

BEHANY CHRISTIAN CHURCH,
LIGHTBURN ROAD, ULVERSTON,
CUMBRIA, LA12 0BX.

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Working with Children, Youth
and Vulnerable Adults

May 2021

Revised January 2025 and May
2026

BETHANY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

CHURCH DETAILS

Bethany Christian Church (hereafter, "The church")

Lightburn Road, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 0BX

Phone: 0781 4928711.

Website: www.bethany.org.uk

An independent church affiliated with the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches

Registered charity No. 1178517

1.1 WHY HAVE A SAFEGUARDING POLICY?

The Church has a wide-ranging ministry and welcomes all members of society to its meetings, seeking to provide a safe and caring environment for all, especially children, young people and vulnerable adults. It is to ensure that all our work is carried out in a way that brings glory to God that these guidelines have been produced. We acknowledge that children, young people and vulnerable adults can be the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and neglect and, therefore, need our protection.

Each individual who works with children, young people or vulnerable adults must have read the safeguarding policy prior to undertaking any direct work with them, to ensure both their own protection and that of the child / young person / vulnerable adult. They must undertake to apply its contents and personally review the policy every 12 months. Likewise, those church regulars who attend outside venues, for example, services in social care settings for the elderly.

In summary, the Church regards safeguarding and good working practice as a priority. In the interests of everyone concerned, it therefore operates a formal Safeguarding Policy.

1.2 OUR COMMITMENT

The Elders recognise the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The Church is committed to ensuring that everyone working with children, young people and vulnerable adults:

- Has undergone a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check at enhanced level.
- Is adequately trained, where necessary, and supervised.
- Understands and follows the church's Safeguarding Policy.

The Church also:

- Recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Is committed to supporting parents and families, and carers of vulnerable adults.
- Recognizes the unique worth of each individual.
- Is committed to nurturing, protecting and safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
- Exercises care in the appointment of all those working with such groups.
- Is committed to following statutory and specialist guidelines in working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Will review its Safeguarding Policy annually.

Should the Church have any safeguarding concerns it will seek the advice of the Safeguarding Coordinator(s) and, if appropriate, contact Cumbria Children's Services for advice.

1.3 WHERE CAN I OBTAIN A COPY OF THE SAFEGUARDING POLICY?

The safeguarding policy may be viewed and/or a copy obtained from the Safeguarding Coordinator. It is also available from the Bethany church website.

1.4 SAFEGUARDING COORDINATOR(S)

The responsibility of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator is to:

- Review and maintain the Safeguarding Policy.
- To help coordinate the appointment of any persons working with children and vulnerable adults with respect to safeguarding, including DBS checks.
- To maintain a record of all safeguarding issues according to guidelines.
- To be available if a disclosure occurs and follow the disclosure procedure, including informing the appropriate authorities.

The current Safeguarding Coordinator lead is: Chris Bantoft - telephone number: 07814 928711. If you can't get hold of Chris then contact Matt Rich – telephone number: 07527 525223.

2. GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

We acknowledge that children and young people can be the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and neglect. We accept the U N 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." 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.

2.1 GENERAL GUIDELINES

All those who work with children and young people should endeavour to:

- Treat them with respect and dignity, as befitting their age, in attitude, language and actions.
- Seek to promote their wellbeing in every way.
- Exercise control and discipline without resorting to physical punishment.
- Ensure another adult is informed if they need to take a child to the toilet.
- Work with or within sight of another adult.

All those who work with children and young people should avoid:

- Any scapegoating, ridiculing or rejecting of a young person.
- Any inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form.
- Rough, physically or sexually provocative games.
- Showing favouritism to any one child, young person or group.
- Being with children and young people on their own.
- Allowing unknown adults access to children. Visitors should always be accompanied by a known person.
- Putting a child out of a meeting unattended.

We aim to provide a warm, nurturing environment for children and young people whilst avoiding any inappropriate behaviour – including anything that could be misconstrued as abuse.

Young children may sometimes need comforting: make sure they are responded to warmly, but with other adults around. First aid should be administered with others around.

Very occasionally it may be necessary to restrain a child or young person who is harming themselves or others. Use the minimum amount of force necessary and inform the parents and the Safeguarding Coordinator as soon as possible.

All physical contact should be an appropriate response to the child's needs, and not the needs of the adult. Colleagues must be prepared to support each other and act or speak out if they think any adult is behaving inappropriately.

2.2 DUTY OF CARE AND POSITIONS OF TRUST

The Children Act 2004 (England) places a duty on organisations involved in providing services for children and young people to safeguard and promote their well-being. This means all workers should treat those they are caring for with respect and dignity as well as demonstrate competence and integrity.

The duty of care is in part exercised through the development of respectful and caring relationships but also by workers taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of those they have responsibility for, particularly in relation to sexual, physical and emotional abuse. Before

individuals start working with children, young people and vulnerable adults, they need to understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust inherent to their role.

All adults working with children, young people and vulnerable adults are in positions of trust. It is therefore vital workers ensure they do not, even unwittingly, use their position of power and authority inappropriately.

Workers should always maintain professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted. Any kind of sexual relationship between an adult worker and a child is never acceptable and if concerns arise in this area, this should be recorded and reported to the Safeguarding Coordinator.

In addition, the trusting relationship between worker and child / young person means that the worker should never:

- Use their position to gain access to information for their own or others' advantage.
- Use their position to intimidate, bully, humiliate, threaten, coerce or undermine.

Under Health and Safety at Work legislation, organisations have a duty of care towards the well-being of all workers and ensure they are treated fairly. They are required to provide a safe working environment and guidance on safe working practice.

2.3 HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

The minimum required staffing levels for children's groups are:

- 0-2 years, 1 person for every 3 children.
- 2-3 years, 1 person for every four children.
- 3-8 years, 1 person for every 8 children.
- Over 8 years, 1 person for the first 8 children and then one extra person for every extra 12 children.

Each group should have at least two adults and it is recommended that there should be at least one male and one female.

At no point should a single leader be alone with a child of any age in a room. If groups are in adjoining rooms, doors should be kept open. If there is a need to talk confidentially to a child, this should be done where possible within the sight of others. If a leader is in a situation where they are left alone with a child, they should tell another leader immediately afterwards.

Young people aged between 14 and 18 may help with groups, but should be supervised by an adult helper who will be responsible for ensuring that good practice and the safeguarding procedures are followed.

Adults asked to help on a very occasional basis may be seen as visitors, but must be responsible to an appointed worker and must be supervised at all times.

Other health and safety advice:

- Groups must have access to a phone in order to call for help if necessary.
- Adults should be aware of the fire procedures. (See the Bethany Fire Safety Policy.)
- No smoking should be permitted in areas where there are children. Alcohol and illegal drugs must not be used by adult leaders whilst children / young people are in their care.
- A record of the names, addresses and emergency contact numbers of the children attending the meeting should be kept in the immediate vicinity of the meeting venue.
- In the event of a toileting accident, two leaders should deal with the situation. If the child has to be changed, it should be recorded in the log book and the parent(s) notified as soon as possible.

2.4 GUIDELINES RE. TRANSPORTATION

Children and young people should not be taken in a vehicle without the prior consent of the parents. All cars that carry children should be comprehensively insured. The insured person should check with the insurance company that their policy covers the giving of lifts during church activities. All cars that carry children should have an up-to-date MOT certificate. All children must wear suitable seat belts. Two adults should be present. If for any reason a driver has to transport one child on his or her own, though, the child must sit at the back of the car. This should only happen for short distances or in case of emergency.

2.5 RECORDS OF ACTIVITIES

For each activity a record book will be held for 20 years containing a register and a log, as follows:

i) The **register** will be kept of the children and helpers present on each occasion. A note will also be made of any other people in the rooms used by the children. For off-premises activities, requiring transport, the names of the passengers and drivers must be included in the register.

ii) The **log** will record any unusual events, relevant in the context of safeguarding children, with each leader recording what they witnessed. (This can be very helpful if leaders have to deal with a difficult young person who may subsequently make accusations of assault. A young person who constantly makes throwaway sexual comments about church workers, for example, may later make an allegation of actual abuse. We ought to attempt to nip any issues in the bud by addressing any issues with the young person's parents. Records of previous examples of concerning behaviours will enable any allegation to be seen in context. Of course, if a number of young people all make similar comments about one worker, this should warn the leadership that they have a problem with that person. Logs can protect both children and workers.) Workers should also record in the log incidents such as fights and what action was taken by the leaders. As the information in the log book is likely to be very sensitive, the log book will be kept safely by the leader but not on church premises.

iii) An **accident book** will be used, for all children's and young people's activities to record any accidents or injuries. Parents (and older children) should be asked to sign the accident book.

3. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE: RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY TO AN ALLEGATION OR SUSPICION OF ABUSE

3.1 RECOGNISING ABUSE

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger for example, via the internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

The four definitions of abuse below operate in England based on the government guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010)'.

Physical abuse:

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused 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 such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse:

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, using pornography, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect:

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm and danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Evidence of abuse will come from one of two sources, either the worker's own observations or by the child or young person confiding. It is important that all workers are vigilant to detect possible evidence of abuse and are approachable for children and young people to talk about their concerns.

3.2 DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE BY (OR IN RESPECT OF) A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON

If a child / young person asks to speak to you alone, it is important to listen. The following guidelines should be followed if possible:

- Be open, available and relaxed. Listen before you speak. Take what is said seriously (however unlikely it seems).
- If a young person wants to speak in private, ensure that the conversation is visible to another worker, e.g., by keeping doors open.
- Avoid putting undue pressure on the person. Allow them to talk, but don't unduly press for information. Help them to decide what they want to do.
- Never promise, if asked, to tell nobody. Be clear that you may need to tell certain, appropriate others the content of the conversation.
- Keep a record of who is spoken to in case follow-up is needed. Sign, date and time the notes.
- If a situation is encountered where the listener feels uncomfortable (where, for example, abuse is disclosed or the person is deemed to be at risk of either harming themselves or others), they should speak to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator as soon as possible.

In cases where neglect or abuse is disclosed:

- Tell the child / young person they are not to blame for anything that has happened and reassure them that they were right to tell you.
- Reassure them that they will continue to be supported during the difficult time to come.
- Seek advice from the Safeguarding Co-ordinator; if they are not immediately available contact the local Children's Services Department directly.
- As soon as practicable carefully record what was said, how they said it, and how they appeared emotionally. Distinguish between fact and opinion. Sign, date and time the notes.

In cases where a parent or another adult report neglect or abuse but are reluctant to inform the relevant authorities, they should be encouraged to discuss the matter with Children's Services.

Whilst there is a general presumption in favour of confidentiality of pastoral conversations of all kinds, this cannot apply in the case of disclosures concerning the abuse of children by those who have perpetrated it. The Children Act 1989 states that “the welfare of the child is paramount”. However, those who admit offences against children should be assured that, within the constraints of the law and subject to the obligation to safeguard the welfare of children, they will continue to receive the pastoral care and support of the church.

3.3 RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

Under no circumstances should a worker carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse. Rather, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator should be informed, so that he/she can make a decision regarding a referral to Children’s Services Social Care or not. If the Co-ordinator is not available, or if the worker is unhappy about the Church’s response, they may contact Children’s Services directly.

In the case of allegations of neglect or abuse by a parent, care should be taken not to inform the child’s parents so that any investigation is not compromised. Children’s Services is the lead agency in safeguarding and it is their responsibility to take the next steps. However, the police can be contacted if the child is deemed to be at immediate risk.

The Safeguarding Co-ordinator should contact Children’s Services. The local Children’s Services are contactable 24hrs a day on **0333 3732724** (the Safeguarding Hub).

4. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE: SAFE RECRUITMENT OF WORKERS

4.1 SAFE RECRUITMENT

The Elders will ensure all regular workers will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in their role. This includes ensuring that:

- There is a written job description for the role.
- A self-declaration form in respect of any previous convictions, should be completed.
- Those short listed have been informally interviewed beforehand by one of the Elders or the Women and Families Worker.
- Safeguarding has been discussed at the above and the worker given a copy of this policy. In particular, they should be made aware of how to report any concerns.
- Two written references have been obtained in the case of those who have been in the church for less than 12 months, and followed up where appropriate.
- A DBS (enhanced level) check has been completed. (We will comply with standards of good practice in respect of requirements concerning the fair treatment of applicants and the handling of information, such as those set out by Thirtyone:eight.)

4.2 SUPPORT AND TRAINING

The Church has a responsibility to:

- Support all those who work with children and young people by providing a safe and structured environment in which safeguarding is seen as a priority.
- Provide pastoral support to all such workers and allow them to speak confidentially to appropriate persons if concerns are raised.
- Provide 1:1 or group training within the Church.
- The whole Church has a responsibility to report any concerns about any workers within the Church to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or the Church Elders.

5. VULNERABLE ADULTS WITHIN THE CHURCH

5:1. DEFINITION OF ADULTS AT RISK

Adults at risk are those who:

- Are unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests.
- Are at risk of harm.
- Are more vulnerable to being harmed due to physical disability, mental disorder or illness.

Thirtyone:eight have identified eight possible signs and indicators of abuse in relation to adults: physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, domestic abuse, psychological abuse, modern slavery, organizational abuse and neglect / acts of omission.

5:2. PROCEDURES WHERE THERE IS CONCERN THAT AN ADULT IS IN NEED OF PROTECTION

Suspicious or Allegations of Physical or Sexual Abuse

If a vulnerable adult has a physical injury or symptom of sexual abuse the Safeguarding Coordinator will:

- Discuss any concerns with the individual themselves giving due regard to their autonomy, privacy and rights to lead an independent life.
- If the vulnerable adult is in immediate danger or has sustained a serious injury contact the Emergency Services, informing them of any suspicions.
- For advice contact the Safeguarding Adults Team - **03003733301** or 01228 526690 (Out of Hours service) who have responsibility under Section 47 of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 and government guidance, 'No Secrets', to investigate allegations of abuse.

6. EX-SEXUAL OFFENDERS OR OTHER ADULTS POSING A POTENTIAL RISK TO CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

The Church is a place for all who fall short and sin, for the vulnerable and for those in need. Abusers are people in desperate need of help. However, whatever support is offered to an ex-offender, the protection and welfare of children and the vulnerable in the Church must come first. An ex-offender will need to realize that contact, direct or indirect, with children and the vulnerable will need to be restricted. Sensitive care of the offender is needed in these circumstances. Although it is important to extend love and friendship, there will be the need for a frank conversation to take place with the person concerned and that efforts are made to sustain open communications. A written agreement should be made in respect of, for example, attending only designated meetings, sitting apart from children, declining hospitality where there are children, never being alone with children, not visiting the homes of the vulnerable and attending only agreed social events.

Direct contact should be made with the person's supervising probation officer. The probation officer will be expected to make contact with the church on any issue relating to the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults. If the person is no longer being supervised, the church should contact the police child protection team to ascertain how much of a risk the individual is considered to be.

7. FINALLY

Good communication is essential in promoting safeguarding, 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. This safeguarding policy is just one means of promoting safeguarding.

Signed by:

_____ PASTOR / ELDER

_____ SAFEGUARDING CO-ORDINATOR

Date: _____

This policy document must be reviewed not more than 1 year from the above date.