

# Beechwood Chapel

## Safeguarding Policy



**Date of policy:** 15th May 2022

**Date of review:** 15th May 2023

### Introduction

We believe that all people are made in the image of God and so have inherent value, dignity and worth, therefore no child or vulnerable adult should experience abuse of any kind. As a church we seek to establish good practice that creates and maintains the safest possible environment for all people.

We do this by:

- Appointing Nominated Person(s) who take specific responsibility for safeguarding policy and act as a reference point for parents, children, staff, volunteers, and outside agencies.
- Creating a safe environment where children and vulnerable adults can thrive and be treated with God-given value.
- Ensuring that staff and volunteers are carefully selected and DBS checked, and accept their responsibility to help prevent abuse.
- Providing guidance on possible signs and indicators of abuse to help staff and volunteers remain vigilant in caring for the children and vulnerable adults in their care.
- Providing guidance on responding to or reporting a disclosure of abuse.
- Ensuring that all information is treated with confidentiality and is restricted only to those who need access.

Beechwood Chapel recognises its responsibilities for safeguarding people (regardless of gender, ethnicity, age or ability) as set out in The Children Act 1989 and 2004, The Care Act 2014 and other relevant government guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

### Nominated Persons

Our Nominated Persons have been delegated overall responsibility of ensuring that Safeguarding is consistently and fairly implemented across all activities undertaken by the church. In the event of any questions relating to this policy or our Safeguarding please get in touch with them in the first instance.

Primary: Jennifer Norwood  
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Secondary: Rob Smart  
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## Scope

This policy specifically relates to the organised activities of the church: Sunday services; Sunday Tots; Mini-Kids; Beechwood Tots; Fit for Life; Lifegroup; Kids Club; Cafe Church; Chapel Tea; other occasional activities organised by the church.

Outside of these organised events the church cannot accept responsibility for care of children and vulnerable adults, and they remain in the sole care of their parents/carers. However, following the guidance set out in this policy the church will undertake to be vigilant in taking safeguarding seriously and always providing a safe environment for everyone.

## Creating a safe environment

The church is committed to providing a safe environment for all people, and recognises it has a particular responsibility towards children and vulnerable adults.

## Appropriate leader to child ratios

To ensure safety and enjoyment for all involved our groups will operate at the following ratios of leaders to children:

- Sunday Tots (ages 1-2) will operate at a minimum ratio of 1 leader per 4 children.
- Mini-Kids (ages 3-11) will operate at a minimum ratio of 1 leader per 8 children.
- Kids Club (ages 4-11) will operate at a minimum ratio of 1 leader per 8 children.
- From time to time older children (11 – 17 years) may be invited to do a 1 to 1 or small group Bible Study with a member of the church. These are only to take place with the knowledge and permission of all the Elders of the church and the child's parent or carer and will only take place in public locations such as a coffee shop, the church office while there are other people in the building, or the child's home while a parent or carer is present.

## Parent/carer consent

If a child or young person wishes to attend one of our regular activities or events where a responsible adult will not be in attendance with them, they will need to have a consent form completed by their parent/carer to ensure that the church has the appropriate medical and emergency contact information.

These completed forms are securely stored and only accessed, when necessary, by approved staff or volunteers.

## Where there is no consent

If any children turn up to join a church activity without consent or their parent/carer, we will:

- welcome the child and establish their name, age, address and telephone number;
- ask the child if their parent/carer is aware of where they are;

- telephone the parent/carer, requesting verbal confirmation that they are happy for them to stay for the church activity, and establishing if any specific needs should be considered (e.g. allergies, etc.);
- on leaving, give the child a consent form, explaining that it must be completed and returned if they wish to attend again.

*Note: repeated attendance without a completed consent form will result in the child being refused admission to the activity.*

Sometimes children will turn up to a public church activity without a parent/carer where we do not ask for specific consent (e.g. the main Sunday morning service). In those situations, the church cannot accept responsibility for their care and they remain in the sole care of their parents/carers. However, following the guidance set out in this policy the church will undertake to be vigilant in taking safeguarding seriously and always providing a safe environment for everyone.

## **Equip children and vulnerable adults to act safely**

Within our organised activities the church will endeavour to teach and model good practice to children and vulnerable adults by teaching safety generally, helping to develop common sense rules, and providing a safe environment where they are able to speak honestly and openly to leaders.

## **Raise awareness of Safeguarding**

Safeguarding is not only the responsibility of staff and volunteers working directly with children and vulnerable adults, but of all people: to be vigilant in ensuring the care, dignity, and safety of all those around them. This policy will be reviewed annually to keep up to date with the latest Safeguarding advice and guidance, and publicly displayed on a noticeboard in the chapel for parents/carers and the church to see. We will keep up to date with Wirral Safeguarding Board's website for updates or guidance provided for charities or third sector organisations.

## **Safe recruitment and training of volunteers**

The church is committed to ensuring that all staff and volunteers are carefully selected and receive ongoing training and support with their responsibility to help prevent the abuse of children and vulnerable adults in their care.

### **Recruitment**

The church is committed to ensuring that all volunteers and staff working with children:

- Hold a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check from within the past 3 years and is found to have no relevant criminal convictions.
- Is adequately trained and supervised.
- Understands and follows our safeguarding policy and procedures.

Anybody whose DBS form discloses cautions or convictions will be interviewed by the church's Safeguarding Nominated Person who will make a recommendation to the Elders concerning their involvement in youth and children's work.

## Training

The church will provide annual training to ensure that all volunteers and staff working with children or vulnerable adults remain up to date with our safeguarding policy and procedures and know how to consistently implement them.

## Guidance

The church, all staff, volunteers and Nominated Person(s) should consistently work together for the good of the church, the children and vulnerable adults and each other.

### Do:

- Treat all young people and vulnerable adults with respect.
- Take notice of their reactions to your tone of voice and manner.
- Always seek a child's consent if he/she is very young or disabled and needs assistance to go to the toilet. Always make sure another member of staff or volunteer knows you are giving assistance. If assistance is required on more than one instance, obtain written consent from the parent/carer.
- Act upon and record all allegations, concerns, or suspicions.
- Take every precaution to protect yourself from a potential allegation.
- Seek more information and guidance from the Beechwood Chapel Nominated Person(s) if there is anything about safeguarding and child protection that is unclear or confusing.
- Ensure the safety of all children and young people who attend Beechwood Chapel events and programmes.

### Do not:

- Touch children in an intrusive, overly physical, or sexual manner.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child or young person, even as a joke.
- Engage in rough or disproportionately physical games or activities with children and young people.
- Do things for a child or young person of a personal nature that they are able to do for themselves such as going to the toilet or assisting with changing clothes.
- Spend time alone with a child without a member of staff or volunteer knowing what you are doing and where you are.
- Give a child a lift in your car, without written parental/carer consent. Even with consent always try to have two adults in the car to protect you from a potential allegation.
- Take a child to your home on their own.  
(\*In the event that you would like to invite a child or young person to your home you must:
  - i) Contact Beechwood Chapel's Nominated Person(s) for advice.
  - ii) If you have permission to proceed, you must obtain written consent from the child or young person's parent/carer. You must explain why you are inviting the child or young person to

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- your home, how long they will be at your home for, travel arrangements to and from your home, and who else will be present at your home for the duration of the child's visit.
- iii) It is strongly advised that you ensure there is a non-family related Beechwood Chapel staff member or volunteer present if a child or young person comes to your home.
  - iv) Take every precaution to protect yourself from a potential allegation.

## Signs and indicators of abuse

There are four main categories that all forms of abuse fall under. A child or vulnerable adult may suffer from more than one category.

- **Physical abuse** - includes hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning, biting, administering poisonous substances, suffocating/drowning, excessive force.
- **Neglect** - a failure to meet the basic essential needs of a child, or if a child is left unsupervised at a young age.
- **Emotional abuse** - children harmed by constant lack of love and affection, or threats, verbal attacks, taunting or shouting.
- **Sexual abuse** - involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children or adolescents, in sexual activity that they do not fully comprehend, or to which they are unable to give informed consent, or which violate the social taboos of family roles.

## Who abuses children?

- Very rarely a stranger.
- Often someone close to a child e.g. parent, carer, babysitter, sibling, relative or friend of the family.
- Sometimes paedophiles and others who set out to join organisations (including churches) to obtain access to children.

## How might we recognise abuse?

Many symptoms of distress in a child can point to abuse, but there are other explanations too. It is important that the below signs are not taken as indicating that abuse has taken place, but that the possibility should be considered. They should make us stop and think - not jump to conclusions.

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy.
- Nervousness/watchfulness.
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration.
- Changed or inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults.
- Attention seeking behaviour.
- Persistent tiredness.

- Running away/stealing/lying.
- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them or where differing explanations have been received.
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- Injuries and illnesses which have not received medical attention.
- Any signs of neglect, under nourishment or inadequate care.
- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse.
- A child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters, and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age inappropriate sexual play.
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing.
- A child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults.
- Inappropriate bed sharing arrangements at home.
- Severe sleep disturbance with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotation.

## **Responding to a disclosure of abuse**

If you are in doubt regarding whether to act, please discuss the situation with the church's Nominated Person(s).

### **When should I act?**

- When you are concerned about someone's behaviour towards a child.
- When someone tells you they are worried a child is being abused.
- If a child or young person tells you that they are being abused.
- If you see something that worries you.

### **How should I respond to information passed on to me from another adult?**

- Keep calm; thank and reassure.
- Gather information if possible.
- Is the child in immediate danger? Ensure the child is safe.
- Record information in writing.
- Inform Beechwood Chapel's Nominated Person(s).

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## What should I do if a child tells me about abuse?

Do:

- Keep calm.
- Treat the child with respect and take what they say seriously.
- Listen and observe carefully.
- Is the child in immediate danger? Ensure the child is safe.
- Ask open non leading questions. Keep your responses short. Gather as much information as possible – what, when and who.
- Reassure the child: they are right to tell you and are not to blame.
- Explain what you are going to do and why.
- Inform the church's nominated person.
- Record in writing as much information as soon as you can. Record what the child said with the date and time of your conversation.
- Keep the information confidential.

Do not:

- Promise confidentiality or say you can keep a secret.
- Interrupt the child's account.
- Ask leading or probing questions.
- Make comments or judgements about the alleged perpetrator.
- Examine the child.
- Make assumptions.
- Investigate further.
- Tell the parents of the child.
- Act on information without seeking help from the Nominated person, unless the child is in immediate danger.

## When should I call the Police – 999?

- Any situation where a child is in immediate danger.
- Any situation where a child's life is at risk.
- Any situation where Beechwood Chapel staff or volunteers have been seriously threatened.

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- Where a serious crime has been committed.

## **Confidentiality**

All permission forms containing personal information of children and parent/carers will be stored securely in a locked cabinet and on encrypted and password protected digital storage. They will only be accessed when necessary, by approved staff and volunteers. These will be destroyed after 1 year of no contact with the child, or at the specific request of a parent/carer.

Records of attendance at our organised groups, with limited personal information (e.g. Name and date), will be stored securely in a locked cabinet. As there is no statute of limitations on historic safeguarding cases these will be kept indefinitely but only accessed if requested by social services and/or the police.

Any records of Safeguarding disclosures or allegations will be stored securely in a locked cabinet, with access limited only to those who need to know (for example the Nominated person and involved volunteers). Copies may also be passed on to social services and/or the police if necessary.