

Safeguarding Policy (July 2025)

Introduction: Waterbrook Church CIO is a registered charity number 1200990 known as Waterbrook Church. The trustees recognise the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children and adults with care and support needs. We acknowledge that children and adults with care and support needs can be the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and neglect.

As trustees we are committed to safer recruitment and on-going safeguarding training and development opportunities for all workers, developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help protect everyone.

As trustees we are committed to supporting all workers and ensuring they receive support and supervision. All workers have been issued with this safeguarding policy which acts as a code of conduct towards children and adults with care and support needs.

The 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.

As trustees we have adopted the procedures set out in this safeguarding policy in accordance with statutory guidance. We are committed to building constructive links with statutory and voluntary agencies involved in safeguarding. 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 with care and support needs. This safeguarding policy is just one means of promoting safeguarding.

Where the phrase 'known to the church' is used, the trustees mean someone who has been known to the church leadership or safeguarding team for over a year.

The Church consists of around 50 adults and 20 children. Of these 12 may be involved from time to time in working with children (Children workers). The Church normally meets on Sundays at Lincombe Barn, Ovendale Road, Bristol BS16 2RW. Waterbrook's e mail address is admin@waterbrook.org.uk For key church phone contact numbers please see appendix 3.

The website www.waterbrook.org.uk contains details of the church's activities and where these are held. At present the main children's work consists of: Sunday school and young people's activities. Children's work is an important feature of the Church. The Church also may from time to time be involved in supporting adults with care and support needs.

Included in this policy are straightforward guidelines about working with children (meaning all those under 18 and referred to here as children) and adults with care and support needs. All people working with children and such adults as part of the church must understand and comply

with these guidelines. Adherence to these guidelines will not only protect the children and adults with care and support needs but also those who are working with them and the reputation of Waterbrook Church, and indeed the Lord, within the community. In all matters respect must always be shown, this applies both ways.

Safeguarding Team Roles: Pauline Glover is the Church's named Safeguarding Co-ordinator (SC) with advice and support from Angela Windsor who is the deputy safeguarding officer and is the trustee representative from the trustees of Waterbrook Church. They are supported by Eve Scott, who is the children's work coordinator. They form the Safeguarding Team and meet twice a year together with the church pastor or administrator.

Safeguarding Co-ordinator: The role requires:

1. Ensuring the Church has appropriate guidelines and that the people involved in children's work and adults with care and support needs understand them and their importance and they are put in to practice.
2. Keeping the Church up to date on any developments in safeguarding requirements, reviewing the guidelines annually and making recommendations if they need amendment.
3. Providing new church workers with awareness training on safeguarding
4. Organise safeguarding training on an annual basis for all church workers.
5. Ensuring the Church has and implements safer recruitment guidelines.
6. Ensuring those who are required to be DBS checked by this policy are so checked within the time frames required.
7. Ensuring those who refuse a DBS check are noted and not asked to work with children and young people.
8. Keeping a register of the Church's children's workers and those working with adults with care and support needs which will include a record of DBSs checked, their DBS reference numbers with dates and any notes that are applicable.
9. Ensuring all activities and events have an adequate risk assessment completed by the leaders of that event.

The SC will also:

1. Act as an advocate (i.e. someone who speaks for and on behalf of children and adults with care and support needs).
2. Act in reporting concerns of abuse to the statutory authorities, that is Children's or Adult Social Care (formerly Social Services) or the Police.

Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator. The role requires:

1. To work alongside the Safeguarding Officer and to support the overall safeguarding process, including managing concerns, ensuring proper record-keeping, and promoting safeguarding awareness within the church community.

2. To act as a point of contact for safeguarding issues and liaise with statutory authorities when necessary.
3. To help implement and review safeguarding policies and to promote safeguarding training.

Trustee Representative on the Trustees. The role requires:

1. To act as a champion for safeguarding within the church, working to create a safe and supportive environment where everyone feels protected.
2. To ensuring that the church has appropriate safeguarding policies in place and that they are effectively implemented and regularly reviewed.
3. To provide advice and support to church leaders on safeguarding matters, including ensuring safeguarding is a regular agenda item at Trustee meetings

Children and Youth work coordinators:

These roles require them to ensure this policy is adhered to including:

1. Ensuring appropriate ratios of workers to children/youth are in place.
2. Ensuring their teams understand what is required of them.
3. Ensuring the environment is safe and risk assessments have been carried out. Therefore, for all activities risk assessments should be carried out and filed with the SC. For regular activities this should be done at least annually.
4. Ensuring a register of children and adults attending is maintained.
5. Appointing a deputy leader in their absence, who takes responsibility for 1-4 above.
6. Ensuring all potential team members are checked with the SC and church leaders before they are approached to join the team.
7. For children's work where parents are present it should be implicit that the parents have responsibility for their children unless this responsibility has been actively transferred to the children's worker/leader at the commencement of the Sunday school club or activity. The leaders should make it clear when an activity has started or finished.
8. For children's work it is the responsibility of the children and youth leaders to ensure that parental consent is obtained at least on an annual basis and any notes referred to on the parental consents including allergies, medical needs and permission regarding medical help are observed. For children who attend Sunday church although there is an implicit consent given when children go to Sunday school a written consent will also be obtained which spells out any special requirements and the parents' position on photos.
9. When planning any events consideration should be given to the risk environment, the availability of people to help and first aid provision.

Guidelines for all working with children and adults with care and support needs

The guidelines for workers are that they must:

1. Be familiar with these guidelines and treat them with the utmost seriousness and be diligent to ensure others involved in the church's work do likewise and attend at least one training/briefing session a year.
2. Know where to find a copy of the guidelines, they are linked to the church's website and confirm annually to the SC to say they have read them and will abide by them (an email will suffice). This is prompted by the annual training event. When DBSs are updated signing the helper's declaration under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 form or the self-declaration form for a position requiring a disclosure.

3. Avoid being in a one-to-one situation with a child. If a private conversation is required ensure a door is open and some other adult is in sight of the door to see what is going on. It is preferably to stay in a room where other people are but go to one side.
4. Never meet with a child on their own on behalf of the Church outside an activity planned by the Church without another person recognised as a leader in children work being present. Exceptions to this will be permitted for 1:1 mentoring and support for children in secondary school or older but only with prior agreement of the Safeguarding committee (which will be minuted) and parent; and only where the meeting is in a public place.
5. Not befriend or accept requests from children on social media who they know solely through Church work. Communicating directly online should be avoided where possible unless there is the prior agreement of the Safeguarding committee (which will be minuted) and a parent.
6. Never invite a child or young person to your home alone. There must always be at least one other adult present. Both adults should be DBS checked and parental/ carer permission must be sought, this can be verbal or written. The safeguarding committee must be informed.
7. Avoid intimate physical contact between and with children e.g. wrestling and tickling.
8. Not restrain children in any way, whether or not it is meant as a game. In the event of someone being in physical danger a minimum of restraint may be called for but only such as is absolutely necessary to avoid the young person or someone else being harmed. If two children are involved in an unruly fight it may be appropriate for the adult to place themselves in between the children and separate if necessary.
9. Address topics, such as bereavement and sex, finances and relationships and other religions in a sensitive way bearing in mind the possible responses of those present.
10. Not use any teaching or activity which could in any way intimidate children or adults, they must be given space to think for themselves and must not be subjected to any pressure to pray or accept the gospel or to make any financial contribution.
11. Where appropriate assure children and adults with care and support needs that the church respects their privacy and that they know to whom they can go to talk about any concerns they have.

Workers to Children staffing ratios:

There must be adequate supervision this should be governed by the following ratios:

Aged 0 - 2 years: 1 adult to 3 children

Aged 2 - 3 years: 1 adult to 4 children

Aged 4 - 8 years: 1 adult to 6 children

Aged 9 - 12 years: 1 adult to 8 children, if an additional adult is present then ratio is 2:18.

Aged 13 - 18 years: 1 adult to 10 children.

Activities or actions involving two genders of children will normally be supervised by leaders of both genders. Single gendered activities will normally be supervised by leaders being of that gender.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks:

A DBS check will be required for all workers who are regularly involved in working with adults with care and support needs or leading support groups for them or who are on a regular rota for Sunday school, or other children and youth work. It is also a requirement that anyone who is on

their own with children will have been DBS checked. DBS checks will be updated every 3 years. DBS checks no more than 12 months old from other organisations e.g. schools and Boys Brigade will be accepted as valid by the Church after they have been inspected by the SC.

Photographs/Lifts

1. Photographs taken of children during church events should never be taken or shared on the web site or newsletter without parental/ guardian permission and via the parents the permission of the child who is at least of school age. Photographs of children should never be shared on social media platforms.
2. Photographs taken of adults during church events should never be taken or shared on the web site or newsletter without their permission.
3. If lifts are needed for children, seek parent permission to enable other parents who attend the groups to take home children who are not their own.
4. If lifts are needed then Waterbrook church workers must avoid being alone in a car with a child, there should be two adults. As a last resort a lift may be given by one adult as long as there is more than one child in the car providing one is at least 10 years old.
5. The driver should have appropriate insurance, have a DBS check and have read the risk assessment on giving lifts.
6. The driver needs comprehensive motor insurance that includes business use cover and child passengers. This means they need to ensure their personal car insurance policy covers transporting children as part of church-related activities.
7. A copy of the driver's insurance will be kept in a locked file at the Church Offices.
8. If lifts are needed, booster seats should be used if a child is under 135cm or not yet 12 years of age. If the correct child seat is not available, a child over the age of 3 years can use an adult seat belt if the journey is all of the following: unexpected, necessary and over a short distance.

Camps and Trips

When any children's camp or any such trip is organised then the principles of guidelines still apply but separate guidelines will be drawn up to address the requirements of the trip. This will include the requirements that:

- There will be separate consent forms for that event
- All adults supervising/helping will have been DBS checked.
- The SC will be informed (dates, address, and number of attendees, number of leaders and brief overview of activities).
- An overall risk assessment will be prepared by the adults leading and supervising.

Safer recruitment

All potential team members are checked with the safeguarding committee before they are approached to join the team. The safeguarding committee will ensure all workers (voluntary and paid) will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with government guidance on safe recruitment.

If someone is interested with helping or has been asked to be involved, a discussion to ascertain their suitability from a safeguarding perspective will be undertaken by the safeguarding committee. This will cover why they want to help and what is expected of them. If the committee has concerns that the person is not suitable for the role then they will discuss this with the leader

of the children's work who will agree a course of action with them including how to communicate with the person.

Factors which will need to be covered before anyone is accepted as a new worker are:

1. For those that have been known for over a year, two references will be required. For those known under a year two written references should be obtained from their former or present church or another suitable organisation.
2. Complete a Helper's Declaration form and will have read and agreed to this safeguarding policy by signing the form.
3. Have a DBS check completed where required under this policy. When a blemished disclosure is received a confidential risk assessment will be carried out by the safeguarding committee in conjunction with thirtyone:eight. Whereas the DBS goes to the applicant in this case thirtyone:eight will also contact us. In the case of any blemished disclosure regarding any activity with children, rigorous restrictions will be placed over the applicant's involvement with children which will be strictly monitored.
4. Be inducted into the church's safeguarding policies by the SC or deputy and thereafter attend the annual training sessions on safeguarding. If they are unable to attend either session for valid reasons, then they must seek to update themselves on the training by approaching the SC or confirm that they have listened to a recording.
5. Have a probationary period of at least 3 months but could be more at the discretion of the safeguarding committee. This means that will not be on their own in a class with children until the end of this period. At the end of the period there will be a discussion with whoever is leading that part of the children's work and with the safeguarding committee to clarify that the probationary period has ended.

Where people outside the Church are involved from time to time in children's work in the Church then a current DBS form, ie less than 3 years old, will be checked by a member of the safeguarding team. A suitability check will be carried out by a suitable person such as a church leader or safeguarding team member. If these people outside of the Church are there for a one off visit, then they will never be left alone with children.

For young people (those under 18 years of age) who would like to help and support with children's work, they will be supervised by adults at all times and have a meeting with the children's work lead who will set out behaviour and work expectations with their parent's permission. Their involvement with the children's work will be reviewed regularly against these expectations under the authority of the children's work lead or church leader.

Safer Recruitment: External recruitment for an employee role within the church

During the recruitment process the candidates will be requested to explain their approach to safeguarding to ensure that they are familiar with safeguarding requirements and that they appreciate fully the importance of safeguarding in all aspects of the church's ministry. Their employment history will be examined to test its completeness and two suitable referees will be sought before the offer of employment is made. It is considered that all church employees with people responsibilities should be enhanced DBS tested by the church as they hold positions of trust and responsibility in the church.

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 safeguarding committee 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, they will set boundaries for that person which will keep them away from all involvement with children. These boundaries will be based on a risk assessment and thorough consultation with appropriate parties and will be communicated in writing to the person concerned who must in writing confirm their agreement to them before they can join any main church meetings.

Appendix 1: Guidelines: Recognising and responding appropriately to an allegation or suspicion of abuse.

Child abuse: Defining child abuse is a difficult and complex issue. A person may abuse by inflicting harm, or failing to prevent harm. Children 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. Types of child abuse include emotional, physical, and sexual and neglect fuller definitions are given in the Appendix.

Adult abuse: A person may abuse by inflicting harm, or failing to prevent harm. Suspicions or allegations of abuse or harm including; physical, sexual, organisational, financial, discriminatory, neglect, self-neglect, forced marriage, modern slavery, domestic abuse. Adults with care and support needs 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 adult.

Suspicion of Child abuse: Under no circumstances should a worker carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. Following procedures apply for the church's workers:

1. If you have suspicions of abuse, you should report concerns as soon as possible to either of the SC Pauline Glover (07800 983704) or Angela Windsor (07790 683369), *who will respond to the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including, if appropriate, referring the matter on to the statutory authorities.*
2. If the suspicions implicate the SC then the report should be made in the first instance to the Thirtyone:eight (formerly CCPAS) <https://thirtyoneeight.org/> PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ. Telephone 0303 003 11 11. Alternatively contact Social Services or the police. See numbers in section 5 below.
3. If a child discloses to you any abuse by someone else. Let the child speak without interruption, accepting what is said, but do not investigate and do not ask leading questions. To help them you can use TED (tell me, explain to me and describe to me) to help them disclose to you. Try to comfort and alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation without passing judgement. Advise them that you will try to offer support but you must pass this information on. Never agree to listen to a child if they make you promise not to tell anyone. Then record the discussion as soon as possible in writing. Inform Pauline or Angela without delay.

4. If you receive an allegation against yourself or another adult then inform the SC without delay. Try to record the facts as best as you know them. Try to ensure that no one else is placed in a position which could lead to further compromise.
5. Where the SC concern is such that they should contact Children's Social Services or Adult Social Services. The numbers are:
 - The Bristol Social Services Team ask us to ring the First Response Team on 0117 9036444
 - The Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) prefer you to speak to someone at your local police station or alternatively you can contact someone online by reporting a crime using this link <https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/report/crime-or-incident/#/>
 - The NSPCC 24 hour Helpline is 0800 800 5000 (free from a landline).
5. The SC may need to inform others depending on the circumstances and/or nature of the concern.
6. 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.
7. The children's leaders and workers and pastoral team will support the SC 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.

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

If you have suspicions of abuse, you should report concerns as soon as possible to either of the SC Pauline Glover (07800 983704) or deputy Angela Windsor (07790683369), who will respond to the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including, if appropriate, referring the matter on to the statutory authorities. The third member of the safeguarding committee is Eve Scott (07989 974732) They will:

- Contact the Adult Social Care Team who have responsibility under the Care Act 2014 to investigate allegations of abuse. **Email:** adult.care@bristol.gov.uk **Telephone:** 0117 922 2700
- Alternatively thirtyone:eight can be contacted for advice. Thirtyone:eight (formerly CCPAS) <https://thirtyoneeight.org/> PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ. Telephone 0303 003 11 11
- 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, the 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.

Appendix 2: Definitions & Indicators of Child Abuse.

1. Neglect: Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs. The following may be indicators of neglect (this is not designed to be used as a checklist):

- Constant hunger; stealing, scavenging and/or hoarding food;
- Frequent tiredness or listlessness;
- Frequently dirty or unkempt;
- Often poorly or inappropriately clad for the weather;
- Poor school attendance or often late for school;
- Poor concentration;
- Affection or attention seeking behaviour;
- Illnesses or injuries that are left untreated;
- Failure to achieve developmental milestones, for example growth, weight;
- Failure to develop intellectually or socially;
- Responsibility for activity that is not age appropriate such as cooking, ironing, caring for siblings;
- The child is regularly not collected or received from school; or
- The child is left at home alone or with inappropriate carers

2. Physical Abuse: Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. The following may be indicators of physical abuse (this is not designed to be used as a checklist):

- Multiple bruises in clusters, or of uniform shape; bruises that carry an imprint, such as a hand or a belt;
- Bite marks;
- Round burn marks; Multiple burn marks and burns on unusual areas of the body such as the back, shoulders or buttocks;
- An injury that is not consistent with the account given; changing or different accounts of how an injury occurred;
- Bald patches;
- Symptoms of drug or alcohol intoxication or poisoning;
- Unaccountable covering of limbs, even in hot weather;
- Fear of going home or parents being contacted;
- Fear of medical help;
- Fear of changing for PE;

- Inexplicable fear of adults or over-compliance;
- Violence or aggression towards others including bullying; or isolation from peers.

3. Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit act of sexual abuse, as can other children. The following may be indicators of sexual abuse (this is not designed to be used as a checklist):

- Sexually explicit play or behaviour or age-inappropriate knowledge;
- Anal or vaginal discharge, soreness or scratching;
- Reluctance to go home;
- Inability to concentrate, tiredness;
- Refusal to communicate;
- Thrush, persistent complaints of stomach disorders or pains;
- Eating disorders, for example anorexia nervosa and bulimia;
- Attention seeking behaviour, self-mutilation, substance abuse;
- Aggressive behaviour including sexual harassment or molestation;
- Unusual compliance;
- Regressive behaviour, enuresis, soiling;
- Frequent or open masturbation, touching others inappropriately;
- Depression, withdrawal, isolation from peer group;
- Reluctance to undress for PE or swimming; or
- Bruises or scratches in the genital area.

4. Emotional Abuse: Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may also involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another person. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment. The following may be indicators of emotional abuse (this is not designed to be used as a checklist):

- The child consistently describes him/herself in very negative ways – as stupid, naughty, hopeless, ugly;
- Over-reaction to mistakes;
- Delayed physical, mental or emotional development;

- Sudden speech or sensory disorders;
- Inappropriate emotional responses, fantasies;
- Neurotic behaviour: rocking, banging head, regression, tics and twitches;
- Self-harming, drug or solvent abuse;
- Fear of parents being contacted;
- Running away;
- Compulsive stealing;
- Appetite disorders - anorexia nervosa, bulimia; or
- Soiling, smearing faeces, enuresis.

N.B.: Some situations where children stop communication suddenly (known as “traumatic mutism”) can indicate maltreatment.

Appendix 3: Key Contact Numbers for Waterbrook Church

Luke Goodway – Church Leader – 07780 458828

Pauline Glover – Safeguarding Coordinator – 07800 983704

Angela Windsor – Trustee & Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator – 07790 683369

Eve Scott – Lead Children’s Worker – 07989 974732