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Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy

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Anyone leading or helping with a FFBC activity must comply with this Policy.

Child, Young Person and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy

Section 1

The Bible is our standard for all matters of life and practice and in 1 Tim 4 v 12 we are encouraged to '**set...an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity**' and it is with this attitude in mind that we set out this Policy.

Mission Statement

Jesus has a pure and genuine love for All; this is what we seek to emulate.

The Leadership (Elders and Deacons) recognises the importance of its ministry to children, young people and vulnerable adults and its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and adults entrusted to the church's care.

As part of its mission, Forest Fold Baptist Church is committed to:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting children and young people 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 or exploitation in the church.
- Maintaining good links with the statutory childcare authorities and other organisations.
- Protecting our own members from false accusations.

- Preventing exploitation and/or abuse occurring at Forest Fold Baptist Church or at events organised by Forest Fold Baptist Church.

Preventing Abuse

Who are we protecting?

Children: anyone under the age of eighteen.

Young People: anyone over eighteen who is linked in any way to our Young Peoples Activities.

Vulnerable adults: Those who have a mental disorder, suffer from dementia, have a personality disorder, have a physical or sensory disability, are substance abusers, are homeless, are living with domestic abuse, are being forced into marriage, are being treated as a slave, are a refugee, are an asylum seeker.

Church Policy

As a Leadership we recognise the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children, young people and adults.

We acknowledge that children, young people and adults can be the victims of physical, sexual, emotional and spiritual exploitation and abuse, including 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”.

We also concur with the Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that children should be able to develop their full potential, free from hunger and want, neglect, exploitation and abuse. They have a right to be protected from “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person who has care of the child.”

As a Leadership we have therefore adopted the procedures set out in this safeguarding policy in accordance with statutory guidance. We are committed to build constructive links with statutory and voluntary agencies involved in safeguarding.

The policy and attached practice guidelines are based on the ten Safe and Secure safeguarding standards published by Thirtyone:eight (see www.thirtyoneeight.org)

The Leadership agrees not to allow its Child, Young Person and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy document to be copied by other organisations.

The Leadership is committed to on-going child, young person and vulnerable adults safeguarding training, for all children/youth workers and those working alongside vulnerable adults and will regularly review the operational guidelines.

Management of Workers – Codes of Conduct

The Leadership undertakes 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 will regularly review the operational guidelines.
- ensure that the premises meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and all other relevant legislation, and that it is welcoming and inclusive.
- support the Safeguarding Coordinators in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children, young people and adults with care and support needs.

Section 2

Responding to the needs of children and vulnerable adults

Anyone helping with a church activity is required to be open to the needs of the children, young people and vulnerable adults, and to work for their spiritual, physical and emotional well-being whilst they are in our care.

Forest Fold Baptist Church (FFBC) recognises that helpers and leaders may learn of, or suspect that, a child, young person or vulnerable adult may be the victim of physical, emotional or sexual abuse in their normal home, school, or play, work or other environment.

Understanding abuse and neglect.

Defining child abuse or abuse against an adult is a difficult and complex issue. A person may abuse by inflicting harm, or failing to prevent harm. Children and adults in need of protection 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 adult.

In order to safeguard those in our places of worship and organisations we adhere to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and have as our starting point as a definition of abuse, Article 19 which states:

1. Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.
2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

Also for adults the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights with particular reference to Article 5 which states:

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Responding to allegations of abuse

Under no circumstances should a worker carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. The following procedures are to be adopted:

- Concerns must be reported as soon as possible to one of the Safeguarding Team, who are nominated for dealing with the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including referring the matter on to the statutory authorities.
- In the absence of one of the Safeguarding Team, or if the suspicions in any way involve a member of the Team, then the report should be made to the most senior member of the team who is not under suspicion.
- Where concern is about a child, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator should contact Children's Services. Where the concern is regarding an adult in need of protection, contact Adult Social Care or take advice from Thirtyone:eight as above.

The East Sussex Children's Social Services telephone number is 01323 464222

The East Sussex Health and Social Care telephone number is 0345 6080191

- The Safeguarding Co-ordinator may need to inform others depending on the circumstances and/or nature of the concern. (for example the Church Trustees to log that a safeguarding concern is being dealt with, and the Insurance company to log that there is a possibility of a serious incident concerning safeguarding)
- 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 logged on iKnow Safeguarding module.
- Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, the absence of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or Deputy should not delay referral to Children's Services, Adult Social Care, the Police or taking advice from Thirtyone:eight.
- The Leadership will support the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputies 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 place of worship / organisation will use this procedure. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) 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 demonstrate its commitment to effective safeguarding and the protection of all those who are vulnerable.

- All records of concerns and follow up actions will be kept on the Safeguarding module on iKnow. The only people who have access to this are the safeguarding leads and the Trustee responsible for safeguarding.

The role of the safeguarding co-ordinators is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information on to statutory agencies who have a legal duty to investigate.

Section 3

How to respond to a child or vulnerable adult wishing to disclose abuse

As part of proper care, and in response to Government guidelines, FFBC Activity Leaders must be alert to the possibility that a child, young person or vulnerable adult might show signs of abuse or exploitation. Abuse and exploitation can be emotional, physical, spiritual or sexual, and can be organised or online. It may occur within the child or adult's home, school, work or another environment. Should there be a concern, FFBC Safeguarding Co-ordinators will work with and seek advice from Thirtyone:eight in following Government regulations and advice.

Any cause for concern, any suspicion that inappropriate behaviour is occurring, any direct report from a child, young person or vulnerable adult that they have a problem that needs further intervention from Children's Services, Adult Social Care or the Police, must be written up immediately whilst evidence is fresh in your mind (what was said, what you noticed, time, date, supporting evidence, witnesses etc) and reported to one of the FFBC Safeguarding Co-ordinators as soon as possible but not later than within 24 hours.

It is vital that if abuse is suspected the child, young person or adult is not questioned more than is absolutely necessary, that any questioning takes place with two leaders or helpers present and that accurate notes are taken. These notes must include any questions asked and the responses and should also make clear what was said prior to and following any questions. Persistent or leading questioning is likely to undermine any subsequent police or Children's services investigation.

If a child, young person or another adult discloses knowledge of abuse:

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- Do not promise confidentiality. Make clear as soon as you can that you will not be able to keep this a secret and say who you will need to tell.
- Do not discuss the matter secretly but ensure you can be seen by someone else if that is possible.
- Listen without interrupting.
- Keep calm and manage your feelings and reactions.
- Do not ask leading questions (questions which suggest a particular answer).
- Reassure the person that they are right to tell you.
- Ensure all notes are written in the person's own words as much as possible and ensure they are dated, timed and signed indicating where the disclosure took place and who was present.
- Simple diagrams of any cuts, bruises can be marked on a simple 'ginger-bread man' figure. No photos should be taken of injuries at this point in the disclosure.

Ensure the physical environment is welcoming, giving opportunity for the child, young person or vulnerable adult to talk in private but making sure others are aware that the conversation is taking place.

- It is especially important to allow time and space for the person to talk.
- Above everything else listen without interrupting.
- Be attentive and look at them whilst they are speaking.
- Show acceptance of what they say (however unlikely the story may sound) by reflecting back words or short phrases they have used.
- Try to remain calm, even if on the inside you are feeling something different.
- Be honest and don't make promises you can't keep regarding confidentiality.
- If they decide not to tell after all, accept their decision, let them know that you are always ready to listen. You may need to let the safeguarding team know a concern has been raised.
- Use language that is age appropriate
- For those with disabilities, non-English speaking or needs sign language we will endeavour to do our best to find someone to support with translation.

Helpful responses

- You have done the right thing in telling
- I am glad you have told me
- I will try to help you

Do not say

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it!
- Are you sure this is true?
- Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- I am shocked. Don't tell anyone else.

If there is powerful and unequivocal evidence that a child or vulnerable adult is at serious and imminent risk of harm outside FFBC, the matter must be reported immediately to one of our Safeguarding Co-ordinators, who may need to make a decision on whether to stop that person leaving the premises until the police or other professionals have been contacted.

If any FFBC member, whether an activity leader or not, has any cause for concern about the behaviour of an adult on FFBC premises (whether a church member or not) the matter should be discussed, in confidence, with one of the Safeguarding Co-ordinators, who will decide an appropriate course of action. They should email a summary of their concern to safeguarding@forestfold.org.uk. This email will be forwarded to all safeguarding leads who will then decide the best course of action.

Detailed procedures where there is a concern about a child

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 Safeguarding Co-ordinator or Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator will:

- Contact Children's Services (or Thirtyone;eight) 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 Children's Services.
- Seek medical help if needed urgently, informing the doctor of any suspicions.

- For lesser concerns, (e.g. poor parenting), encourage parent or carer to seek help, but not if this places the child at risk of significant harm.
- Where the parent or carer is unwilling to seek help, offer to accompany them. In cases of real concern, if they still fail to act, contact Children's Services direct for advice.
- 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 Services.

Allegations of sexual abuse

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator will:

- Contact the Children's Services Department Duty Social Worker for children and families. They may not speak to the parent or carer at this initial stage, but they would normally inform the Eldership of the church through contact with the Elder with oversight of Child Protection.
- Seek and follow the advice given by Thirtyone:eight if, for any reason they are unsure whether or not to contact Children's Services or the Police. Thirtyone:eight will confirm its advice in writing for future reference.

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

Suspensions or allegations of abuse or harm including; physical, sexual, organisational, financial, discriminatory, neglect, self-neglect, forced marriage, modern slavery, domestic abuse

If there is concern about any of the above the Safeguarding Co-ordinator 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 will;

Identify support services for the victim i.e. counselling or other pastoral support.

Contact Thirtyone:eight and in discussion with them will consider appropriate action with regards to the scale of the concern.

Allegations of abuse against a person who works with children

If an accusation is made against a church worker (whether a volunteer or paid member of staff) whilst following the procedure outlined above, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, in accordance with Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures, will need to liaise with Children's Social Services in regards to the suspension of the worker, also making a referral to a designated officer formally called a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). They should also report the accusation to Thirtyone:eight.

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and Designated Adult Safeguarding Officer (DASM) telephone number is 07825 782793 or 01323 466606. Email – lado@eastsussex.gov.uk

Consideration also needs to be given to the possibility of advising the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Section 4 - Prevention

Safer recruitment – appointment, support, supervision and training of leaders and workers

The Leadership will ensure all senior workers (e.g. activity co-ordinators, youth workers, etc.) whether paid or voluntary, will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with government guidance on safe recruitment. The same principles will be applied to those appointed to work with vulnerable adults. This includes ensuring that:

- Those carrying out such work have completed a self-declaration form.
- Safeguarding has been discussed with them.
- Where appropriate, written references have been obtained, and followed up.
- A Disclosure and Barring check (DBS) has been completed (we will comply with Code of Practice requirements concerning the fair treatment of applicants and the handling of information).
- The applicant has been given the safeguarding policies or can access on Forest Fold website and has certified that they have read these policies and know how to report concerns.

Management of workers – Code of Conduct

As a leadership we are committed to supporting all workers and ensuring they receive support and supervision. All workers will have seen and signed up to this Policy and will have been issued with a relevant Code of Conduct. The Home Office guidance 'Abuse of Trust Caring for Young People and the Vulnerable; Guidance for preventing abuse of Trust' is intended to avoid power imbalances and encourage a culture of mutual respect to prevent situations that could be perceived as coercive and controlling and to establish clear boundaries in regards to personal relationships.

DBS checks

Anyone over the age of 16 who volunteers to help church activities on a regular basis will be required to undertake a DBS check. These checks are completed using support from Thirynone: eight and are refreshed every 5 years.

Section 5

Pastoral Care

Supporting those affected by abuse or exploitation

The Leadership is committed to offering pastoral care, working with statutory agencies as appropriate, and offering support to those who have been affected by abuse or exploitation who have contact with or are part of the church.

Working with offenders

When someone attending FFBC is known to have abused or exploited children, young people, or is known to be a risk to vulnerable adults the Leadership, together with the Safeguarding Team will supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but in its safeguarding commitment to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults, set boundaries for that person which they will be expected to keep. Should this situation arise, a confidential contract between the individual and the church will be agreed: this will be tailored specifically to individual circumstances and, where possible, informed by risk assessments from the statutory agencies.

Section 6

Practice guidelines

As a Church working with children, young people and adults with care and support needs we wish to operate and promote good working practice. This will enable workers to run activities and events safely, develop good relationships and minimise the risk of false or unfounded accusations. These principles will apply to any joint venture with another church or organisation, and will include the use of our premises.

As well as general code of conduct for workers we also have a specific Code of Conduct for those involved with all Young People groups and activities.

Working in partnership with other organisations

We expect those with whom we work in partnership in the UK to follow these guidelines. We will discuss with all partners our safeguarding expectations where access to children, young people or vulnerable adults is possible and have a partnership agreement for safeguarding. It is our expectation that any organisation using our premises, as part of any agreement will have their own policy that meets Thirtyone:eight's safeguarding standards.

Where we work with organisations outside the UK the church leaders will ensure that no child, young person or adult is at risk and that procedures match our policy as closely as is possible. Parents of children and young people engaged in activities abroad or in the UK with partner organisations should be made aware of the arrangements for ensuring their safety and any potential areas of risk.

Good communication is essential in promoting safeguarding, both to those we wish to protect, to everyone involved in working with children and vulnerable adults and to all those with whom we work in partnership. The safeguarding policy is just one means of promoting safeguarding.

Signed by

  on behalf of the Leadership

 

Team

Safeguarding Co-ordinator on behalf of the Safeguarding

Date 18 APRIL '25