

WORDSPRINGS CHURCH

Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy

Purpose of the Policy

This policy is intended to protect children/young people and adults with additional care and support needs who attend any of our Church events and activities. For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

Policy Statement

Wordsprings Church Milton Keynes is a contemporary church that is committed to the protection of children/young people and adults with additional care and support needs. This policy is intended to provide guidance and overarching principles to guide our approach to protecting and safeguarding the welfare of everyone who access our church and are entrusted to our care.

The following documents set out the government guidance and legislation by which this safeguarding policy is influenced:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- What to Do If You're Worried a Child Is Being abused (2015)
- Care Act (2014)
- Equality Act (2010)
- The Children's Act (2004)
- Working Together (2018)
- United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- Child sexual exploitation: Definition and Guide for Practitioners (2017)

The Leadership is committed to providing regular safeguarding training to all staff and volunteers and this policy will be regularly reviewed.

Our aim is to safeguard children/young people and adults by:

- Adopting child protection guidelines through a code of conduct for staff/volunteers.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practices with children/young people, parents, and volunteers.
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know and involving parents and children appropriately.
- Carefully following the procedures for safer recruitment in the selection of volunteers.
- Managing and providing effective oversight for volunteers through supervision, support, and training.
- Regularly reviewing and updating this policy.

Meet the Safeguarding Officer

At Wordsprings Church, the Safeguarding Officer is responsible for promoting and monitoring the Safeguarding policy and for making sure that members and volunteers are provided with relevant information, advice, and training.

Safeguarding Officer

Ola Afolabi: 07737010976



The role of the Safeguarding Officer

At least one named person who acts as the designated safeguarding lead for children, young people and adults with additional care and support must be present in every place of worship. This person is responsible to make themselves available to be consulted by staff, volunteers, visitors, children/young people, adults, and their families.

The Safeguarding Officer will ensure that:

- All necessary enquiries, procedures, and investigations relating to safeguarding are carried out.
- Reporting results of screening enquiries and preserving 'need to know' levels of confidentiality and access to secure records.
- Ensure that all confidential records relating to safeguarding matters are kept secure.
- Liaising with children or adults social care at a formal and informal level on all safeguarding matters, also with the police.
- Reporting allegations and suspicion of abuse to the appropriate authorities.
- To always follow Safeguarding Policies reporting in a timely manner (on the same day and ideally within the hour) any incidents using the safeguarding form and taking appropriate action.

If the Safeguarding Officer is not available, the Deputy Safeguarding Leader will take the lead role.

Other relevant numbers outside of Wordsprings Church:

- MK Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub: 01908 253 169/70
- Emergency Social Work Team - out of hours: 01908 265 545
- Social Services Office: 01908 691 691
- Police Child Protection Team: 01908 253 169
- NSPCC Child Protection Helpline: 0808 800 5000

Guidance and Prevention

Within the various activities/ministries at Wordsprings Church, adequate safeguarding procedures (listed below) will be in place for children/young people and adults.

Volunteers are committed to:

- **Treat children/young people with respect and dignity:**
 - Always listening to what a child/young person is saying.
 - Valuing each child/young person.

- Recognising the unique contribution each child/young person can make.
 - Encouraging and praising each child/young person.
 - Being sensitive to children's appearance, race, culture, religious beliefs, sexuality, gender, or disability.
- **Lead by example**
 - Provide an example which we would wish children/young people to follow.
 - Use appropriate language with children/young people and challenge any inappropriate language used by a child/young person or an adult working with children/young people.
 - Respect a child/young person's right to privacy.
- **Visible to others when they are in contact with children**
 - Not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children, away from others.
 - In the unlikely event of a volunteer having to meet with an individual child or young person, every effort will be made to keep this meeting as open as possible.
 - If privacy is needed, the Church will ensure that other volunteers are informed of the meeting and its location.
- **Promote good working relationships during events**
 - Consent form must be filled out for each child/young person attending our Church event.
 - Consent forms will include emergency contact details and will set out any specific safety needs/requirements for children.
 - All consent forms will be kept secure and shall be stored in accordance with our data protection privacy policy.
 - Advise parents and guardians to properly supervise their children at our events and activities where the children attend alongside their parents or guardians.
 - Record any unusual events on the accident/incident form unless this includes anything confidential.
 - Question any unknown adult who enters the children's meeting place and/or who attempts to engage with children.
 - Obtain parental consent for those who cannot give consent for themselves to take/use images prior to the taking of images.

Volunteers should never:

- Allow, or engage in, inappropriate touching of any kind.
- Wordsprings Church is committed to protecting children in its care and recognises that appropriate touch is part of a positive, nurturing environment in a healthy children's ministry. However, volunteer/volunteers will be discouraged from this in circumstances where adult and child/young people are alone together.
- Force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected, except in cases where the child's safety or the safety of others is in question.
- Engage in sexually provocative or rough physical games, including horseplay.
- Do things of a personal nature for a child or a young person that they can do for themselves. If such an incident arises, (for example, where a child or young person has limited mobility),

Wordsprings Church volunteer should ask another volunteer or a leader of the youth group to deal with such an incident.

Teenage Volunteers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during our events or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage volunteers:

- Must be at least age 14.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

Understanding abuse and neglect

Abuse is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child/young person and an adult's physical, psychological, or emotional health and development.

Safeguarding children/young people and adults with additional care and support from harm and abuse is an essential responsibility for our Church. All volunteers must familiarise themselves with the appropriate behaviours and approaches for working with children/young people and adults with additional care and support. Volunteers have a duty of care to all children and should ensure that they work toward the creation of a safe environment. They must always show respect and understanding for individual's rights, safety, and welfare, and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the values and principles of Wordsprings Church.

Safeguarding Children

Child protection is the response to the different ways in which a young person's or child's physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual health are damaged by the actions of another person. Children can be vulnerable to different forms of abuse and harm. It is important to recognize that abuse and harm of children can cover a wide range of circumstances and behaviours. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

The causes of such harm and/or abuse can also be wide-ranging. For example, children can be placed at risk by family members or by members of the community.

Responding to a Safeguarding concern about a Child

Where there is a safeguarding concern but no immediate risk of serious harm or where any child makes a disclosure relating to harm or abuse to a volunteer, or where the volunteer becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, the volunteer who has heard or witnessed this concern should consult with an available allocated Safeguarding Officer as soon as practicable and by no later than the end of the same day. Upon receipt of any safeguarding concern, the Safeguarding

Officer shall consult with any other relevant persons and will make any appropriate referrals to the relevant Local Authority.

Where a child is at immediate risk of serious harm, any adult present should call 999. Thereafter, an available allocated Safeguarding Officer should be contacted as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Allegations against a staff/volunteer

Where any person has a concern regarding the conduct of a volunteer or an adult connected to the Church, which poses or may pose a safeguarding risk to children such as:

- Harming a child either physically or emotionally.
- Exposing a child to behaviour which may cause physical or emotional harm.
- Engaging in criminal activity concerning a child.

The following procedures shall be followed:

- All allegations of will be reported to the local authority.
- Three types of investigation may be conducted: criminal investigation, child protection investigation or disciplinary/misconduct investigation. The disciplinary investigation may be influenced by the outcome of the police and child protection investigation; however, this may not be the case.
- The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
- The volunteer will be instructed not to have any contact with the victim or with witnesses.
- The local authority designated lead (LADO) will advise on the next steps.

When a child/young person raises a concern

Good communication is essential in any organisation. At Wordsprings Church, every effort will be made to ensure that, should children/young people have concerns, they will be listened to and taken seriously.

What volunteers should do:

- Listen to the child/young person.
- Look at them directly and do not promise to keep any secrets before you know what they are, but always let the child/young person know if, and why, you are going to tell anyone.
- Take whatever is said to you seriously and help the child/young person to trust his/her own feelings. Take notes of exactly what is said to you, avoiding assumptions and conjecture.
- Speak immediately to the Local Authority, NSPCC or to the named child protection officer for further advice and guidance.

What volunteers should say:

- What you are telling me is very important.
- This is not your fault.
- I am sorry that this has happened/is happening.
- You were right to tell someone.
- What you are telling me should not be happening to you and I will find out the best way to help you.

What volunteers should not do:

- Volunteers should not begin investigating the matter themselves (this would contaminate evidence if a situation went to court).
- Do not discuss the matter with anyone except the correct people in authority.
- Do not form your own opinions and decide to do nothing.
- Do not show your own emotions e.g., shock/disbelief.

What volunteers should not say:

- Do not ask leading questions – Why? How? What?
- Do not say ‘Are you sure?’
- Do not make false promises.

Responding to a Safeguarding concern about an adult with additional care and support needs

The Care Act (2014) applies to an adult 18 years of age or over who has care and support needs, is at risk of, or being abused and as a result of needs are unable to protect themselves from the risk or experience of abuse.

If there is an allegation of abuse against a person who works with adults with additional care and support needs, the Safeguarding Officer will:

- Contact the Adult Social Services regarding the suspension of the worker.
- Following the advice of the Adult Social Services, a referral may be made to the DBS

The Adult Social Services is responsible for investigating any situations which may cause harm to adults with additional care and support needs. They may take a range of actions against the person or organisation causing the harm; they may increase the level of support for the carers, or they may take no further action if the victim made this choice and are able to communicate this decision.

Internal investigation and Suspension

The Safeguarding Officer will decide on whether the volunteer or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be suspended pending further inquiries from the police or social services. Individual cases will be assessed to decide whether the member or volunteer can be reinstated, based on the available information, especially when there is insufficient evidence for the police to uphold any action. Throughout this process, the welfare of the child/young person and adult is of utmost importance.

Accidental Injuries to Children

The location of any events or activities which are held by us shall be risk-assessed properly to ensure they are suitable and safe for children. Fire and safety procedures and precautions shall be made clear to all those involved.

If a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps shall be followed:

- Any accident or injury concerning a child must be brought to the attention of the nearest first aider.
- The incident should thereafter be formally reported to an available allocated Safeguarding Officer.
- The child’s parent or guardian must be notified of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.

For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid:

- The parent or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the Safeguarding Officer.
- Where a child is at immediate risk of serious harm, any adult present must call 999.
- Where the child has received treatment by a medical professional, an incident report must be completed.

Selection of Volunteers

All persons who desire to work with the children attending our church events and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

- **Three Month Rule**

Volunteers that will serve in the Children ministry must have attended Wordsprings Church for a minimum of 3 months. This period will provide interaction between the leadership and the volunteers which will allow for evaluation and suitability of the applicant.

- **Application**

Volunteer seeking to work with children must complete an application form and self-declaration form.

- **Reference Checks**

The prospective volunteer must supply the names of two referees. These referees will be contacted to send references in writing (telephone references can be sought as a last measure).

- **Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check/Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check will be conducted for the volunteer, giving photographic and other evidence of identity, and including a formal declaration of any criminal convictions or they could permit the church to check their DBS record if they subscribed to the update service. Before a background check is run, the prospective volunteer will be asked to sign an authorisation form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, she/he will not be able to work with children.

- A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Safeguarding officer on a case-by-case basis considering all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children.
- Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event. The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the church office.

- **Safeguarding Training**

The applicant will go through safeguarding policy and procedure on induction. Twice a year, all volunteers will be made aware of safeguarding, so they are reminded of the concepts and procedures. Wordsprings Church will provide regular training for basic understanding of safeguarding and the knowledge required to respond appropriately to any concern and wellbeing of children/young people and adults with care and support needs.

Last Updated: March 2023