

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Church details

For the purpose of this policy, **Park Church** refers to **Park Church** and **Hope Church**.

Charity number: 1095313

Church address: Park Church, Boughey Road, Shelton, Stoke on Trent ST4 2BZ

Main contact: Park Church- Rachel McNabb, Hope Church - Julie Mawdsley

Email: safeguarding@park-church.uk

This policy first adopted: 1st March 2025

This policy should be reviewed annually. The next review is due on: 1st March 2026

Context

Park Church is an independent charity registered with the Charity Commission of England and Wales. The church has a formal membership and is led by Elders and Deacons.

Our beliefs are outlined in our Statement of Faith which is available www.park-church.uk and is run in accordance with our constitution which is available www.park-church.uk.

Park Church is affiliated to the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC). FIEC is a membership organisation and does not exercise any authority over the church.

The church is a group of Christians who meet for Sunday services at Park Church, Boughey Road, Shelton, Stoke on Trent and at Hope Church, St John's CE Primary School, Trent Vale, Stoke on Trent. The church also runs various midweek and weekend groups and activities as detailed on www.park-church.uk.

The church does not provide any activities specifically for at risk children or young people. However, we recognise that during the course of our ministry we may come into contact with vulnerable people. All leaders

of the church and members involved with any groups involving children or young people run by the church will have an enhanced DBS check.

Our responsibilities

We recognise that both as a charity and as Christians, we have a responsibility to:

- Protect and promote the wellbeing of those who attend the church; paying particular attention to those who may be more vulnerable than others.
- Ensure that we have suitable systems and processes in place to manage safeguarding risks, including the appointment of a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Ensure that those who act on our behalf are competent and safe to do so.
- Identify non-safeguarding risks and manage them effectively.
- Report any safeguarding concerns that meet the threshold to the appropriate statutory services as soon as possible and certainly within 24 hours. Where immediate action is required to ensure safety, an urgent report to the Police (999) or the appropriate Social Services department will be made without delay.
 - If we are unsure whether a statutory threshold has been met, we will seek advice from either the relevant statutory services or from Christian Safeguarding Services (thecss.co.uk).
- Ensure that our conduct and practice is accountable and transparent and that we care well for those to whom we minister.
- Ensure that if problems occur or dissatisfaction is expressed, we examine these in an impartial and careful way and manage any conflict of interest effectively.

Our commitments

- We will treat all who engage with the church through its ministries with courtesy and respect and will seek to uphold their inherent dignity and worth.
- We will seek to support and care well for anyone who discloses to us that they have been a victim of abuse or neglect and report this to statutory services in line with local procedures where required.
- We will seek to listen well to any concerns, complaints, or other expressions of dissatisfaction and to respond in a proportionate, impartial, transparent, and accountable manner.
- We will carefully examine any allegations made or concerns raised about any member or leader and respond appropriately.
- We will ensure that our staff and volunteers are competent to fulfil their roles, and the legal duties associated with safeguarding.

Governance, Oversight and Management of Safeguarding

The Elders will include a statement on safeguarding in their annual return as required by the Charity Commission. The Designated Safeguarding Leads will be trained in the role and will update their safeguarding training every two years in line with best practice standards and Local Authority requirements. The trustees will ensure that those who act on behalf of the church are competent and appropriately trained.

Any allegations that may require a Serious Incident Report to the Charity Commission will be passed to the Elders as a matter of urgency and certainly within 48 hours. The Elders, who are trustees, will file the Serious Incident Report with the Charity Commission in accordance with their responsibilities. If the Elders require advice or support in this duty, they will seek such from suitably qualified and experienced sources.

A safeguarding advisory team meets on a biannual basis and any issues relating to practice or policy is fed back to the Elders and Deacons meeting by Rachel McNabb (Deacon and DSL). Safeguarding is a standing item on the agenda at the monthly Elders and Deacons meetings.

Handling safeguarding concerns

Any concerns that are identified or disclosures that are made must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead:

The Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) are Rachel McNabb at Park Church, Julie Mawdsley at Hope Church

They can be contacted by email: safeguarding@park-church.uk

If a DSL should step down from their post before this policy is reviewed, Elders and Deacons will nominate a new DSL at their next meeting.

If the concern involves the DSL, or if the DSL is unavailable, the report should be made to the DSL of the partner church.

The details of the concern will be clearly and accurately recorded and stored securely in the allocated locked filing cabinet in the Park church office.

The DSL will ascertain whether any action needs to be taken. If required, support and advice will be sought from either the relevant statutory services or from Christian Safeguarding Services.

The DSL will make any necessary referrals according to local procedures.

The DSL will cooperate with statutory services and provide the link between the church and those professionals involved in responding to the situation.

Records of all discussions, advice sought, decisions made, and actions taken will be retained in the confidential file. DSL will inform the elders that a safeguarding concern has been raised and action taken.

Safer Recruitment

The church will ensure that the main leaders are DBS checked in accordance with national guidance.

Although the church does not engage in regulated activity with either children or adults, reasonable and proportionate assessment of the suitability and competence of staff and volunteers will be made and decisions recorded. The church will provide training for formal roles where required.

Handling Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers

Allegations against staff or volunteers will be dealt with in accordance with the church complaints policy. This is available on the Park website: www.park-church.uk

Upon receipt of an allegation, advice will be sought to ascertain whether a statutory threshold for reporting has been reached:

If a statutory threshold has been reached, the matter will be handed to the responsible statutory authority and the church will fully cooperate with the process of investigating the allegation.

If the person handling the allegation on behalf of the church is unsure whether the statutory threshold has been met, they will consult with either the statutory services or with Christian Safeguarding Services to establish this.

If the statutory threshold has not been met, a proportionate response will be developed and implemented. Where necessary (including for the avoidance of conflict of interest) advice and support will be sought from Christian Safeguarding Services, who will support in developing a plan to address the concerns raised.

Handling of Complaints, Grievances or Any Other Expression of Dissatisfaction

Any concern, complaint or other expression of dissatisfaction will be dealt with in accordance with the church complaints policy.

The matter will be examined impartially and proportionately, and once conclusions have been reached, the church will respond to the complainant.

If advice or support is required, this can be sought from Christian Safeguarding Services.

Managing Ex-Offenders, Those Who Are on a Barred List, or Others Who Pose a Risk to Vulnerable People

A formal risk assessment will be made which will include input from statutory services. Advice and support will be sought from Christian Safeguarding Services where required.

A formal contract will be drawn up that outlines the church's commitments to the individual and any control measures required.

The contract will be drawn up and agreed by DSL and Elders and will be formally reviewed and monitored on a regular basis.

Appendix 1: Key Contact Details

The Church's Designated Safeguarding Lead is Park Church – Rachel McNabb, Hope Church – Julie Mawdsley.

Email: safeguarding@park-church.uk

The Local Authority is **Stoke on Trent City Council**.

Children's Advice and Duty service (ChAD) CHAD.referrals@stoke.gov.uk 01782 235100 (office hours) 01782 234234 (emergency, out-of-hours).

The Church's Safeguarding Advisors are Christian Safeguarding Services.

They can be contacted on 0116 218 4420 or by e-mail at contact@thecss.co.uk

Appendix 2: Definitions

Abuse

Abuse is a general term that is used to cover a wide range of harm caused to people. It always involves a violation of the person's rights. It can take various forms as described under "Categories of Abuse" later in this appendix.

Adult at risk of abuse (sometimes referred to as adult in need of protection)

These are adults who have care and support needs, however, in addition, they are at risk of abuse, and because of their support need, are unable to protect themselves.

Since these adults are unable to protect themselves, we have a legal duty to protect them.

Adult with care and support needs

An adult who requires help or support with basic and essential day-to-day tasks such as:

- Getting up, washing, or dressing
- Cooking meals
- Cleaning the house
- Shopping
- Managing their finances
- etc.

Adults with care and support needs have the right to choose whether they want support or not.

Allegation (against a member of staff of volunteer)

An allegation is a claim that a person who has a role that provides access to a vulnerable person has used their position to exploit, abuse, or otherwise harm the person they should have been caring for.

Categories of abuse

This term is used to refer to the legally recognised forms of abuse.

When considering the safeguarding of children, abuse is categorised under four headings:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Neglect

When considering the safeguarding of adults, abuse is categorised under ten headings:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological (or emotional)
- Neglect
- Domestic
- Institutional
- Financial or material
- Modern slavery
- Self-neglect
- Discriminatory

Child

A person (including an unborn child) who has not yet reached the age of 18 years.

Child protection

Child protection is defined as the protection of children who have suffered, or are at risk of suffering, “significant harm”. It is our legal duty to report all Child Protection concerns to either Children’s Social Care or the Police as per local procedures.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Frequently abbreviated to DSL, this is the person appointed by the church to take responsibility for many aspects of safeguarding, including, receiving safeguarding concerns from staff or volunteers, and passing them on to the local authority where their threshold is met.

Early Help / Child in Need

Early Help and Child in Need are the areas of safeguarding where a child who has additional needs is receiving targeted support to meet their needs. Support is consent based and so the parents (or the young person if deemed competent to make decisions for themselves) can choose whether to access the support.

Neglect

Neglect is one of the categories of abuse that is characterised by the failure to provide the basic necessities for life where we have a responsibility to do so.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a broad range of activities that range from the general duty of care that we have for everyone who comes into contact with the charity, through early intervention and targeted support to protection from significant harm. It relates to both children and adults.

Spiritual Abuse

This term has become widely used, although remains ill-defined and is not a legally recognised category of abuse. We understand this to be a term referring to emotional, psychological or spiritual harm caused within the context of a religious community, often, but not always involving the misuse of power, authority, position or scripture to manipulate, control and abuse others. This policy does not refer specifically to the different categories of abuse since it covers all forms of abuse and harm.

Universal safeguarding

This refers to the general duty of care that we must provide for everyone who comes into contact with the church.

Vulnerable adults

This term is only used as a generic term. It is no longer used as a technical descriptor for a specific group of people. A vulnerable adult is less able to protect themselves and meet their own needs than an adult who has no vulnerabilities.

Appendix 3: Good Practice

All potential workers/volunteers will be asked to sign the policy to confirm they have read and understand the safeguarding policy. They will be encouraged to watch the safeguarding awareness video and invited to attend the next level 1 equivalent Safeguarding Awareness training.

Photographs

Before taking any photographs of children, ensure that parents have given signed permission for this to be done.

- Avoid taking photographs of children in swimwear.
- Preferably take photographs of children in groups.
- Take photographs in places where parents and/or other workers can see you.

Work with Children and or Young Adults

- Workers should avoid being alone with a child (if unavoidable, then a door should be left open) and all activities should take place within public view.
- Arranged one to one meetings should only take with a child of the same gender, in a public venue, with parental permission.
- If needing to take a child to the toilet, the worker will wait on the outside of the toilet door.
- Lifts can be given by workers who have been DBS checked. There should always be more than one child in the same car with an adult. Child should be seated in the back seat and a text should be sent when leaving/arriving from the venue.
- All social media communication with children will be in adherence to the social Media guidelines (Appendix 4).
- Physical contact should only ever be initiated by the child (child to worker) and only used when appropriate, i.e. an arm round a shoulder when a child is hurt.
- Reasonable physical constraint should only be used if a child is endangering themselves or someone else and only as a last resort.
- Physical punishment must **never** be used as a form of discipline.
- Children who continually disrupt the meeting or put other children at risk should be asked to leave the meeting and taken back to their parents as appropriate.

- If a disruptive child refuses to leave the meeting contact their parents, asking them to collect/deal with the child.
- DBS checks will be reviewed at regular intervals and will aim to be updated every three years.

Appendix 4: Social media

These guidelines cover all social media and virtual meetings and online gaming platforms. Both leaders and young people (YP) need to be kept safe. Leaders and parents should be given a copy. These guidelines should be considered alongside the church safeguarding policy.

How we will keep your child safe:

- All social media groups will include at least one youth leader.
- YP will be reminded, when appropriate, about online safety with a message similar to this: “Bullying, harassment or other anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated. If you are concerned or upset about something you’ve seen in this group, please message one of the leaders, or ask a parent to.”
- Photos shared in a group will only be used elsewhere if permission has been given and the images are appropriate.
- Leaders will use professional and appropriate language. For example, these would be inappropriate:
 - Adding ‘xx’ to messages.
 - Using ambiguous endearments such as “love”.
 - Impersonating someone else.
 - Pranking someone else.
 - Singling out a YP that might feel like bullying.
- Leaders will only “add” or “message” or “call” a YP on social media if it is necessary and appropriate to their role. For example,
 - It would be necessary and appropriate for a paid youth worker.
 - It would not be necessary or appropriate for an occasional youth helper.
- Leaders will be mindful of what they post on their own social media accounts and all content should be appropriate to their church role.
- Leaders will only involve YP in social media platforms where messages are saved.
- Leaders will set the security and privacy settings on any given platform as high as reasonably possible.
- Leaders will have the ability to delete, block or silence any message that expresses unhelpful or inappropriate content. For example,
 - Leaders will have the ability to delete messages on WhatsApp or mute people on a Zoom call.
 - Leaders will block anyone for whom we do not have a consent form.

How we will keep leaders safe:

- Leaders will keep a record of any conversation that makes them feel uncomfortable. For example,
 - If the YP expresses attraction to a leader.
 - If the YP makes an offensive or inappropriate comment.

How you can keep your child safe:

- There are lots of online resources with advice for keeping safe in the online world. For example,
 - <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

- <https://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/>
 - <https://www.childnet.com/>
- Ask them not to share information outside the group they are part of. For example,
 - Don't share Zoom access codes.
 - Don't share personal information about other YP.
- Be careful to ensure your YP installs only "official" versions of software/apps.
- Remind your child to wear appropriate clothing on video calls. For example,
 - Not pyjamas or other night wear.