

Date policy adopted by the trustees:	December 2024	Latest date for renewal of the policy:	December 2025
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This document is based on the thirtyone:eight safeguarding template

Section 1: Details of the place of worship / organisation

Gillingham Community Church
Wessex House,
8 High Street,
Gillingham,
Dorset,
SP8 4AG.

Tel No: 01747 825611
Email: admin@gillinghamcommunitychurch.co.uk

Senior Leaders:

- Han Gibbons han@gillinghamcommunitychurch.co.uk
- Jules Bond jules@gillinghamcommunitychurch.co.uk
- Pete Bond pete@gillinghamcommunitychurch.co.uk
- Liz Doré liz@gillinghamcommunitychurch.co.uk
- Andy Sparkes andy@gillinghamcommunitychurch.co.uk

Safeguarding Coordinator:

- Rachael Wright rachael@gillinghamcommunitychurch.co.uk

Charity Number: 1129261
Insurance Company: Methodist Insurance plc, policy # 22MPG/9126415

The following is a brief description of our place of worship / organisation and the type of work / activities we undertake with children and adults who have care and support needs:

- Wessex House is the main premises used by Gillingham Community Church for administration and activities, including, but not limited to:
 - Public worship meetings
 - Open Door (café-style drop-in for assistance with various social needs)
 - Gillingham Foodbank (distribution centre), and advice with debt and finances
 - Parents and babies/toddlers groups
 - Courses such as the Alpha Course
 - Youth groups
 - Counselling
- The church operates Small Groups of adults who meet regularly, usually in homes
- Other venues are occasionally hired or used in the town or nearby for special events

Our commitment

As leaders and trustees, we recognise the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children, young people and adults. We acknowledge that children, young people and adults can be the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and exploitation. We accept the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant of Human Rights, which states that everyone is entitled to "all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status". We also concur with the Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that children should be able to develop their full potential, free from hunger and want, neglect 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 leaders and trustees, we have therefore adopted the procedures set out in this safeguarding policy in accordance with statutory guidance. We are committed to build constructive links with statutory and voluntary agencies involved in safeguarding.

The policy and any attached practice guidelines are based on the ten **Safe and Secure** safeguarding standards published by thirtyone:eight.

The leaders and trustees undertake to:

- endorse and follow all national and local safeguarding legislation and procedures, in addition to the international conventions outlined above.
- provide on-going safeguarding training for all its workers and will regularly review the operational guidelines attached.
- ensure that the premises meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and all other relevant legislation, and that it is welcoming and inclusive.
- support the Safeguarding Coordinator(s) in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children and adults with care and support needs.
- the leaders and trustees agree not to allow the document to be copied by other organisations.

Section 2: Prevention

Understanding abuse and neglect

Defining child abuse or abuse against an adult is a difficult and complex issue. A person may abuse by inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm. Children and adults in need of protection may be abused within a family, an institution or a community setting. Very often the abuser is known or in a trusted relationship with the child or adult.

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

1. *States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.*

2. *Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.*

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

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

Detailed definitions, and signs and indicators of abuse, as well as how to respond to a disclosure of abuse, are included here in our policy.

Safer recruitment

The leaders and trustees will ensure all workers will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with government guidance on safe recruitment. This includes ensuring that:

- There is a written job description / person specification for the post
- Those applying have completed an application form and a self-declaration form
- Those short listed have been interviewed
- Safeguarding has been discussed at interview
- Written references have been obtained, and followed up where appropriate
- A disclosure and barring check has been completed where necessary (we will comply with Code of Practice requirements concerning the fair treatment of applicants and the handling of information)
- Qualifications where relevant have been verified
- A suitable training programme is provided for the successful applicant
- The applicant has completed a probationary period
- The applicant has been given a copy of the organisation's safeguarding policy and knows how to report concerns.

Safeguarding training

The leaders and trustees are committed to on-going safeguarding training and development opportunities for all workers, developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help protect everyone. All our workers will receive induction training and undertake recognised safeguarding training on a regular basis.

The leaders and trustees will also ensure that children and adults with care and support needs are provided with information on where to get help and advice in relation to abuse, discrimination, bullying or any other matter where they have a concern.

Management of Workers - Codes of Conduct

As leaders and trustees, we are committed to supporting all workers and ensuring they receive support and supervision. All workers have been issued with a code of conduct towards children, young people and adults with care and support needs.

Section 3 - Practice Guidelines

As an organisation / place of worship working with children, young people and adults with care and support needs we wish to operate and promote good working practice. This will enable workers to run activities safely, develop good relationships and minimise the risk of false or unfounded accusation.

As well as a general code of conduct for workers we also have specific good practice guidelines for every activity we are involved in and these are attached or in the appendices.

Working in Partnership

The diversity of organisations and settings means there can be great variation in practice when it comes to safeguarding children, young people and adults. This can be because of cultural tradition, belief and religious practice or understanding, for example, of what constitutes abuse.

We therefore have clear guidelines in regard to our expectations of those with whom we work in partnership, whether in the UK or not. We will discuss with all partners our safeguarding expectations and have a partnership agreement for safeguarding. It is also our expectation that any organisation using our premises, as part of the letting agreement will have their own policy that meets thirtyone:eight's safeguarding standards.

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

Section 4 - Responding to allegations of abuse

Follow these steps:

- Listen carefully and trust what's being said.
- Offer immediate support and reassurance.
- Document a factual account of the conversation.
- Do not promise to keep anything secret.
- Report the disclosure to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator (as below)

Under no circumstances should a volunteer or worker carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. Follow procedures as below:

Documenting a concern

The worker or volunteer should make a report of the concern in the following way:

- The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse should report concerns as soon as possible to:

Name: Rachael Wright (hereafter the "Safeguarding Co-ordinator")
Tel: 07786 464644
Email: rachael@gillinghamcommunitychurch.co.uk

The above is nominated by the leaders and trustees to act on their behalf in dealing with the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including referring the matter on to the statutory authorities.

- In the absence of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or, if the suspicions in any way involve the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, then the report should be made to:

Name: Debbie Sparkes (hereafter the "Deputy")
Tel: 07973 493915
Email: debbie@gillinghamcommunitychurch.co.uk

- If the suspicions implicate both the Safeguarding Co-ordinator and the Deputy, then the report should be made in the first instance to:
thirtyone:eight PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ.
Tel: 0303 003 1111
- Alternatively contact Dorset Council or the police (see information below)
- The Safeguarding Co-ordinator should contact the appropriate agency or they may first ring the thirtyone:eight helpline for advice. They should then contact the local council in the area the child or adult lives.
- The Pan-Dorset Multi Agency Safeguarding Procedures (PDSCP) should be used when there is an allegation or concern that any person who works with children (whether they are paid, unpaid, volunteers, casual, agency employees or anyone working in a self-employed capacity) in Dorset, has:
 - behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child,
 - possibly committed a criminal offence against children, or related to a child,
 - behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children,
 - behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.
- Common indicators of child abuse may include (but are not limited to):
 - unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
 - becoming withdrawn and uncommunicative
 - seeming anxious
 - becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
 - lacking social skills and having few or no friends,
 - poor bond or relationship with a parent
 - knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
 - running away or going missing
 - always choosing to wear clothes which cover their body
 - unexplained injuries

Signs such as these do not necessarily mean a child is being abused but may raise suspicions and may indicate further assessment is required.
- The concern regarding child safety should be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and can initially be done by completing an e-form (procedures, information and links are available on the PDSCP website: <https://pdscp.co.uk>), or by contacting Dorset – LADO or Children's Advice and Duty Service (see below).
- It is a requirement that the LADO is contacted within 24 hours of an incident occurring, they will record all concerns and provide further advice and guidance.
- If the child lives within another local authority area, the corresponding LADO should be contacted.
- Useful contact details are provided in the Appendix, which will be kept updated, and includes details of how to contact the LADO and other services.

- The Safeguarding Co-ordinator may need to inform others depending on the circumstances and/or nature of the concern, in addition to the Local Authority Designated Officer (as outlined above) if the allegation concerns a worker or volunteer working with someone under 18.
- Chair or trustee responsible for safeguarding may need to liaise with the insurance company or the charity commission to report a serious incident.
- Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. A written record of the concerns should be made in accordance with these procedures and kept in a secure place.
- Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, the absence of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or Deputy should not delay referral to the Children's Advice and Duty Service, the Police or taking advice from thirtyone:eight.
- The leaders and trustees will support the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy in their role and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.
- It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make a direct referral to the safeguarding agencies or seek advice from thirtyone:eight, although the leaders and trustees hope that members of the place of worship / organisation will use this procedure. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) as to the appropriateness of a referral they are free to contact an outside agency direct. We hope by making this statement that the leaders and trustees demonstrate their commitment to effective safeguarding and the protection of all those who are vulnerable.

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

Detailed procedures where there is a concern about a child:

Allegations of physical injury, neglect, emotional abuse or child sexual exploitation

If a child has a physical injury, a symptom of neglect or where there are concerns about emotional abuse or child sexual exploitation (CSE), the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy will:

- Contact Children's Advice and Duty Service (or thirtyone:eight) for advice in cases of deliberate injury, if concerned about a child's safety or if a child is afraid to return home.
- Not tell the parents or carers unless advised to do so, having contacted Children's Advice and Duty Service
- Seek medical help if needed urgently, informing the doctor of any suspicions.
- For lesser concerns, (e.g. poor parenting), encourage parent/carer to seek help, but not if this places the child at risk of significant harm.
- Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, offer to accompany them. In cases of real concern, if they still fail to act, contact Children's Advice and Duty Service direct for advice.
- Seek and follow advice given by thirtyone:eight (who will confirm their advice in writing) if unsure whether or not to refer a case to Children's Advice and Duty Service .

Allegations of sexual abuse

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

- Contact the Children's Advice and Duty Service for children and families or Police Child Protection Team direct. They will NOT speak to the parent/carer or anyone else.
- Seek and follow the advice given by thirtyone:eight if for any reason they are unsure whether or not to contact Children's Advice and Duty Service /Police. Thirtyone:eight will confirm its advice in writing for future reference.

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

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

If there is concern about any of the above, Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy will:

- Contact the Adult Care Team who have responsibility under the Care Act 2014 to investigate allegations of abuse. Alternatively thirtyone:eight can be contacted for advice.
- If the adult is in immediate danger or has sustained a serious injury contact the Emergency Services, informing them of any suspicions.

If there is a concern regarding spiritual abuse, Safeguarding Co-ordinator will:

- Identify support services for the victim i.e. counselling or other pastoral support
- Contact thirtyone:eight and in discussion with them will consider appropriate action with regards to the scale of the concern.

Allegations of abuse against a person who works with children/young people

If an accusation is made against a worker (whether a volunteer or paid member of staff) whilst following the procedure outlined above, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, in accordance with Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures will:

- Liaise with Children's Advice and Duty Service in regard to the suspension of the worker
- Make a referral to a designated officer called a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) whose function is to handle all allegations against adults who work with children and young people whether in a paid or voluntary capacity.
- Make a referral to Disclosure and Barring Service for consideration of the person being placed on the barred list for working with children or adults with additional care and support needs. This decision should be informed by the LADO if they are involved.

Allegations of abuse against a person who works with adults with care and support needs

The safeguarding co-ordinator will:

- Liaise with Adult Services in regards the suspension of the worker
- Make a referral to the DBS following the advice of Adult Services

The Care Act places the duty upon Adult Services to investigate situations of harm to adults with care and support needs. This may result in a range of options including action against the

person or organisation causing the harm, increasing the support for the carers or no further action if the 'victim' chooses for no further action and they have the capacity to communicate their decision. However, this is a decision for Adult Services to decide not the church.

Section 5 - Pastoral Care

Supporting those affected by abuse

The leaders and trustees are committed to offering pastoral care, working with statutory agencies as appropriate, and support to all those who have been affected by abuse who have contact with or are part of the place of worship/organisation.

Working with offenders and those who may pose a risk

When someone attending the place of worship / organisation is known to have abused children, is under investigation, or is known to be a risk to adults with care and support needs; the leaders and trustees will supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but in its safeguarding commitment to the protection of children and adults with care and support needs, set boundaries for that person, which they will be expected to keep. These boundaries will be based on an appropriate risk assessment and through consultation with appropriate parties.

Section 6 - Adoption of the policy

This policy was agreed by the leaders and trustees and will be reviewed annually in December

Signed by:



Position: Chair of Trustees

Date: December 2024

A copy of this policy is available on the Gillingham Community Church website and is held at Wessex House.

Safeguarding Policy Appendix - important and useful contacts:

Name of local authority:

Council website

Dorset Children's Advice and Duty Service

Safeguarding children website

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

Adult safeguarding concerns

Adult Services

Local Authority Designated Officer

Dorset Council

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

01305 228558 (available 24/7) or
childrensadvicandduty@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

<https://pdscp.co.uk>

01305 228558

01305 221016

01305 221016 or 221000 out of hours

01305 221122 or
LADO@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Name of local authority:

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

Website Address:

Local Authority Designated Officer

Somerset Council

0300 1232224 or
childrens@somerset.gov.uk

www.somerset.gov.uk

0300 123 2224 or
somensetsafeguardingchildren.org.uk

Name of local authority:

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

Website Address

Local Authority Designated Officer

Wiltshire Council

0300 45600108 or
MASH@wiltshire.gov.uk

www.wiltshire.gov.uk

LADO@wiltshire.gov.uk

Police Protection Team

Police Protection Team Tel:

Police Protection Team email

101 (or 999 in emergency)

101@dorset.pnn.police.uk