarding Coordinator/Deputy is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion, and where necessary pass this information on to statutory agencies who have a legal duty to investigate.

Detailed procedures where there is a concern that an adult is in need of protection

If there is concern about any suspicions or allegations of abuse or harm including physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, spiritual, organisational, financial, discriminatory, neglect, self-neglect, forced marriage, modern slavery, domestic abuse, the Safeguarding Coordinator/Deputy will:

- Contact the Adult Social Care Team who have responsibility under the Care Act 2014 to investigate allegations of abuse. Alternatively, thirtyone:eight can be contacted for advice.
- If the adult is in immediate danger or has sustained a serious injury, contact the Emergency Services, informing them of any suspicions.

If there is a concern regarding spiritual abuse, the Safeguarding Coordinator/Deputy will:

- Identify support services for the victim i.e. counselling or other pastoral support
- Contact thirtyone:eight and in discussion with them consider appropriate action with regards to the scale of the concern.

Allegations of abuse against a person who works with adults with care and support needs

The Safeguarding Coordinator will:

- Liaise with Adult Social Services in regards the suspension of the worker
- Make a referral to the DBS following the advice of Adult Social Services

The Care Act places the duty upon Adult Social Services to investigate situations of harm to adults with care and support needs. This may result in a range of options including action against the person or organisation causing the harm, increasing the support for the carers or no further action if the 'victim' chooses for no further action and they have the capacity to communicate their decision. However, this is a decision for Adult Social Services to decide.

Section 5 - Pastoral Care

Supporting those affected by abuse

The Leadership is committed to offering pastoral care, working with statutory agencies as appropriate, and support to all those who have been affected by abuse who have contact

with or are part of the organisation.

Working with offenders and those who may pose a risk

When someone attending the online support groups is under investigation or is known to be a risk to adults with care and support needs, the Leadership will supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but in its safeguarding commitment to the protection of adults with care and support needs, set boundaries for that person, which they will be expected to keep. These boundaries will be based on an appropriate risk assessment and through consultation with appropriate parties.

Section 6 - Adoption of the policy

This policy was agreed by the leadership on 13th May 2025 and will be reviewed annually.

Agreed: May 2025
Reviewed: August 2026