

HOLYWELL CHURCH LOUGHBOROUGH

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

June 2024

1 Holywell Church and Safeguarding

1.1 About Holywell Church

Holywell Church is an independent evangelical church based in Loughborough, Leicestershire. Holywell is an independent church and does not have any affiliations.

Holywell Church is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission, registration number – 500613.

Our registered office is: Berkeley Road, Loughborough, LE11 3SJ. Office telephone: 01509 236253, E-mail: office@holywell.church

1.2 Why safeguarding is important

As a church, our aim is making Jesus known in Loughborough, as we grow to know Him better. To this end, the aims of our Safeguarding Policy are to:

- Uphold the honour of Jesus' name
- Keep the Gospel from disrepute by:
 - Protecting the children, young people, and adults at risk in our care
 - Protecting those in the church who serve in our ministry (referred to generically as 'church workers' in this Policy).

As a church, we take safeguarding very seriously and this Safeguarding Policy sets out the framework by which Holywell will manage our responsibilities. The Policy has been developed in line with statutory guidance and is based on material published by 'Thirtyone:eight'. The Policy includes the church's Safeguarding Statement (Appendix 1) and Safeguarding Good Practice Guide for church workers (Appendix 2).

The most important message of this Policy is that **safeguarding is everyone's responsibility**. Everyone involved in and connected with Holywell Church has a responsibility to prevent abuse and neglect of anyone, but particularly of children, young people and adults at risk.

This Safeguarding Policy is just one means of promoting safeguarding. Good communication is essential in promoting safeguarding – with everyone working with children and adults at risk, and with those with whom we work in partnership. As part of our commitment to protecting all those we serve, we will ensure constructive links with the local statutory agencies involved in safeguarding.

The Elders (who make up the majority of the legal Trustees of the church) are responsible for the church's safeguarding processes and have a legal duty to take all reasonable steps within their power to ensure abuse and neglect does not happen.

The Charity Commission requires the Elders of the church to review this Policy regularly or when safeguarding legislation changes.

1.3 The Church Safeguarding Team

To enable Holywell Church to effectively fulfil our safeguarding obligations, we have a Church Safeguarding Team, who are:

- Joseph Pettitt (Safeguarding Lead)
- Sam Harries (Deputy Safeguarding Lead)
- Rebecca Young (Lead Recruiter)

Any issues relating to safeguarding, of children or adults, should be referred immediately to a member of the Safeguarding Team either in person, by telephone or by e-mail on the church office e-mail: office@holywell.church

2. Understanding the Issues

2.1 What do we mean by children and adults at risk?

Everyone is vulnerable in some way – it's part of being human in a broken world. However, all children and young people under the age of 18 need protection because of their age.

Some adults also need protection because their circumstances put them particularly at risk, whether temporarily or permanently. This may be due to physical or mental disability, illness, addiction, age or a stressful life event. As a result, they may have difficulty in making or communicating decisions, taking care of themselves, or protecting themselves against harm or exploitation.

Safeguarding legislation applies to any child or young person under the age of 18 and any adult who is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.

2.2 What do we mean by abuse?

Defining abuse is difficult and complex. A person may abuse someone by inflicting harm, or by failing to prevent harm. It can be physical, emotional, sexual, financial, or even spiritual. Anyone can carry out abuse or neglect, including:

- Spouses/partners or other family members
- Neighbours, friends, or acquaintances
- Staff, professionals, or volunteers
- Strangers who deliberately exploit those they perceive as vulnerable to abuse

3. Protecting Children and Adults at Risk

3.1 Appointment of staff and volunteers

The church has put the following procedures in place to minimise the risk of abuse or neglect of children, young people and adults at risk within the church and the activities we are involved with.

All members of church staff, Elders, Deacons and those involved in any work with children, young people or vulnerable adults must firstly be approved in this role by the Elders. As part of the consideration process, they will be required to fill in the Holywell DBS self-declaration form which asks about anything which should be disclosed. If anything is disclosed, this must be discussed with the Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Safeguarding Lead before proceeding further and a written record must be kept.

Once approved by the Elders, all new church workers are required to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) application, or provide evidence of a current DBS check to the Lead Recruiter or Recruiter. All information on disclosures and DBS checks will be kept strictly confidential.

Where a DBS check cannot be obtained due to the applicant not residing in the UK for a sufficient period of time, a background check will be sought from the country of origin prior to any appointment to a role made.

In the event that a background check cannot be obtained, the church will not appoint the applicant to a role, until such a time that a DBS/background check can be obtained.

Where a DBS raises a prior and/or current conviction, the Church Safeguarding Team will risk assess the applicant prior to any appointment to a role made. This may involve meeting with the applicant.

The church must notify the DBS if someone is asked to step down from a church activity because they have harmed, or might have gone on to harm, a child or adult at risk, or if they stepped down for such reasons.

4. Dealing with Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse

4.1 Possible indicators of abuse

The following signs may or may not indicate that abuse has taken place, but the possibilities should be considered. If a church worker is concerned about a child or adult at risk, they should speak to a member of the Safeguarding Team (see Section 1.3). For procedures on dealing with suspicions or allegations of abuse, see Section 4.2.

- Signs which may indicate **physical abuse** of children or adults include:
 - Injuries which do not have an 'accidental' explanation
 - Injuries which are not consistent with the explanation given for them
 - Injuries which have not received medical attention
 - Self-harming
 - Neglect, including poor hygiene or inappropriate hunger
- Signs which may indicate **sexual abuse** of children or adults include:
 - Any allegations made by a child or adult concerning sexual abuse
 - Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour
 - Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
 - Sexually provocative or seductive behaviour with adults
 - Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Signs which may indicate **emotional abuse** of children or adults include:
 - Changes or regression in mood and behaviour (particularly where a person withdraws or becomes clingy), depression or aggression
 - Nervousness
 - Sudden underachievement or lack of concentration
 - Inappropriate relationships with peers and / or adults
 - Attention-seeking behaviour
 - Running away, stealing or lying
- Signs of **financial abuse** of adults at risk include:
 - Change in living conditions
 - Lack of heating, clothing or food
 - Inability to pay bills or unexplained shortage of money
 - Unexplained withdrawals from an account
 - Unexplained loss or misplacement of financial documents
 - Sudden or unexpected changes in a will or other financial documents

4.2 Procedures for dealing with allegations, suspicions or concerns

The following procedures must be followed in relation to all safeguarding concerns, whether raised by a child, adult, church worker or anyone else:

i. Report the issue immediately to the Church Safeguarding Team

Church workers must report any safeguarding allegations, suspicions or concerns as soon as possible to a member of the Church Safeguarding Team, as set out in Section 1.3. (Appendix 3 - copies can be found in the church foyer)

ii. Maintain confidentiality

It is important that confidentiality about the concern and those involved is maintained at all times. Details of the issue should only be reported to a member of the Church Safeguarding Team and no-one else. The Church Safeguarding Team will then take the appropriate further action.

Church workers should not discuss a concern or allegation of abuse or neglect of a child with the child's parents / carers or of an adult at risk with a member of their family or their carer.

iii. Do not attempt to investigate

Church workers should not take matters into their own hands and seek to investigate a concern or allegation. They should report any issues to a member of the Church Safeguarding Team who will consider what action to take as outlined in Section 4.3.

iv. Keep a written record

Church workers with any safeguarding concerns should make a written record of the issue, including what was said and / or what happened, and any actions taken (Appendix 3 - copies can be found in the church foyer).

The record should be written, signed and dated and then given to a member of the Church Safeguarding Team as soon as possible. All notes should be kept in a secure and confidential place.

4.3 What happens next?

The Church Safeguarding Team will deal with any allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse. This will involve:

- Collating and clarifying the details of the allegation or suspicion
- If appropriate, referring matters on to the relevant external agencies, which have a legal duty to investigate

Thirtyone:eight may be contacted on 0303 0003 1111 for advice.

Children's safeguarding concerns should be raised with First Response Children's Duty Team on 0116 305 0005.

Adult safeguarding concerns should be raised with Leicestershire Adult Social Care on 0116 305 0004 (Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm) or the Emergency Duty Team on 0116 255 1606 (evenings, weekend and bank holidays).

In an emergency relating to any safeguarding issue, the Police should be contacted on 999.

Information about the issue should only be shared with others in the church, including other Elders, Deacons, staff, or others, on a strictly need-to-know basis when it is in the interests of the child or adult concerned, or if others in the church may be at risk.

5. Supporting those affected by or involved in abuse

The church is committed to ensuring that pastoral care and support are available to anyone in contact with the church who has been affected by abuse. The church is also committed to the pastoral care and appropriate support and supervision of anyone who has been involved in any form of abuse, or is otherwise believed to be a risk to children or adults at risk. The Elders and the Church Safeguarding Team will work with statutory agencies as appropriate.

Appendix 1

Holywell Church Loughborough Church Safeguarding Statement

Holywell Church is committed to the safeguarding of children and adults at risk and ensuring their wellbeing.

We recognise the personal dignity and rights of every person as a bearer of God's image. Every person has the right to be treated with respect, to be listened to, and to be protected from all forms of abuse, and we will ensure that our policies and procedures reflect this.

We are committed to:

- Following legal requirements and good practice recommendations in relation to safeguarding.
- Exercising proper care in the appointment and selection of all those who will work with children and adults at risk, and ensuring that everyone follows the procedures within our Safeguarding Policy.
- Supporting the Church Safeguarding Team in their work, and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children and adults at risk.
- Supporting those in the church who have been affected by abuse.
- Co-operating with relevant statutory authorities (including Children's and Adults' Social Services which have the primary responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse, and the Police, who should be contacted as a matter of urgency when an allegation suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed).
- Reviewing this Statement and our Safeguarding Policy regularly.

A copy of the full Church Safeguarding Policy is available from the Church website.

Appendix 2

Holywell Church Loughborough Safeguarding Good Practice Guide for Church Workers

Holywell Church is committed to good working practices to help church workers run activities safely, develop good relationships, and minimise the risk of false accusations.

Boundaries

Church workers should observe appropriate boundaries, which are designed to protect them and create a safe environment for children and adults at risk.

Church workers should provide a good example of Godly behaviour for others to follow, particularly, children and young people. Church workers should treat everyone, including children and adults at risk, with dignity and respect in attitude, language and actions.

It is not acceptable for those in a position of trust to engage in a relationship, or engage in any behaviour which might allow an inappropriate relationship to develop, with a child or vulnerable adult for as long as the relationship of trust continues.

Church workers should keep everything public and plan activities with more than one church worker present, or at least within the sight or hearing of others, so they avoid being alone with a child in their care. Activities for children and young people should have at least two leaders present at all times and mixed sex activities should have at least one male and one female leader, or two female leaders, present at all times.

Church workers must not use any form of inappropriate physical contact or physical form of discipline. Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by a child rather than a church worker.

When giving first aid (or applying sun cream, etc.), church workers should encourage children to do what they can manage themselves, but should consider the children's best interests and give appropriate help where necessary.

Church workers should ensure that parents / carers give permission for church workers to change their child's nappies.

Telephone and electronic communication with children and adults at risk

Telephone and electronic communications are helpful for complementing communication in person, but present potential risks that should be explicitly considered by church workers.

In general, telephone and electronic communication with children and adults at risk should be short and purposeful, using an appropriate, but not over-familiar tone and

not suggesting or offering a special or private relationship. Prior permission must be obtained from the parent/carer in relation to communication with children and young people.

Church workers should avoid telephone and electronic communication with children and adults at risk of the opposite sex and no pictures of children and adults at risk should be taken by camera phone. In general, church workers should avoid any form of telephone or electronic communication with children and adults at risk between 10pm and 8am.

Photographs of children and adults at risk

The church is committed to safe practice when dealing with images of children and adults at risk. No names or any other personal information, which could enable identification, should be used in church materials or publicity. The storage and use of images by the church is subject to the legal requirements of the Data Protection Act.

Anyone who does not wish the church to take, store and use photographs and video of themselves, their children or those in their care should make this wish explicitly known in writing to the leader of the activity concerned, one of the Pastors or the Church Office.

Church trips and transport

Parents/Carers are encouraged to drop off and collect their children/those in their care from church activities. Children/Adults at risk should not be taken on church trips unless explicit permission from the parents/carers has been obtained in writing in advance by the activity leader. Only those who have gone through the church's procedure for the appointment of church workers should transport children and adults at risk in church-related trips.

Situations of one leader and one child alone together should be avoided whenever possible. It is reasonable to expect that drivers may be alone with a child for short periods (for example, when dropping off the last child). However, drivers should not spend unnecessary time alone with a child.

Church workers transporting children and adults at risk must have held a full driving licence for a minimum of one year. They must also have adequate insurance and the vehicle should be fully roadworthy.

All children carried as passengers in cars are subject to the national legal requirements, including the driver's legal responsibility to ensure that children have the appropriate age-related safety restraints in place.

Church premises

It is important that all church workers ensure that the church building and its contents are safe and provide a safe environment for our activities.

Appendix 3

Safeguarding Concerns Form

Name of child/young person			
Outreach/Ministry that concern has been raised:			
Date of incident		Time of incident	
Details of incident: (please include as much detailed information as possible)			
Action taken:			
Name of person reporting concern		Safeguarding Lead sign-off	