YORK CITY CHURCH SAFEGUARDING POLICY

CONTENTS

1. Our Commitment to Safeguarding Children, Young People & Adults-at-risk
2. The legal framework and guidance we work within
3. How we seek to keep children, young people and adults-at-risk safe
4. Roles and responsibilities
5. Recognising, responding and dealing with concerns
    - Recognising possible abuse
    - Responding to concerns and dealing with disclosures
    - Recording concerns
    - Referral
6. Further safeguarding measures and procedures
    - Reducing risk through safer recruitment
    - Staff and volunteer conduct
    - Safeguarding training for staff and volunteers
    - Safeguarding agreements
    - Risk assessments
    - Safeguarding Reviews & Learning
    - Escalation Procedures

Reviewed and Updated:
October 2026

1. OUR COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARDING

As a Christian organisation, York City Church affirms its belief in the God-given value of each person with whom it has contact and of a God who upholds and cares for those who are vulnerable. Out of this God-given love for people, we are committed to treating each individual with value and dignity, and aim to adopt the highest possible standards and take all reasonable steps to safeguard the welfare of children and adults-at-risk, and to prevent their abuse.

We are committed to listening to the voices of children and young people, ensuring their views are heard, respected, and considered in all safeguarding decisions.

We believe:

- no child, young person or adult-at-risk should experience abuse of any kind.
- all people should be valued, safe, and free to enjoy all aspects of participation in the life of the church.

We recognise:

- that children, young people and adults-at-risk can be the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and neglect.
- that we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, young people and adults at-risk, to keep them safe and to work in a way that protects them.
- that abuse can happen anywhere but creating an open and transparent culture of safeguarding and clear communication is key to preventing abuse here.
- that working in partnership with children, young people, adults-at-risk, and their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting people's welfare.
- that some children and adults-at-risk are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues and that extra safeguards may be needed to keep them safe from abuse.

Therefore, across the Church's leadership team, staff team and trustees, we are committed to creating a culture where safeguarding is given focus and attention, and this policy is well understood lived out in order to:

- protect children, young people and adults-at-risk from harm. This includes the children of adults who use our services.
- to provide staff and volunteers, as well as children, young people and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

In order to fulfil our responsibilities, all members of staff and those in voluntary roles working with children, young people and adults-at-risk from harm must read this safeguarding policy and sign to say they have read it, understood the content, and will abide by the principles to act immediately on concerns about a child or adult-at-risk's welfare. We also share this document with all volunteers, and it is publicly available to everyone online at yorkcitychurch.org.uk/safeguarding.

This policy applies to anyone responsible for the care and welfare of children, young people or adults-at-risk, including staff and volunteers within York City Church, and all who participate in our activities and ministries such as The Well, Make Lunch and The Welcome Cafe.

2. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND GUIDANCE WE WORK WITHIN

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England.

We accept the UN Universal Declaration 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 agree 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 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."

We accept the principles laid out by the Children Act 2004 and the Care Act 2014 , and work within current government and local authority guidelines. We are committed to fulfilling the requirements of the Prevent duty (anti-radicalisation and extremism).

Relevant documents include:

National

- The Children Act 2004
- The Care Act 2014
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017
- The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- The Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Section 16 – Position of Trust)
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026

3. HOW WE SEEK TO KEEP CHILDREN AND ADULTS-AT-RISK SAFE

There are three key elements that enable us to fulfil our legal responsibilities to identify individuals who may need early help, or who are suffering, or are at risk of suffering, harm.

1. PREVENTION

We take an organisation-wide approach to safeguarding and well-being, promoting a culture of openness, good communication and early intervention to help prevent abuse from occurring.

- We establish and maintain a culture in which children and adults at risk feel safe, are encouraged to speak up and know that they will be listened to and supported. They are made aware of how to seek help if they experience bullying or discrimination.
- We promote an understanding of the importance of challenging inappropriate or abusive behaviour and ensuring that such behaviour is never normalised or tolerated.
- We build and maintain positive relationships with other agencies to ensure that referrals for support and intervention are made promptly and appropriately, before risks escalate.
- We have robust safer recruitment procedures in place for all staff and volunteers, supported by appropriate safeguarding training.

2. RESPONSE

We have clear and well-defined procedures in place to identify and report actual or suspected cases of abuse, which are outlined in this document and available at yorkcitychurch.org.uk/safeguarding.

- We follow the latest safeguarding procedures and guidance endorsed by the government and our local authority.
- We have fully trained Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) (DSLs) and deputies in place. They receive regular training and are given appropriate time and resources to carry out their responsibilities.
- We work in partnership with parents and carers, seeking consent in accordance with local authority procedures and safeguarding requirements.
- We ensure that safeguarding concerns are recorded accurately and promptly, and that all records are stored securely and handled confidentially.

3. SUPPORT

We keep the individual at the centre of our approach, taking account of their needs, wishes and feelings when responding to safeguarding concerns.

- Children, young people and adults at risk who display behaviours that may put themselves or others at risk will receive positive, compassionate and appropriate support from our staff and volunteers.
- We recognise that individuals who have experienced abuse may display challenging behaviour or have complex emotional responses. We aim to provide a positive, supportive and safe environment in which everyone feels valued, respected and heard.
- We identify and work with relevant agencies to ensure individuals can access specialist support where needed. This may include local authority officers, mental health services, counselling, crisis support and advocacy services.
- We maintain appropriate and secure records of safeguarding concerns and actions taken, and notify the local authority of any further concerns in accordance with established procedures.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, but there are specific roles within York City Church that have particular duties in keeping people safe:

TRUSTEES

The board of **Trustees** have independent authority and legal responsibility for York City Church as a charity. They are responsible for providing good governance and oversight of the organisation which helps prevent abuse and means we can respond quickly and with integrity when concerns arise. Along with the church Leadership Team, the trustees have a critical role in decision making and compliance as well as setting the values, standards and behaviours which make up the culture of the organisation. There is a **nominated trustee with safeguarding responsibility (**James Bailey**)** who helps to oversee the organisation's response to concerns raised.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

The church **leadership team** of elders and deacons oversee the vision, direction and operations of the organisation, which includes the management of staff and volunteers. Along with the trustees, the church leadership have a critical role in decision making and compliance as well as setting the values, standards and behaviours which make up the culture of the organisation.

MINISTRY LEADS

The leaders of each ministry will have operational responsibility for ensuring the Safeguarding Policy is understood by all staff and volunteers and that new people receive adequate training regarding their responsibilities. They will also be the first point of contact for team members who have concerns regarding the welfare of vulnerable persons.

DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD (MARK ALTY)

The **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** is appointed to ensure that appropriate arrangements for keeping children and adults-at-risk safe are in place, and to always promote the safety and welfare of people. They oversee and review safeguarding practices, and take the lead in coordinating the response to concerns raised.

DEPUTY DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD (MILLIE HARRISON)

The DSL is assisted by a **Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads**. They work closely with the DSL and share some responsibilities for coordinating the response to concerns raised.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

All **staff and volunteers** are responsible for outworking the safeguarding arrangements and following the processes to keep children and adults-at-risk safe. They often work closely with children and adults-at-risk and most likely to become aware of any concerns before anyone else. It is their duty to recognise and respond to safeguarding concerns.

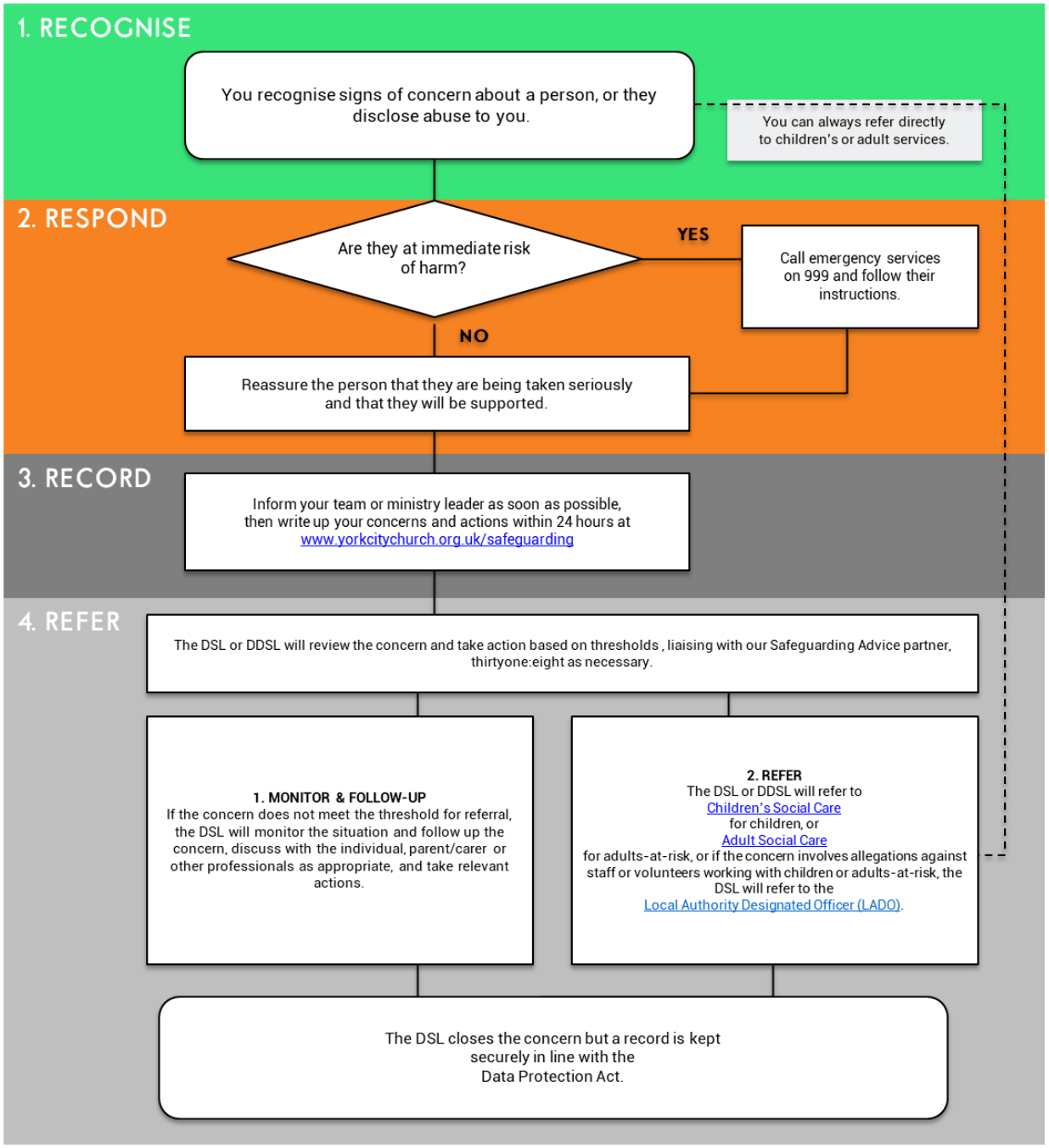
Named roles and contact details are kept up to date on yorkcitychurch.org.uk/safeguarding

5. RECOGNISING, RESPONDING AND DEALING WITH CONCERNS

The following steps outline our approach for dealing with concerns of abuse. They are set out under headings known as the 4 R's of Safeguarding:

1. Recognise
2. Respond
3. Record
4. Refer

Following steps 1-3 are the responsibility of the individual who raises the concern. Step 4 is usually the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSL).



1. RECOGNISE

Safeguarding concerns are usually identified in two ways:

1. Recognising signs or indicators of abuse: This involves noticing things that a person sees or hears, or information that someone else shares with them.
2. Receiving a disclosure of abuse: This occurs when a person tells someone about their experience of abuse or approaches them for help.

The ability to recognise signs or behaviours that may indicate abuse is fundamental to keeping people safe. All staff and volunteers will receive safeguarding training and should be able to identify possible signs of abuse.

CATEGORIES OF ABUSE

The four main categories of abuse are physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. These are outlined below.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Physical harm may also occur 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, which can have severe and lasting effects on their emotional development.

It may involve:

- Telling a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only when they meet another person's needs.
- Denying a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or making fun of what they say or how they communicate.
- Imposing expectations that are inappropriate for the child's age or stage of development, including interactions beyond their developmental capabilities.
- Overprotecting a child, restricting their opportunities for exploration and learning, or preventing them from participating in normal social interactions.
- Exposing a child to the ill-treatment of another person, including witnessing or hearing abuse.
- Subjecting a child to serious bullying, including cyberbullying, which may cause them to feel frightened or in danger.
- Exploiting or corrupting a child.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of child maltreatment, although it can also occur on its own.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. It does not necessarily involve physical violence.

Sexual abuse may include:

- Physical contact: Including assault by penetration, such as rape or oral sex, and non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing or touching outside clothing.
- Non-contact activities: Including involving children in looking at or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging sexually inappropriate behaviour, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse.

Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology may also be used to facilitate abuse offline.

Sexual abuse is not perpetrated solely by adult males. Women and other children can also commit acts of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse of children by other children, also known as child-on-child abuse, is a specific safeguarding concern. All staff should be familiar with their organisation's policies and procedures for recognising and responding to it.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of their health or development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy, for example, as a result of maternal substance misuse.

After a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter, including excluding a child from home or abandoning them.
- Protect a child from physical or emotional harm or danger.
- Provide adequate supervision, including using appropriate caregivers.
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- Meet a child's basic emotional needs or respond appropriately to them.

OTHER TYPES OF ABUSE AND SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

In addition to the four main categories of abuse, there are several other types and subcategories of abuse.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Child Criminal Exploitation occurs when children and young people are manipulated or coerced into committing crimes. This often involves gangs, including peer groups, street gangs and organised criminal gangs.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of sexual abuse that occurs when a child or young person is coerced, manipulated or deceived into sexual activity in exchange for something they need or want, such as gifts, drugs, money, status or affection.

Children and young people may be groomed into believing they are in a loving and consensual relationship. As a result, the abuse may appear consensual, and they may trust their abuser without understanding that they are being exploited.

CSE does not always involve physical contact and can also take place through technology.

County Lines

County Lines is a form of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). It involves gangs exploiting children and vulnerable adults to transport, store and sell drugs across the UK.

The term County Lines refers to the use of dedicated mobile phone lines to supply drugs, often involving children travelling across county boundaries.

Children may initially become involved because they are offered money or gifts. Others may be drawn in through relationships involving sexual exploitation, violence or manipulation.

County Lines can affect any child, regardless of age, gender or social background, and can occur anywhere. Although children involved may be breaking the law, they are also victims of criminal exploitation.

Bullying and Cyberbullying

Bullying is intentional behaviour that hurts another person. It can include:

- Name-calling.
- Hitting or pushing.
- Spreading rumours.
- Threatening or undermining someone.

Bullying can happen anywhere, including at school, at home or online. It is often repeated over a prolonged period and can cause both physical and emotional harm.

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online. Unlike offline bullying, it can follow a child wherever they go through social networks, gaming platforms and mobile phones. Children may experience bullying both online and offline at the same time.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is any single incident or pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading or violent behaviour, including sexual violence and economic, psychological and emotional abuse, by someone aged 16 or over towards a person they are, or have been, in a relationship with, or who is a family member. It can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, faith or background. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse are victims in their own right, and it is a form of child abuse. Any concerns must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay.

Domestic abuse can affect anyone in our church community, including those who appear to have stable families and active faith lives. We recognise that religious beliefs about marriage, forgiveness and family can make it harder for victims to speak out or leave, and that these beliefs must never be used to pressure someone to stay in or return to an abusive situation. Where domestic abuse is suspected, we would seek to create appropriate safeguards. For example, we would generally seek to avoid couples counselling or mediation in that context, instead providing pastoral support separately with regards to anyone alleged to have caused harm and the person harmed.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) involves the deliberate alteration or removal of a female's genitals for non-medical reasons.

It is also known as female circumcision or cutting, although other terms are used. FGM is a form of child abuse, is dangerous and is a criminal offence in the UK.

Grooming

Grooming occurs when someone builds a relationship, trust and an emotional connection with a child or young person in order to manipulate, exploit or abuse them.

Children and young people who are groomed may experience sexual abuse, exploitation or trafficking.

Anyone can be a groomer, regardless of their age, gender or race. Grooming can take place over a short or long period, ranging from weeks to years.

Groomers may also develop relationships with a young person's family or friends to appear trustworthy or authoritative.

Radicalisation

Radicalisation is the process through which a person comes to support or become involved in extremist ideologies. It can expose children and young people to significant harm.

The process may involve:

- Grooming, either online or in person.
- Exploitation, including sexual exploitation.
- Psychological manipulation.
- Exposure to violent material or other inappropriate information.
- The risk of physical harm or death through involvement in extremist acts.

Radicalisation often happens gradually. Children and young people who are affected may not realise that they are being drawn into extremist ideologies.

Trafficking

Child trafficking occurs when children and young people are tricked, forced or persuaded to leave their homes, transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold.

Children may be trafficked for a range of purposes, including:

- Sexual exploitation.
- Benefit fraud.
- Forced marriage.
- Domestic servitude, such as cleaning, cooking and childcare.
- Forced labour in factories or agriculture.
- Involvement in criminal activities, such as begging, theft, working on cannabis farms or transporting drugs.

Trafficked children may experience multiple forms of abuse and neglect. Traffickers may use physical, sexual and emotional abuse to control them. Children and young people may also experience physical and emotional neglect and sexual exploitation.

Common signs to be aware of

Abuse can be complex and difficult to identify. However, there are common signs that may indicate something concerning is happening in a person's life.

Staff and volunteers should be alert to the following:

Changes in behaviour and relationships

- Unexplained changes in behaviour or personality.
- Becoming withdrawn or appearing anxious.
- Becoming unusually aggressive.
- Lacking social skills or having few, if any, friends.
- Having a poor bond or relationship with a parent or carer.
- Demonstrating knowledge of adult issues that is inappropriate for their age or developmental stage.
- Running away or going missing.
- Consistently choosing to wear clothing that fully covers their body.

Physical injuries and signs of possible harm

Be alert to physical injuries that may be non-accidental, including:

- Injuries on both sides of the body.
- Injuries to soft tissue.
- Injuries with distinctive patterns, such as clusters of bruises on the upper arm, the outside of the thigh or elsewhere on the body.
- Injuries that carry the imprint of an implement or hand.
- Bruises surrounded by petechiae (small dots of blood under the skin), which are reported more commonly in children who have been abused than in those who have sustained accidental injuries.
- Injuries that do not fit the explanation given.
- Delays in seeking medical attention for injuries that appear to have occurred some time earlier.
- Untreated injuries.

Remember that signs of abuse can sometimes have other explanations. However, it is important to respond to and report any concerns you identify, even if there turns out to be a reasonable explanation.

2. RESPOND

No sign of abuse should ever be ignored. The welfare of the child or adult at risk is paramount. Any statements or allegations of abuse or neglect made by children or adults at risk must always be taken seriously.

If you identify any signs or indicators of abuse, you should record your concerns by following the process outlined in the next section. Where appropriate, you may ask open questions to help the person share any concerns they wish to discuss. For example, you might say, "You seem a bit quiet today. Can you tell me about it?"

If the person chooses not to talk, their decision should be respected. However, any concerns you have must still be recorded.

Immediate risk of harm

If you believe someone is at immediate risk of harm, call 999 and follow the emergency services' instructions. You should then inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) at the earliest opportunity.

Dealing with disclosures

A disclosure occurs when a person tells someone directly about their experience of abuse or approaches them for help.

The initial response to a disclosure can have a lasting impact, so it is essential to respond sensitively and appropriately. A person who has built up the courage to disclose abuse may be feeling desperate and may have reached a point where they feel unable to cope alone. It is vital that they are taken seriously.

The person they choose to speak to may be the only person they feel safe talking to, and it may be the only time they ever disclose their experience.

Listening to children and adults at risk, and giving them the space to express their views and experiences, is a vital part of responding effectively to safeguarding concerns.

How to respond to a disclosure of abuse

When someone discloses abuse:

- Encourage them to express their views, feelings and experiences in a way that is appropriate to their age and level of understanding.
- Listen actively and sensitively, without judgement or interruption.
- Make sure they know who they can talk to and understand how to raise any concerns.
- Take everything they say seriously, even if their account seems unlikely or difficult to believe.
- Avoid silencing or dismissing their views. Never make fun of what they say or how they communicate.

- Consider their wishes and feelings when deciding what action to take, while ensuring that all statutory duties and safeguarding procedures are followed.
- Reassure them that they are not to blame for what has happened and that they have done the right thing by telling someone.
- Explain that the information they share will be taken seriously.
- Avoid physical reassurance or comfort wherever possible. If physical contact is needed and appropriate, always ask for their consent first, such as before offering a hug or putting an arm around their shoulder.
- Explain what you intend to do next and take action without delay.
- Ensure their immediate safety and seek medical help if needed. Inform medical professionals of any safeguarding concerns.

In addition, you must:

- Not promise confidentiality. Explain that you may need to share the information with others, but only on a need-to-know basis.
- Avoid asking too many questions. Only clarify what has been said to ensure you have understood correctly.
- Never ask why they did not tell someone sooner.
- Never tell them not to tell anyone else.
- Never attempt to investigate the matter yourself.
- Not discuss the concern with parents or carers until you have recorded your concerns and received advice about the appropriate next steps.

Things to consider

Children will usually seek support from someone they trust. Where possible, it is important to ensure that the child receives support from the person to whom they initially disclosed, so they do not have to repeat their experience unnecessarily.

Under no circumstances should an alleged victim, whether a child or adult, be required to meet or face their alleged abuser.

A person may not disclose everything at once. If they share further information at a later time, the same safeguarding process must be followed.

A disclosure may also involve someone who works for another organisation or a person who is unknown to you. The need to respond appropriately remains the same.

In cases of severe sexual assault, such as rape, which may have occurred recently (for example, within the last few days), the police should be contacted. Do not touch or tamper with potential evidence, such as clothing, and advise the person not to wash or otherwise clean themselves before receiving appropriate guidance.

The victim's wishes and feelings should be considered when determining what action to take and what services to provide. However, all statutory duties must always be followed.

3. RECORD

Anyone can record a concern directly to bring it to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL).

Concerns can be reported by completing the online form at:

www.yorkcitychurch.org.uk/safeguarding

However, staff and volunteers should usually share their concerns directly with their team or ministry leader, who will liaise with the DSL or DDSL.

All safeguarding concerns must be recorded.

ALL concerns, even minor ones, must be recorded and must never be ignored.

All staff and volunteers have a personal responsibility to act and should never assume that someone else will take action.

If you believe someone is at immediate risk of harm, call 999 and follow the emergency services' instructions.

If a concern or allegation involves the DSL, you should contact the Trustee with safeguarding responsibilities directly.

How to record a concern

Once a concern has been shared with the appropriate person, it must be recorded within 24 hours, if it has not already been recorded directly.

The person who raised the concern is usually the most appropriate person to complete the record. This can be done using the online safeguarding form:

www.yorkcitychurch.org.uk/safeguarding

The online form is publicly accessible and requires the following information:

- Concern date and time: When you first became aware of the concern.
- Concern summary: A brief headline or title describing the nature of the concern.
- Details of the concern: This should include:
    - The individual's name, full address and date of birth, if known.
    - The date and time of any incident, if different from when you became aware of it.
    - An accurate account of any conversation or disclosure, using the individual's own words wherever possible. Include what was seen, heard and said.
    - The names of any third parties who were present.
    - The location of any injuries, including their colour and shape. Injuries should also be recorded on a body map template, where appropriate.
- Your name and contact details: These are optional to allow people to report anonymously.

When recording a concern, it is important to:

- Be clear and accurate, recording what was said in the individual's own words wherever possible.
- Remain objective and professional, clearly distinguishing between facts and any personal opinions.
- Include contact details, such as telephone numbers and email addresses, wherever possible.
- Document the actions taken to safeguard the individual at the time.

A ministry or team leader, DSL or DDSL may help with recording the concern to ensure that the right questions are asked and that the information is as factual and complete as possible.

Where possible, concerns should be recorded directly using the online form. If a concern is initially shared through another method, it must still be submitted through the safeguarding system. Once it has been submitted, any previous copies of the concern should be destroyed or permanently deleted from other electronic systems, including email.

What happens next?

Once a concern has been logged, the DSL or DDSL will be notified. They will review the information and decide on the most appropriate course of action. They may need to contact the person who reported the concern to obtain further information.

There are two possible courses of action:

i. Monitor and follow up

If the concern does not meet the threshold for referral, or the level of concern is inconclusive, the DSL or DDSL may decide to monitor the situation and follow up.

This may involve:

- Asking the team to report any additional concerns.
- Gathering further information, where appropriate.
- Discussing the concern with the individual, their parent or carer, or other professionals, as appropriate, to establish the facts.
- Seeking professional advice from appropriate safeguarding services, such as Thirtyone:eight or the NSPCC.
- Setting clear actions and deadlines for follow-up.

Monitoring and follow-up may be appropriate when a concern is minor and does not meet the threshold for risk of harm, or when further information is needed to determine whether the threshold has been met.

ii. Make a referral

If a concern, or a pattern of multiple concerns, meets the threshold for risk of harm, the DSL or DDSL will make a referral to the appropriate statutory authorities to ensure that those involved receive appropriate help and support.

4. REFER

Referrals to statutory services are usually the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL).

A referral will be made when the DSL or DDSL considers that an individual is at risk of harm.

Understanding risk of harm

A person's risk of harm may change over time, depending on their circumstances. They may be at risk for a limited period because of temporary changes or life events, such as an illness from which they later recover.

Risk may also increase because of several interconnected factors. These may affect a person's ability to protect themselves or safeguard their own interests, or create opportunities for others to neglect, exploit or abuse them.

There are no absolute criteria for determining whether harm is "significant". The DSL and DDSL will assess the possible risk of harm based on statutory guidance and advice from our safeguarding partner, Thirtyone:eight.

Referrals should be considered not only when there is an urgent risk of harm, but also when there is a longer-term risk that could be reduced through early help services or other appropriate intervention.

Harm to children

Harm to children is defined in Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 as the ill-treatment of a child or the impairment of their health or development.

Harm may also be considered significant by comparing a child's health and development with what might reasonably be expected of a similar child.

Harm to adults at risk

Harm to adults at risk includes harmful conduct and may involve:

- Behaviour that causes physical or psychological harm, such as harassment, intimidation or causing fear, alarm or distress.
- Unlawful conduct that adversely affects a person's property, rights or interests, such as theft, fraud or extortion.
- Behaviour that causes self-harm or self-neglect.

An adult may be at risk of harm if they have additional care and support needs, whether or not the local authority is meeting those needs, or if they are engaged in, or are likely to engage in, activities that may cause self-harm.

Where an adult lacks the mental capacity to protect themselves or others from abuse, it may be necessary to take action on their behalf.

Care must be taken not to label any individual or group as inherently vulnerable because of their personal characteristics, as this can be disempowering.

Both the Care Act 2014 and the Mental Capacity Act 2005 require organisations to consider and assess an adult's capacity to make decisions and to obtain valid consent before undertaking safeguarding interventions, where appropriate.

When safeguarding adults at risk, it is essential to assess mental capacity in each case. Individuals should be empowered to participate in decisions about their safety, and any actions taken on behalf of someone who lacks capacity should be in their best interests.

Clear records of capacity assessments and consent must be maintained to support legal and ethical responsibilities and uphold the rights, autonomy and dignity of adults at risk.

Making a referral

Making a referral to statutory services is usually the responsibility of the DSL or DDSL. This helps ensure consistency in the process and enables the DSL to build relationships with referral agencies.

However, staff and volunteers also have the right to share their concerns directly with Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care or the police, without affecting their terms of employment or role.

All referrals must be confirmed in writing by the person making the referral within 24 working hours, unless they were submitted directly online.

The DSL or DDSL should save and upload a copy of the referral to the appropriate record in the private safeguarding drive. The record should include the date, time and outcome of the referral.

Supporting those affected by abuse

York City Church is committed to providing pastoral care and support to everyone affected by abuse who has contact with the organisation. We will work with statutory agencies as appropriate.

We adopt a survivor-centred approach that prioritises the needs of victims and survivors.

Disclosing abuse can be extremely difficult. Victims and survivors may feel more supported if someone from the organisation checks in with them regularly. Following a disclosure, the DSL or DDSL should therefore arrange for someone to offer pastoral care and check on the victim's well-being, with their agreement or, where appropriate, the agreement of their parent or carer.

This support should be arranged in consultation with the individual to ensure they are comfortable with the nominated person knowing about the disclosure, if that person was not initially involved, and with the proposed contact arrangements.

In addition to providing initial pastoral care, the DSL will usually identify and liaise with other agencies that can offer specialist support.

Victims and survivors may sometimes be uncertain about what support they need or whether they wish to engage with the support being offered. In these circumstances, the nominated person should continue to listen and offer support until the individual feels able to decide what support, if any, they would like to receive.

6. FURTHER SAFEGUARDING MEASURES & PROCEDURES

Reducing Risk Through Safer Recruitment

York City Church follows robust safer recruitment procedures to help ensure that all staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children, young people and adults at risk. These measures include:

- Safeguarding commitment: Making our commitment to safeguarding clear in role advertisements and informing applicants that appropriate safeguarding checks will be carried out.
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act: Ensuring that all paid staff and volunteers are aware that work with children is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- Role descriptions: Providing written job or role descriptions that clearly outline the safeguarding responsibilities associated with each position.
- Application and selection process: Requiring prospective staff and volunteers to complete an application form and participate in an appropriate selection process. This includes an interview for paid roles and a conversation with the relevant ministry leader for volunteers.
- References and identification: Obtaining two references (including one from the current or most recent employer for job applicants), two forms of identification and original copies of any relevant qualifications.
- Right to Work checks: Completing the necessary Right to Work checks for all employees.
- Self-declaration: Requiring applicants to complete a self-declaration disclosing any criminal record or other information that may make them unsuitable to work with children or adults at risk.
- DBS checks: Completing Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for all staff and volunteers working with children, young people or adults at risk, in accordance with DBS requirements and other relevant official guidance. Anyone who does not meet the criteria for a vetting and barring check (for example, those under 16) must always be supervised by appropriately checked adults.
- Safeguarding induction: Requiring all staff and volunteers to complete relevant safeguarding induction training within six weeks of their start date.
- Ongoing supervision and review: Carrying out regular reviews, session debriefs and one-to-one supervision with staff.
- DBS re-checking: Operating a rolling programme of DBS re-checks every three years and annual checks through the DBS Update Service.

If references or an enhanced DBS check, where relevant, indicate that an individual has previously abused or acted improperly towards a child or adult at risk, they will not be authorised to work with vulnerable individuals. The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) will also be informed in accordance with our legal duties under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

Staff and Volunteer Conduct

The character and conduct of employed staff will be reviewed and managed by their line manager through regular one-to-one meetings and appraisal processes. These reviews will help ensure that staff continue to adhere to our Safeguarding Policy and Good Practice Guidelines.

Ministry leaders will regularly review the character and conduct of volunteers to ensure that they also adhere to our Safeguarding Policy and Good Practice Guidelines.

Any concerns about the conduct of staff or volunteers will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who will determine the most appropriate course of action.

Safeguarding Training for Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers must be able to recognise the possible signs of abuse, including emotional, physical and sexual abuse, and neglect. They must also understand how to report any safeguarding concerns.

Everyone will be made aware of our Safeguarding Policy, procedures and good practice expectations. All staff and volunteers must complete appropriate safeguarding training within six weeks of their start date and annually thereafter.

The level and depth of safeguarding training will depend on each individual's role and responsibilities.

Safeguarding Agreements with Individuals

Where an individual is known or suspected to have caused harm and wishes to be part of the Church, pastoral care should be offered in a way that prioritises the safety of others, particularly those who may be vulnerable.

A Safeguarding Agreement will be developed with relevant individuals. This agreement will set out clear expectations, rules and guidance about how the individual may attend and participate in church life while ensuring the safety of others.

Each Safeguarding Agreement will be tailored to the circumstances and needs of everyone involved. It will specify:

- The reason for the agreement: The basis for the decision to put a Safeguarding Agreement in place.
- Expectations and responsibilities: What the individual can expect from the Church and what is expected of them. This may include restrictions relating to activities, ministries, behaviour or access to particular venues and locations.
- Information sharing: Details of any other individuals or organisations, as agreed, who have been made aware of the Safeguarding Agreement. These may include statutory agencies, voluntary organisations or agreed accountability partners within the Church community.
- Consequences of non-compliance: The implications of the individual breaching the agreement. These may include warnings, the requirement to have an allocated chaperone or restrictions on participation in church life, including being barred from certain activities or settings.

The Safeguarding Agreement must be signed by the individual, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy, and at least one other appropriate person.

A Safeguarding Agreement is not a legally binding document. It is intended to establish a shared understanding of expectations and responsibilities. Individuals entering into an agreement should be treated with respect and fairness by Church leadership and demonstrate a commitment to practising safe behaviour.

If an individual refuses to enter into a Safeguarding Agreement, or behaves in a way that poses a risk to the safety of vulnerable people, further advice may be sought from external safeguarding organisations and statutory agencies to determine what other options are available.

Risk Assessments

Risk assessments must be in place for all official Church activities. They should take account of the needs of vulnerable individuals and groups and identify appropriate measures to reduce and manage safeguarding risks.

Safeguarding Reviews and Learning

As part of York City Church's commitment to safeguarding best practice, we have systems in place to regularly review our safeguarding arrangements. These reviews help us learn from incidents, identify areas for improvement and implement any necessary changes or recommendations.

Our safeguarding review processes include:

- Policy review: Our Safeguarding Policy and procedures are reviewed annually and updated as soon as possible following changes to named staff, national guidance or local guidance.
- Safeguarding audits: In consultation with children's and adults' social work professionals, safeguarding audits are completed twice a year. These audits identify strengths and weaknesses in our safeguarding arrangements and help ensure that we meet our legal safeguarding obligations.
- Case reviews: The DSL and DDSL meet every two months to review open safeguarding concerns. These meetings provide an opportunity to consider updates, assess ongoing risks and plan the next steps for each case.
- Trustee meeting agendas: Safeguarding is a standing item on trustee meeting agendas to ensure that it is discussed and monitored regularly.
- Data monitoring: Anonymised safeguarding data reports are provided to trustees quarterly. These reports include categories and statistics relating to reported safeguarding concerns and the actions taken, without sharing identifiable personal information. They help trustees identify trends, recurring themes or areas of concern and manage the organisation's resources appropriately.

Escalation Procedures

If you believe that a safeguarding concern is not being taken seriously or is not being dealt with in a timely or appropriate manner, you should escalate your concern.

Initially, concerns should be raised with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). If you are not satisfied with the response or the action taken, you should contact the Trustee with safeguarding responsibilities.

You can also refer your concerns directly to the relevant children's or adult social care services. If your concern relates to someone working with children or adults at risk, you may also contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), where appropriate.