

SAFEGUARDING ADULTS AT RISK

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

WORRIED ABOUT AN ADULT AT RISK NOW? - TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU SHOULD DO, GO STRAIGHT TO SECTION 3.1 OF THIS DOCUMENT.

IMPORTANT NOTE

The Safeguarding Policy and Procedure covers allegations of actual or suspected abuse against adults at risk, which have taken place on church premises or during an activity organised by the church, or which relate to church workers.

This document is divided into six sections:

- 1. Policy Statement**
- 2. Information about Adults at risk and about Abuse**
- 3. Procedure**
 - 3.1 What to do if you think an adult at risk has been abused or may be at risk of abuse**
 - 3.2 Concerns about the behaviour of a church worker**
- 4. Care of Victims; Working with Offenders**
- 5. Safer Recruitment; Supervision and Training; and Responsibilities of Designated Person.**
- 6. Code of Conduct**

It is vital that all staff and volunteers know what to do if they suspect someone may be at risk of abuse or where someone discloses abuse to them.

TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU SHOULD DO, GO STRAIGHT TO SECTION 3.1 OF THIS DOCUMENT.

This policy is for everyone in the church – Ministers, church leaders, employees and church workers who have responsibility for supporting adults at risk.

A copy of the Policy is available from the Church Secretary. Copies can also be accessed on the church website and in the church operations manager's office. Copies of the statutory guidance are available from the Designated Person.

Each worker with adults at risk whether paid or voluntary will be given a copy of the policy and procedures and will be required to sign to say that they have read them. Staff and volunteers are expected to comply with the policy and procedures at all times.

Key contacts in the Church

Sarah Giles, is the Designated Person for adults at risk.

Sarah can be contacted on +44 7891 300362 or sarah.giles@stpetersbaptist.org.uk

Matt Davis is Safeguarding Trustee (Adults at risk) and will oversee and monitor implementation of the policy and procedures for the Church Trustees.

Matt can be contacted at matt.davis@stpetersbaptist.org.uk

All safeguarding officers can be contacted using the group email address:

safeguarding@stpetersbaptist.org.uk

SECTION 1: POLICY STATEMENT

What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding is the protection of adults and children from harm, abuse or neglect.

Legislation

The Safeguarding Policy and Procedure are based on relevant legislation and statutory guidance issued by the Department of Health.

Sections 42-47 and 68 of the Care Act 2014 apply. The Act places a duty on Councils to make enquiries if it believes an adult is at risk of abuse or neglect.

Key Principles

St. Peter's Baptist Church (SPBC) seeks to welcome everyone into the life of the church, including those who may be considered as vulnerable or marginalised.

Jesus teaches us that we are each called to love others and to treat them with respect, dignity and love (Matthew 22:39). We commit ourselves to the nurturing, inclusion and protection of any adults at risk associated with our church, whatever their age, abilities, health or history. We will pray for them regularly and will ensure that they receive any pastoral care they need. We will speak up for those who have no voice. We will care for those who have been victims of abuse.

We recognise that everyone who comes to church has a fundamental right to be safe. The church centre will provide a safe environment and a place of healing, comfort and hope.

"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35)

The church will exercise proper care in the selection and appointment of those working with adults at risk, whether paid or voluntary. We will provide training for those working with adults at risk.

It is the responsibility of each of us to help to prevent the physical, emotional, sexual, financial and spiritual abuse of adults at risk

We will ensure that actual or suspected abuse is reported *immediately*. The church will co-operate fully with any statutory investigation into any abuse linked with the church. *If any person is identified as posing an actual or potential risk to adults at risk within the church community, the church leaders will take steps to remove or mitigate the risk, seeking advice as necessary from the Police or the Worcestershire County Council Adult Safeguarding team.*

SECTION 2: INFORMATION ABOUT ADULTS AT RISK AND ABOUT ABUSE

Who is an adult at risk?

The term "adults at risk" has replaced the previously used term "vulnerable adult"

An adult at risk is defined as:

Any adult aged 18 or over who due to disability, mental function, age, illness or traumatic circumstances may not be able to take care or protect themselves against the risk of significant harm, abuse, bullying, harassment, mistreatment or exploitation

Adults at risk may include people with:

- a learning disability
- a physical disability
- mental ill-health
- age or illness, such as dementia
- any other reason (for example an addiction to alcohol or drugs)
- problems associated with bereavement; past abuse including domestic violence, or trauma

The risk may be temporary or permanent.

The adult at risk may be a regular Church attender or may be visiting SPBC to participate in an activity which is held at the Church Centre.

What do we mean by abuse?

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons.

The Department of Health guidance recognises the following categories of abuse:

Physical abuse: includes hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication or inappropriate use of restraint.

Sexual abuse: includes rape and sexual assault or other sexual acts to which the person has not given clear informed consent; making sexual remarks, suggestions and teasing; enforced as exposure to pornographic material; inappropriate photography of a person in a sexually explicit manner.

Psychological and emotional abuse: includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, humiliation, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or unreasonable withdrawal of services.

Financial abuse: includes theft, fraud, embezzlement, exploitation, or coercion in connection with someone's financial affairs such as wills, property or inheritance; or the misuse or misappropriation of possessions or benefits. The abuse of influence to persuade a person to make gifts.

Neglect and acts of omission: includes ignoring medical or physical care needs; failure to provide access to health and care services; withholding the necessities of life, such as medication, food and heating

Discriminatory abuse: discrimination on grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion; harassment; withholding services without justification.

Institutional abuse: May occur in places such as nursing homes or hospitals where poor professional practice or shortages of staff may result in harm to patients, either isolated incidents or continuing ill-treatment. The institution fails to safeguard people from harm; institutional abuse can occur in church settings. The

In addition, the Church recognises **spiritual abuse** i.e. forcing a person to accept religious ideas through a misuse of authority, scripture or leadership. Examples could include intrusive healing or deliverance ministries and interference in personal matters reducing individual choice and responsibility.

Abuse does not have to fit into any one of the above categories; often more than one type of abuse may be taking place.

Other forms of abuse

Domestic abuse: any threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults, who are or have been in a relationship, or between family members.

Cyber abuse: the use of e-mail, mobile phones, websites, social media, including messaging, chat rooms etc. to repeatedly harm or harass other people.

Self-harm: intentional damage or injury to a person's own body, sometimes as a way of coping with overwhelming emotional distress.

Self-neglect: an adult at risk may neglect themselves, which can result in harm.

Who could abuse?

An adult at risk may be abused by a family member or carer. Others who may abuse include social care workers, church workers or Ministers.

Abuse can be committed by one adult at risk towards another.

Where could abuse happen?

Abuse can take place in many different settings, including nursing home, hospital, church, in a car or other vehicle, or online or via mobile communications.

What is covered by this Policy?

The policy covers allegations of actual or suspected abuse against adults at risk, which have taken place on church premises or during an activity organised by the church, or where the alleged perpetrator is a church worker.

Church activities include, for example:

- Visiting *on behalf of the church* a vulnerable person in their home to provide a service of a practical or spiritual nature
- Providing a group within the church specifically or primarily for adults at risk

SPBC has identified the Coffee Shop, Tuesday at 2, The Olive Tree, Open Space, the visiting team and staff on reception as the activities in the church primarily working with adults at risk, ***but abuse can happen in any church setting.***

The policy applies to all 'church workers' i.e. Ministers, employees, church leaders, church members, volunteers, helpers and any person whether a church member or not who works with or supports adults at risk in the context of Church.

Other organisations which use or hire the church building are expected to have their own policy and procedures for safeguarding adults at risk.

From time to time, church members may become aware of abuse or neglect of an adult at risk e.g. when visiting an elderly friend in the community or in a care home, where the allegation is unconnected with the church. Such concerns would be dealt with under the Worcestershire multi-disciplinary safeguarding procedures. The Designated Person can give advice in these cases.

SECTION 3: THE PROCEDURE

3.1: WHAT YOU SHOULD DO IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT AN ADULT AT RISK

You should act if you are concerned about any of the following:

1. An adult has told you that he/she has been harmed or is at risk of harm, either in their own family, or outside the church or as a result of the actions of someone in the Church, including a church worker. This includes reports of abuse which may have happened several years ago.
2. The behaviour or appearance of an adult makes you feel concerned about their welfare – this might include unexplained injuries, knowledge of domestic violence within the family, or carers experiencing significant stress.
3. The behaviour of someone in the church towards adults at risk makes you think that person might pose a safeguarding risk.
4. You become aware that someone in your church has, or may have, a conviction for offences against children or adults at risk.

All concerns about harm to adults at risk must be treated seriously. Direct allegations of ill-treatment or abuse must be responded to without delay.

How to refer?

- A. *If there is reasonable suspicion of harm, but no direct allegation of abuse has been made.*

You should share your concerns with, and seek guidance from a Minister or church leader in the first instance.

Following this discussion, if you are still concerned, or if you are unsure about what to do, you or the Minister/church leader should contact the Designated Person, **Sarah Giles** on sarah.giles@stpetersbaptist.org.uk

If your concern is about a Minister or church leader, you should go direct to the Designated Person.

B. *If you have received a direct allegation of abuse, but the adult is not in immediate danger*

You should contact the Minister [**Andy Browning, Minister (Team Leader)**, on +44 7540 381 085 andy@stpetersbaptist.org.uk] or the Designated Person **Sarah Giles** (sarah.giles@stpetersbaptist.org.uk) **without delay, and in all circumstances within 24 hours.**

The Minister and the Designated Person will consider whether to inform the Police and/or Adult Social Care.

If for any reason you have been unable to speak to a Minister or the Designated Person, you should ring Police and/or Adult Social Care directly, and leave a message for the Minister and the Designated Person to let them know you have done this.

Contact telephone numbers for the statutory agencies can be found in Appendix A of this Policy.

C. *If you think it is necessary to take immediate action*, and there may not be the opportunity to consult with a Minister or the Designated Person. For example:

- where an adult at risk has sustained injuries that require urgent medical attention
- where an adult at risk is likely to suffer significant harm if he/she returns home, or he/she is refusing to return home because of fear of abuse

You should contact the police or other emergency services immediately on 999. You should ensure that the adult is safe in the meantime.

You should contact the Minister **Andy Browning, Minister (Team Leader)**, on +44 7540 381 085 andy@stpetersbaptist.org.uk, or the Designated Person, **Sarah Giles** (sarah.giles@stpetersbaptist.org.uk) as soon as possible and at the latest within 24 hours to let them know what has happened. The Designated Person will advise on what further action may be necessary.

Other things you must do

Listen carefully to the adult who has disclosed harm, but **do not** ask lots of questions or attempt to investigate the matter yourself, as this could prejudice a subsequent Police investigation. **Never** go and talk to the alleged abuser.

Offer reassurance, tell the adult they have done the right thing by telling you.

Request their consent to share the information. If the person lacks capacity to give consent, contact the Designated Person for advice.

Tell the adult what you are going to do. Do not promise confidentiality, but let them know that they will be kept informed about what happens next.

As soon as possible after the disclosure, make a written record of what happened, the questions you asked, what was said to you in the adult's own words, your concerns and the action you have taken, including dates/times. Your written record, together with all known details of the adult at risk and any other relevant information must then be passed to the Designated Person

The role of the Designated Person in responding to referrals of abuse

The Designated Person will work closely with the Minister(s) at all stages of the process, and in deciding what action should be taken.

The Designated Person will be the principal point of contact with the police or adult social care services. The Designated Person will ensure that the HEBA Safeguarding Lead is informed, in cases where a police investigation is taking place.

The Designated Person working with the Minister(s) will be responsible for ensuring that support is offered to all parties during any safeguarding investigation.

The Designated Person will ensure that a safeguarding incident report has been completed, setting out the concerns and the actions taken by the church.

The Designated Person will ensure that any records of safeguarding allegations, concerns or disclosures are kept in safe and secure storage.

What if the adult doesn't want help?

Adults who have capacity have the right to make their own choices in relation to their personal safety and well-being, even if such choices may seem unwise. It is important to tell the adult where he/she can get help and support, if they should change their mind.

If the adult at risk lacks the mental capacity to make such a choice, or where there is a risk of harm to others, the police or adult social care services should be informed.

3.2: CONCERNS ABOUT THE BEHAVIOUR OF A CHURCH WORKER

Inappropriate behaviour by church workers must be challenged and addressed at an early stage, before it escalates to the point at which an adult at risk may be harmed. Team leaders should discuss any concerns and seek advice from the Designated Person.

Incidents and behaviour should be reported on to the Designated person where:

- A church worker causes harm or a risk of harm to an adult at risk
- A church worker's behaviour gives rise to significant concern
- A church worker commits repeated breaches of the code of conduct, whether or not these are deliberate

If the allegation is serious, the employee should be suspended (or the volunteer withdrawn) pending the outcome of the investigation. The church's disciplinary procedure will apply to paid employees.

Where a referral is made of a paid employee or volunteer to the Police or the Council safeguarding team, the Safeguarding Trustee will ensure the position of that person working with adults at risk is reviewed as a priority by the church leaders.

The standard of proof applied by the courts is "beyond reasonable doubt", but the church leaders as employer can apply a lesser standard, i.e. "on the balance of probabilities". Thus, even if the police decide not to proceed, if the church leaders consider, on the balance of probabilities, that the alleged perpetrator presents a risk to adults, they can take appropriate disciplinary action in respect of an employee, or can simply remove a volunteer from his/her position of responsibility in the church. Alternatively, if they are satisfied that there is no risk, they can agree that the employee/volunteer can return to their normal duties. It may be necessary for the church leaders to commission a risk assessment from a suitably qualified professional in order to assist them in making a decision.

In less serious cases, it may be possible for the team leader to deal with concerns through supervision and debrief sessions with the church worker. The team leader should keep a record of incidents whereby a pattern of behaviour over time can become clearer, and if more serious concerns develop, the Designated Person should be contacted without delay.

Where the concern involves the Designated Person or members of their family, the report should be made to the Safeguarding Trustee. If the concern is in relation to a Minister, the Regional Minister should be immediately informed in addition to the above procedures.

SECTION 4: CARE OF VICTIMS; WORKING WITH OFFENDERS

4.1 Care of Victims of abuse

Many adults are suffering from the lasting effects of abuse during childhood; these can include depression, anger, low self-esteem, anxiety, inability to form close relationships, or feelings of guilt and shame.

Victims of abuse may find it difficult to trust others and will need space and time to go through their own healing process. They need someone to listen to them, to believe them, and to allow them to repeat their story time and again, in order for them to come to terms with their experience.

The Church has a particular duty to care for victims of abuse or neglect. We must do what we can as church members and members of the wider church family to provide a safe and caring environment for them. We can help them to know that God loves them unconditionally and that those in the church community know about the abuse are with them on their journey, no matter how long and difficult that journey may be.

Where appropriate, with the victim's permission, we can help him/her to make contact with a specialist agency, which may be able to offer support or counselling.

4.2 Working with Offenders

The church leadership may become aware that someone who has a conviction for offences against children or vulnerable adults, or against whom a serious allegation has been made, is attending the church. Alternatively, the church may receive a referral from the statutory authorities about a potential offender on bail, an offender on license or ex offender wishing to worship at SPBC. Such cases must be dealt with in conjunction with the HEBA safeguarding lead, who can offer guidance on the process to be followed. Typically, this process will include:

1. A core group will be set up, including a Minister and the Designated Person, to manage the case.
2. A risk assessment will be carried out to determine the level of risk that the alleged or known offender poses.
3. A formal agreement in writing will be signed by the offender setting out the conditions under which they can attend church services or other church activities.
4. The formal agreement will be reviewed at intervals, not less than annually.
5. The church will offer pastoral support to the offender to assist in his/her rehabilitation

SECTION 5: SAFER RECRUITMENT; SUPERVISION AND TRAINING; RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DESIGNATED PERSON

5.1 Safer Recruitment

Safer recruitment applies to all roles, paid or voluntary, within the church who work with adults at risk. Safer recruitment is part of the overall safeguarding policy of the church. The following process will be followed:

Step 1: write a simple job profile, setting out what the role involves and the kind of person you are looking for.

Step 2: ask prospective employees/volunteers to complete an application form with basic details and information about their previous experience. ***Do not assume you know someone just because they have been coming to church for years.***

Step 3: take up references, at least one of which should be from someone outside the church community.

Step 4: interview the candidate in person.

Step 5: if the role requires a disclosure and barring service (DBS) check, carry out the check to ascertain whether or not the prospective employee/volunteer is allowed to work with adults at risk. The Designated Person can advise whether a check is required. Employees of the Church will not be allowed to commence work, until a satisfactory DBS check has been received.

Step 6: ask the prospective employee to sign an employment contract or volunteer to sign a volunteer agreement, when you have agreed to take them on.

All church workers (both paid staff and volunteers) will be asked to sign an undertaking that they will work within the Safeguarding Adults at risk policy and procedure

When recruiting for a role working with adults at risk, treat each candidate as though you don't know them. Don't assume that the short time you may have spent with them each week at church means that you know all about someone, their skills or abilities

5.2 Support, supervision and training

All new staff and volunteers will be offered an induction programme.

All staff and volunteers will have a designated supervisor.

Training in the protection of adults at risk will be offered to all new church workers, as soon as possible after they are appointed to their role, and that the latest within 12 months. Such training may be provided in-house or through the programme organised by HEBA.

5.3 Responsibilities of the Designated Person

The Designated Person for adults at risk will have the following responsibilities:

- Advocating for safeguarding within the church and providing advice and information and promote good practice on managing risk in all areas of church activity.
- Implementation and updating of the policy/procedures.
- Responding to incidents and allegations, and ensuring that appropriate action is taken and recorded
- Training of those engaged directly with adults at risk and other staff, volunteers and church members
- Safer recruitment, working closely with the designated person for children's safeguarding.
- To represent the views of adults at risk to the church.
- Liaison with the HEBA safeguarding lead and with the relevant statutory authorities.

The Designated Person is expected to attend appropriate safeguarding training, arranged by the Heart of England Baptist Association (HEBA) or by the Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board.

SECTION 6: CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CHURCH WORKERS COMING INTO CONTACT WITH ADULTS AT RISK

Leaders of church activities are role models. It is especially important that we set a good example in the way we interact with adults at risk taking part in activities and with each other.

- The Bible says in Psalm 82 v3 "Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed."

This code of conduct should be read in conjunction with St Peter's Baptist Church Policy and Procedure for Safeguarding Adults at risk.

- All types of abuse are unacceptable, including physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, and discriminatory abuse, and neglect.
- It is vital that all church workers taking part in activities with adults at risk – whether as a leader, staff member, volunteer or other helper – are familiar with the Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Adults at risk, and adhere to the policy at all times.

Church workers should be aware of the power imbalance within pastoral relationships, and the potential for abuse of trust.

Church workers should avoid behaviour that suggests favouritism or which encourages dependency.

Church workers should recognise the limits of their own abilities, and they should not hesitate to seek professional help, when working with challenging individuals, whose needs may be outside their expertise.

The code of conduct sets out standards of behaviour, which we expect from all leaders and church members, who may come into contact with adults at risk.

Attendance.

- Leaders must ensure that there is an adequate number of helpers for each group/activity.
- You should arrive at the group or event at the time given by the leader, allowing sufficient time for preparation.
- You are expected to stay after the group or event has finished for a debrief, where any issues which have arisen at the event or group can be discussed.

Training and policies

- You are expected to attend training organised by your team, in order to develop your skills and knowledge, so that you can improve your practice and our service to adults at risk.
- You must adhere to all the church policies and procedures relevant to work with adults at risk

Communicating with Adults at risk

- Please make it a priority to befriend group members, listening carefully and taking an interest in what they have to say. Be thoughtful, kind and considerate.
- Speak about your Christian faith, honestly and openly, when opportunities arise.
- Make sure there is nothing inappropriate – physical or sexual – in what you do. Avoid any sexual references in what you say.
- Do not make jokes at the expense of others or make fun of their appearance. Bad language and rude jokes are completely unacceptable. Do not shout. You can use a firm voice without shouting.
- Be clear about the limits of your role in the life of the adult at risk adult. Your role is concerned with pastoral support and practical help **in the church context**. If you are asked to assist with other areas of the adult's life e.g. making arrangements for care; assistance with managing personal finances, you should seek the advice of your group leader or one of the church leaders, as it will often not be appropriate to you to undertake these roles.
- If there is anything in your contact with the adult at risk which makes you uncomfortable, please speak with a leader immediately.
- If you are concerned about how another helper is speaking or acting, it is ok to challenge them at the time, or as soon as possible after the event or group. Disagreements between team members should be raised in the debrief afterwards, or privately with the group leader.

Physical contact with adults at risk

- Great care must be taken to ensure physical contact is appropriate. Such contact should be in response to the needs of the adult at the time, of limited duration and appropriate given gender, circumstances etc.
- Physical contact must not be sexual in nature or capable of being construed as sexual.

- Physical contact, which is secretive or which is intended for the gratification of either the adult at risk or the helper is not acceptable.
- Physical restraint should only be used as a last resort in exceptional circumstances, e.g. to prevent a person with dementia wandering out of the church building. Minimal restraint should be used.

Being alone with an adult at risk

- Church workers are advised to exercise care, if they spend time in a room on their own with an adult at risk. There would have to be a good reason for a private conversation, for example to pray together. It is often preferable to talk in a quiet corner of the room where other staff are present, or go into another room, where you will still be visible.
- Regular one-to-one working e.g. mentoring must be specifically approved by the Safeguarding Trustee/Minister for Pastoral Care and comply with agreed procedures

Transport

- Group leaders are responsible for making arrangements for transport to activities.
- Group leaders must consider whether an adult at risk will require an escort as well as a driver, and if so, who will act as escort. This could be a family member, or another church helper.
- Group leaders must ensure that church helpers who are providing transport have a valid driving licence, insurance and MOT.
- Each adult must have his or her own seat with a seatbelt. Vehicles without seat belts must not be used.
- If a minibus is being used, there must be an adequate number of helpers on the vehicle, and the group leader must ensure that the minibus is roadworthy.

Texting, e-mail, phone calls and social media

- The purpose of making contact with the adult at risk is primarily to support their involvement with the church activity/group, which he/she is attending.
- Normally, contact details for adults at risk will be held by the group leader. Church workers should not ask adults at risk for their mobile phone numbers or e-mail addresses, unless it is necessary to facilitate the participation of the adult in the church group or activity which he/she is attending.
- Text messages, e-mails and personal social media accounts may be used by the group leader (or by someone designated by him/her) to impart factual information e.g. date or

time of activity. Messaging may also be used by church workers to keep in contact with the adult at risk, offer advice or practical help from the church, answer questions and provide reassurance where necessary.

- Frequent and persistent messaging of an adult at risk is not acceptable e.g. dozens of text messages within the space of a few days. The content of messages must always be appropriate; inappropriate messages could include, for example, asking for money, inviting the adult to meet at an unsafe place, or sexualised content.
- ***If a group leader or church worker believes that another church worker is communicating inappropriately with an adult at risk via social media, e-mail or text – either the volume of messages or the content of messages or both - he/she must immediately inform a church leader or the designated person, as such behaviour could indicate that grooming is taking place.***

Finances

- Leaders of church activities and other helpers are in a "position of trust" and should not accept money or gifts from adults at risk.
- Church workers should not canvass for donations from adults who may be at risk, including the recently bereaved.
- If an adult at risk insists on making a gift, it should be passed to the church treasurer, who will decide whether it can be accepted.
- Church workers may become involved in some aspects of personal finance for adults at risk e.g. collecting pensions, shopping or banking. Church workers should always collect receipts or other evidence of transactions.
- Some adults at risk may be experiencing financial difficulties, but you should avoid getting drawn into discussion of personal finances. You can instead refer people to one of the organisations which can help e.g. Two Pennies. You must not ask, or appear to ask, anything for your personal gain or advantage.
- Church workers including Ministers should not act as executors for someone they know through their pastoral role, as this may lead to a conflict of interest

Smoking and Drinking

- You must not smoke or drink in the presence of adults at risk, or consume alcohol *prior* to an event or group.

Reviewed and Updated June 2025