

Safeguarding Policy

(Children and Young People)

This policy is reviewed annually.

CONTENTS

Section 1 - To be read by all church members.

- 3 Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator details
- 4 Safeguarding Policy Statement

Section 2 – To be read by all those involved in children’s and young peoples’ work.

- 5 Church Statement
- 5 Church Mission
- 6 Our Commitment
- 6 Areas of Policy
- 7 Good Practice Guidelines for the Prevention of Abuse
- 11 Procedures if abuse is disclosed or discovered
- 15 Working with Offenders

Section 3 – To be read by the Elders and the Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator

- 18 Appendix 1 – The chain of events that should occur if an allegation is made about a volunteer or staff member
- 24 Appendix 2 – Escalating Concerns
- 25 Appendix 3 – Concerns about Radicalisation
- 26 Appendix 4 – Child Sexual Exploitation
- 26 Appendix 5 – County Lines
- 26 Appendix 6 – Modern Slavery and trafficking
- 27 Appendix 7 – Private Fostering

WALTHAMSTOW CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

In accordance with our Safeguarding Policy, we have appointed a Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator whose name, address and telephone number appear below.

Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator

Lily Harrison
22 Poplars Road
Walthamstow
London
E17 9AT

Landline : 020 8509 0392
Mobile : 07974 908066

CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT

This statement was agreed at the Church members meeting held on 20th May 2021

It will be read annually at the Church Annual General Meeting where progress in carrying it out will be monitored.

- ❖ As Christians, we are called to love our neighbour (Matthew 22:39).
- ❖ Our Lord Jesus Christ also said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them." (Matthew 19:14).
- ❖ Therefore, we are committed to supporting our parents and families.
- ❖ As members of this Church, we commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all, especially those who are vulnerable at whatever their stage of life.
- ❖ It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual, neglect and emotional abuse of vulnerable people, and to report any abuse discovered or suspected.
- ❖ We recognise that our work with children and young people is the responsibility of the whole Church.
- ❖ As a Church we are committed to respectful pastoral ministry of adults providing support and empowerment to participate and make their own decisions.
- ❖ As a Church we are committed to being a caring community which provides a loving environment where there is a culture of informed vigilance regarding the dangers of abuse.
- ❖ The Church is committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with children and young people and to providing supervision.
- ❖ The Church is committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with vulnerable adults.
- ❖ The Church is committed to the Home Office Code of Practice: 'Safe from Harm' and to 'Working together to safeguard children – A guide to interagency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (March 2015).
- ❖ Each worker with children, young people or vulnerable adults must know the recommendations and undertake to observe them. Each shall be given a copy of the Church's agreed procedures and good practice guidelines. When a new worker takes up a role, the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator or their deputy or an elder will go through the recommendation with the person in question. Each year, all children's, youth workers and those who work with vulnerable adults will attend a meeting to go through the appropriate policy and recommendations.
- ❖ At the start of each academic year, this statement will be explained in an age-appropriate manner to young people and children at our groups, which may include talking about online abuse if age appropriate.
- ❖ The Designated Safeguarding Coordinator is Lily Harrison. She will deal with any concerns or matters arising from safeguarding issues and coordinate the DBS checks. If, in an emergency, Lily Harrison is not available, Andrew Ferdinando should be approached.

Children, young people and vulnerable adults are part of our Church today. They have much to give as well as to receive. We will listen to them. As we nurture them in worship, learning and in community life we will respect their wishes and feelings of the children, young people and vulnerable adults.

CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Name	Walthamstow Central Baptist Church
Address	101A Orford Road Walthamstow London E17 9QR
Telephone Number.	020 8503 7577
Email address	central101@btconnect.com
Denomination	Affiliated to the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches

Church Statement

The Church has an ongoing children's and young person's ministry. The Church takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people.

Church Mission

The Church is committed to:

- ❖ Valuing, listening to, and relating effectively to children and young people whilst ensuring their protection within Church activities.
- ❖ Safe recruitment, supervision and training for all the children's/youth workers within the church.
- ❖ Encouraging and supporting parents/carers
- ❖ Supporting those affected by abuse in the church
- ❖ Having a system for dealing with concerns and possible abuse

Our Commitment

As a Leadership we recognise the need to provide a safe environment for children and young people in our care. This forms part of our obligation to love one another (John 13:34). We acknowledge that children and young people can be the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and neglect.

We concur with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child where it 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 a Leadership we have therefore adopted the procedures set out in this safeguarding policy in accordance with statutory guidance.

The Leadership undertakes to:

- endorse and follow national and local safeguarding legislation and procedures, in addition to the international conventions outlined above, as far as they do not go against anything taught in God's Word, the Bible.
- provide on-going safeguarding training for all its workers, seeking to keep workers informed of current guidelines.
- support the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator(s) in their work and in any action, they may need to take in order to protect children and young people.

Areas of Policy

The Church recognises that some children and young people today are the victims of neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Accordingly, the Church has adopted the policy contained in this document, (hereafter "the policy"). The policy sets out agreed guidelines relating to the following areas:

- ❖ Responding to allegations of abuse, including those against leaders or members of the Church.
- ❖ Appointing children's / youth workers
- ❖ Supervision of activities and practical issues
- ❖ Helping victims of abuse
- ❖ Working with offenders

The local Social Services telephone number between 9am and 5pm is **020 8496 2310** (Waltham Forest Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub team), the out of hours number known as the emergency team is **020 8496 3000**.

Good Practice Guidelines for the Prevention of Abuse

A. Good practice with children and young people

The Church will ensure that:

- ❖ as far as possible an adult is not alone with a person under the age of eighteen where their activity cannot be seen. On Church premises this may mean leaving doors open or two groups working in the same room.
- ❖ all persons who are in any counselling situation with a young person, where privacy and confidentiality are important ensure that another adult knows the interview is taking place and with whom.
- ❖ that access to the building is safe and well lit.
- ❖ on a Sunday morning the back of the Church is locked to any visitors by 10:55am.
- ❖ during children's activities adults that have not been DBS checked are kept separate from children they are not related to.

You, the worker should:

- ❖ treat all children and young people with respect and dignity befitting their age, mental capacity; watch language, tone of voice, and where you put your body;
- ❖ follow the instructions of group leaders with regard to keeping registers and registration forms (for example, ensuring accurate records are kept of the attendance of children and staff, including those giving lifts, and ensuring data is kept securely in line with our Data Protection Policy;
- ❖ not engage in any of the following:
 - invading the privacy of children when they are showering, changing or toileting;
 - rough play that could lead to injury or sexually provocative games;
 - making sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person even in fun
 - initiating unnecessary physical contact;
 - any scapegoating, ridiculing, embarrassing or rejecting a child or young person;
- ❖ learn to control and discipline children without physical punishment (this includes their own children whilst at church or on church activities);
- ❖ make sure another adult is present if for example a young child has soiled their underclothes and needs to be thoroughly washed. Where possible allow the child to clean themselves in a cubicle with both adults outside of the cubicle;
- ❖ not let youngsters involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly physical in nature;
- ❖ not invite a child or young person to your home alone; invite a group or ensure that someone else is in the house. Make sure parents know where the child is;
- ❖ not share sleeping accommodation with children or young people if you take a group away or during a sleepover in the church building;
- ❖ avoid using social media to communicate with young people under the age of 18. Where emails or texts are used copy other adults in (preferably a parent);
- ❖ avoid accepting friend requests on social media from young people under the age of 18;
- ❖ avoid taking photos and videos of young people under the age of 18, that do not have a clear purpose. Where photos are taken for church purposes, the photos should be stored on a church computer and be deleted from personal devices;
- ❖ where lifts are to be given:
 - only give lifts where a parent / guardian has signed to allow their child to be transported (except in emergencies);
 - only give lifts where cars / drivers meet the following criteria:
 - drivers must be over 21, having held a full driving licence for over 1 year;
 - drivers must have fully comprehensive insurance cover;
 - cars must be taxed and have a valid MOT certificate;
 - drivers and cars meeting the above criteria will be noted on a list of approved drivers / cars by the deacons. The deacons or their representative shall sign the list each year to say they have seen the relevant documents;
 - not give lifts to a child or young person on their own unless there is a second adult in the car;
 - have children in the back of the car and adults in the front;
 - use car seats / booster seats according to the law.

B. Appointing Young people and children's workers

The Leadership will ensure all workers will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with government guidelines on safe recruitment.

In appointing workers (volunteer or otherwise) the Leadership will be responsible for ensuring the following procedure:

- An interview with an Elder.
- Over 16s : Agreement to an enhanced DBS police check, with the worker not being involved in young people's or children's work until they have an up-to-date enhanced DBS check. A paper enhanced DBS check from another organisation that is less than three years old, will be considered valid, as with a DBS update number, that will be checked by the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- For workers / volunteers who have been attending the church for less than two years, a phone reference shall be taken up.
- To sign and agree to abide by the guidelines in this policy.

Criteria for NOT appointing workers are:

- Any indications of previous offences against children or young people.
- Previous sexual offences
- Violent or inappropriate behaviour
- Unsuitability for this type of ministry.

Workers will be given their own personal copy of this document for reference.

Workers will be given opportunities to meet together with their children and young people's leaders to discuss work programmes and areas of concern.

C. Safeguarding training

The Leadership is committed to on-going safeguarding training for the safeguarding co-ordinator and developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues amongst all workers to help protect everyone.

The Leadership will also ensure that children and young people 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.

D. How to respond if you are worried about one of the adults within the church and their behaviour

If you see another member of staff acting in ways that might be misconstrued, be prepared to speak to them or to the group leader or other church leader about your concerns. Leaders should encourage an atmosphere of mutual support and care which allows all workers to be comfortable enough to discuss inappropriate attitudes or manners.

If, after having spoken to the person, you are still unhappy about their behaviour or their lack of willingness to change their behaviour, you should talk to the pastor (or other church leader). The pastor will then deal with the situation. It maybe that the pastor asks the person to step down from the role in children and young people's ministry. If the person who raised the initial concern feels that the situation is unresolved, they should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator who will consult with the other elders and then speak to Thirtyone:eight if it is considered necessary.

E. Responding to Allegations against Young People or Children's workers.

If an allegation of abuse is made against a Worker, this should be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator or, if not available, an elder. If the allegation concerns the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator, you should inform the Pastor or one of the other elders. Workers should not themselves inform the worker who has been accused.

Immediately an allegation is made, written details of the allegation should be obtained by the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator or, if not available, an elder.

The Designated Safeguarding Coordinator or, if not available, an elder, will decide what to do next.

- If the suspicions or allegations are of a serious nature (particularly those where a child has suffered or is likely to suffer harm, or where a criminal offence may have been committed), they will immediately contact Social Services, Thirtyone:eight or the Police directly for advice.
- Other cases can be dealt with internally, although less serious allegations may still need to be examined objectively by someone independent of the church, and so may be, at the discretion of the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator, or, if not available, an elder, referred to Waltham Forest Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub team.
- The Church recognises that an over hasty or ill-judged decision to suspend a children's worker immediately from attendance and involvement at an activity when an allegation of abuse is made, can be very damaging for them. There may be other options.

The Designated Safeguarding Coordinator or, if not available, an elder, will decide when to inform the accused worker of the allegation. If the matter has been referred to Social Services or the Police, this decision shall be made in conjunction with the relevant outside agency.

The Church recognises that the allegations may be false, misplaced, exaggerated or mistaken, and that where this is the case, there may be malicious and deliberate intent, or a genuine mistake. Regardless of the motives underlying any allegations, they may also be well-founded. Everyone who deals with allegations of abuse should maintain an open and enquiring mind. It is also essential that all agencies concerned act in a manner and at a speed suitable to the nature and level of the concern once suspicions are brought to their attention.

If after investigation by outside agencies the allegation is considered serious enough for the person to be removed from their role, even if they step down of their own accord, the elders need to inform the DBS.

RECORD KEEPING

Make notes as soon as possible about what is causing you concern. Record dates and times of events and when you made the record. Keep all handwritten notes, even if subsequently typed. Such record should be kept safely for an indefinite period.

Procedures if abuse is disclosed or discovered.

The Church and all its appointed children's and youth workers are committed to the protection of children from physical, sexual, neglect and emotional abuse.

Children can be abused by adults as well as by other young people or children. Whatever the situation child abuse is an abuse of power and a breach of trust.

The authorities will be notified if the designated safeguarding coordinator believes that a child is either suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm.

Sometimes a single traumatic event constitutes 'significant harm' to a child; and, sometimes, a build-up of concerns or a series of incidents over time also gives rise to 'significant harm'.

The law recognises the following categories of abuse under the Children Act (1989):

<p>Neglect 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.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Hunger → Poor personal hygiene → Inappropriate clothing → Frequent lateness or non-attendance → Untreated medical problems → Poor social relationships → Compulsive stealing or scrounging → Tiredness 	<p>Sexual Abuse</p> <p>Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, physical contact including non-penetrative act, and non-physical contact including making pornographic material, being exposed to sexual activity, encouraging to behave sexually and verbal sexual abuse.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Bruises, scratches, burns or bite marks on the body. → Scratches, abrasions or persistent infections in the anal or genital regions → Sexual awareness inappropriate to the child's age → Public masturbation → Teaching other children about sexual activity → Refusing to stay with certain people or go to certain places. → Aggressiveness, anger, anxiety, tearfulness → Withdrawal from friends → Pregnancy (in older young people) → Grooming → Sexting
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<p>Physical Abuse Hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning/scalding, drowning, suffocating, otherwise causing physical harm, or factitious illness by proxy</p> <p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Unexplained injuries or burns → Refusal to discuss injuries/improbable explanations. → Untreated injuries/illness → Admission of punishment which appears excessive. → Shrinking from physical contact → Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted. → Fear of undressing → Fear of medical help → Aggression/bullying → Over compliant behaviour or 'watchful attitude' → Running away → Significant changes in behaviour without explanation → FGM 	<p>Emotional Abuse Persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child causing severe and persistent adverse effects on child's emotional development.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Continual self-deprecation → Depression, withdrawal → Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations → Self-harm or mutilation → Compulsive stealing/scrounging → Drug/solvent abuse/eating problems (over-/under-eating) → 'Neurotic' behaviour – obsessive rocking, thumb-sucking → 'Don't care' attitude or desperate attention-seeking behaviour. → Social isolation – does not join in and has few friends
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What to do if a child makes a disclosure or you observe abuse

A disclosure can be indirect or direct. A young person might tell someone at the church about something of a personal or sensitive nature. (Direct disclosure). The concern might be considered to be a potential safeguarding or child protection concern. Equally, someone in the church might overhear something of a personal or sensitive nature that might be considered to be a potential safeguarding or child protection concern. This might also be accompanied by visible signs of discomfort or distress in a young person.

This would be considered as an indirect disclosure. Whatever the circumstance of the disclosure:

DO:

- ✓ Listen carefully.
- ✓ Show acceptance of what the child says (however unlikely the story may sound).
- ✓ Keep calm – look at the child directly – be honest.
- ✓ Tell the child you will need to let someone else know – don't promise confidentiality.
- ✓ Even when a child has broken a rule, they are not to blame for the abuse.
- ✓ Be aware that the child may have been threatened or bribed not to tell.
- ✓ Record the conversation in the child's words and note the time.
- ✓ Sign and date the record you make.
- ✓ Take it seriously.
- ✓ Reassure the young person that they are right to tell.
- ✓ Explain what happens next - including support.
- ✓ Pass on the information as soon as possible.

HELPFUL THINGS YOU MAY SAY OR SHOW

- ✓ You've done the right thing to tell me.
- ✓ It's not your fault.
- ✓ I will help you.

DON'T

- Ask leading questions.
- Interview the child such as asking who? Where? When? Why? How?
- Say 'Why didn't you tell anyone before?'
- Say 'Are you sure this is true?'
- Make false promises.
- Make statements such as "I am shocked, don't tell anyone else".
- Make promises you cannot keep –you can not keep it between you.
- Jump to conclusions, speculate or blame.
- Try to investigate the situation yourself.
- Delay in referring to the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator or, if not available, the deputy.

If the child is in immediate danger call the police on:

101

(if no response dial 999)

Main police switchboard number. Request to speak to Child Protection Team

CONCLUDING

- Again, reassure the child that they were right to tell you and show acceptance.
- Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens (if the abuse is taking place in their home you might have to consider referring to Social Services or the police to prevent a child or young person returning home if you consider them to be seriously at risk of further abuse).

Contact the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator as soon as possible or if unable to do so, refer to Social Services direct or Police.

AFTER FINISHING WITH THE CHILD

- Report your discussion as soon as possible with Lily Harrison (Safeguarding Co-ordinator), if she is implicated contact an agency such as Thirtyone:eight for advice or go directly to Social Services / Police / NSPCC.
- You should not discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone other than the nominated person in the above point.
- Consider your own feelings and seek pastoral support if needed.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Waltham Forest Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub team	020 8496 2310
Out of hours Emergency Duty Team	020 8496 3000
Police (Central Switchboard)	101
Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator Lily Harrison	0208 509 0392
Thirtyone:eight (formerly CCPAS)	0303 003 1111

WORKING WITH OFFENDERS

Where someone attending the Church is known to have abused children then it will be important to extend friendship to the individual, but at the same time the leadership will ensure a frank discussion takes place with the person concerned and efforts will be made to sustain open communication. It will be necessary to establish clear boundaries for both the protection of the young people and to lessen the possibility of the adult being wrongly suspected of abuse.

Sexual offences are often addictive; the offender may be tempted to re-offend and might try to gain access to young people by befriending their parents. The offender may try to manipulate and control and be coming to Church specifically to contact children.

The Church will look for direct contact with the person's supervising probation officer and also expect that the supervising officer would be making contact with the Church on any issue relating to the safety of children.

The Church leaders will meet with the offender and discuss the possibility of drawing up a contractual statement similar to the example below:

- ✓ I will never allow myself to be in a situation where I am alone with children or young or vulnerable people;
- ✓ I will attend meetings/house groups as directed by the Church leadership;
- ✓ I will sit where directed in the Church and will not place myself in the vicinity of children, young or vulnerable people;
- ✓ I will not enter certain parts of the building designated by the leadership, not any area where children's activities are in progress;
- ✓ I will decline invitations of hospitality where there are children or vulnerable people in the home;
- ✓ I accept that and will sit with me during Church activities accompanying me when I need to use other facilities. They will know that I am a Schedule 1 offender / registered with the police under the terms of the Sex Offenders Act;
- ✓ I accept that there are certain people who will need to be told of my circumstances in order for them to protect the children/young people for whom they care;
- ✓ I accept that will provide me with pastoral care;
- ✓ I understand that if I do not keep to these conditions, I may be barred from attending the Church and in such circumstances the leadership may choose to inform the statutory agencies and any other relevant organisation and the Church congregation;
- ✓ I understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly every months and will remain for an indefinite period.

(This document would need to be signed and dated by the offender and by the Church representatives)

Date

Signed

.....

Robert Jeffery – Pastor

It should be made clear that as people change role, their successors will take on becoming involved. An agreement must remain in place so long as the person is part of the congregation, whether or not they are on licence or their name appears on the Sex Offenders Register.

If the person leaves the church for another church, then the police should be involved, and a new agreement should be made. If the person leaves without informing anyone where or whether they might attend worship, the police should be informed.

Whenever possible, the agreement should be drawn up as a two-way covenant. The Church will agree to levels of support and appropriate access to worship etc while the offender agrees to the appropriate behavioural guidelines included in the agreement.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Signed	Date	Robert Jeffery
Signed	Date	Roger Neil
Signed	Date	Maurice Titmarsh
Signed	Date	Thomas Kitchen
Signed	Date	Lily Harrison

Appendix 1 – The chain of events that should occur if an allegation is made about a volunteer or staff member based on advice from London Safeguarding Children Board, 5th Edition (2017)

When informed of a concern or allegation, the designated safeguarding lead should not investigate the matter but they should continue to gather factual information in regard to the incident and ensure any evidence is preserved. This fact-finding should be a neutral process and should not amount to an investigation of the incident. They should:

- Obtain written details of the concern / allegation, signed and dated by the person receiving it (not the child / adult making the allegation);
- Approve and date the written details;
- Record any information about times, dates and location of incident/s and names of any potential witnesses;

Record discussions about the child and/or member of staff, any decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions.

The designated safeguarding lead should review the information available and consideration should be given as to whether the case meets the threshold of harm/risk of harm.

- If it is decided it meets the threshold of harm/risk of harm and therefore is an allegation they should follow the procedures below and notify the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day. If appropriate, the police should also be notified within one working day – or immediately if necessary;
- If it is decided that the incident does not meet the threshold of harm/risk of harm and is a concern only, then they should take steps to ensure any conduct or behaviour issues are addressed with the member of staff through normal employment practices;

If the designated safeguarding lead is unclear whether the incident meets the threshold of harm/risk of harm they may wish to seek advice from the LADO.

Notifying the London Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day of an allegation

The designated safeguarding lead must inform their LADO within one working day when an allegation is made and prior to any further investigation taking place. A failure to report an allegation in accordance with procedures is a potential disciplinary matter.

- If it is outside of normal working hours and there is an immediate risk to a child, the local authority emergency duty team for children's social care, the LADO, should be informed as soon as possible;
- An immediate risk assessment should be carried out;
- If appropriate the police should also be notified within one working day – or immediately if necessary;

It is important to note that information gathering is distinct from investigation. Employers should continue to gather information about the facts of the case, for example, checking if there is any evidence and taking statements from other witnesses.

Where it has been deemed appropriate to suspend the person, written confirmation should be dispatched within one working day, giving as much detail as appropriate for the reasons for the suspension. It is not acceptable for an employer to leave a person who has been suspended without any support. The person should be informed at the point of their suspension who their named contact is within the organisation and provided with their contact details.

Children's social care services or the police cannot require the case manager to suspend a member of staff or a volunteer, although they should give appropriate weight to their advice. The power to suspend is vested in the employer. However, where a discussion concludes that there should be enquiries by the children's social care services and/or an investigation by the police, the LADO(s) should canvass police and children's social care services for views about whether the accused member of staff needs to be suspended from contact with children in order to inform consideration of suspension. Police involvement does not make it mandatory to suspend a member of staff; this decision should be taken on a case-by-case basis having undertaken a risk assessment.

If a suspended person is to return to work, the employer should consider what help and support might be appropriate (e.g. a phased return to work and/or provision of a mentor), and also how best to manage the member of staff's contact with the child concerned, if still in the workplace.

The meeting /discussion should also:

- Ensure that arrangements are made to protect the child/ren involved and any other child/ren affected, including taking emergency action where needed;
- Consider what support should be provided to all children who may be affected;
- Consider what support should be provided to the member of staff and others who may be affected and how they will be kept up to date with the progress of the investigation;
- Ensure that investigations are sufficiently independent;
- Make recommendations where appropriate regarding suspension, or alternatives to suspension;
- Identify a lead contact manager within each agency;
- Agree protocols for reviewing investigations and monitoring progress by the LADO, having regard to the target timescales;
- Consider issues for the attention of senior management (e.g. media interest, resource implications);
- Consider reports for consideration of barring;
- Consider risk assessments to inform the employer's safeguarding arrangements;
- Agree dates for future meetings / discussions.

A final meeting /discussion should be held to ensure that all tasks have been completed, including any referrals to the DBS if appropriate, and, where appropriate, agree an action plan for future practice based on lessons learnt.

Timescales for completing investigations of allegations.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve cases as quickly as possible consistent with a fair and thorough investigation. All allegations should be investigated as a priority to avoid any delay. The time taken to investigate and resolve individual cases depends on a variety of factors including the nature, seriousness and complexity of the allegation, but these targets should be achieved in all but truly exceptional cases. Target timescales are shown below:

- For those cases where it is clear immediately that the allegation is unsubstantiated or malicious, they should be resolved within one week;
- Where the initial consideration decides that the allegation does not involve a possible criminal offence it will be for the employer to deal with it, although if there are concerns about child protection, the employer should discuss them with the LADO;
 - In such cases, if the nature of the allegation does not require formal disciplinary action, the employer should institute appropriate action within three working days;
 - If a disciplinary hearing is required and can be held without further investigation, the hearing should be held within 15 working days.

It is expected that:

- 80 per cent of cases should be resolved within one month;
- 90 per cent should be resolved within three months;
- All but the most exceptional cases should be completed within 12 months.

Outcomes following an investigation.

The following definitions should be used when determining the outcome of allegation investigations:

Substantiated allegations - There is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation that a child has been harmed or there is a risk of harm.

If the facts of the incident are found to be true but it is not found that a child has been harmed or there is a risk of harm, then consideration should be given to deciding that the outcome is 'unsubstantiated' or 'unfounded'.

Malicious - There is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive. The police should be asked to consider what action may be appropriate in these circumstances.

False allegations – There is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation, however, there is no evidence to suggest that there was a deliberate intention to deceive.

False allegations may be an indicator of abuse elsewhere which requires further exploration. If an allegation is demonstrably false, the employer, in consultation with the LADO, should refer the matter to LA children's social care to determine whether the child is in need of services, or might have been abused by someone else.

Unsubstantiated allegations – There is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the

allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.

Unfounded - The additional definition of 'unfounded' can be used to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made. It might also indicate that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw. Alternatively, they may not have been aware of all the circumstances.

The Chair of the meeting / discussion should make a record of the agreed outcome and forward this to the employer.

Record keeping in relation to the outcome of an investigation.

Details of allegations that are found to have been malicious should be removed from personnel records. However, for all other allegations, it is important that a clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation, details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, and a note of any action taken and decisions reached, is kept on the confidential personnel file of the accused, and a copy provided to the person concerned. The purpose of the record is to enable accurate information to be given in response to any future request for a reference, where appropriate. It will provide clarification in cases where future DBS checks reveal information from the police about an allegation that did not result in a criminal conviction and it will help to prevent unnecessary re-investigation if, as sometimes happens, an allegation re-surfaces after a period of time. The record should be retained at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for a period of 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer. The Information Commissioner has published guidance on employment records in its Employment Practices Code and supplementary guidance, which provides some practical advice on record retention.

Substantiated allegations

Referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

There is a legal requirement for employers to make a referral to the DBS where they think that an individual has engaged in conduct that harmed (or is likely to harm) a child; or if a person otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child; or is there is an investigation and the outcome is substantiated either by criminal investigation or by the balance of probabilities.

If an allegation is substantiated and the person is dismissed or the employer ceases to use the person's service or the person resigns or otherwise ceases to provide his/her services, the guidance regarding making a referral - available on the **Disclosure and Barring Service website**.

Legal duty to refer and power to refer.

See the **DBS referral guidance and tools**

The following groups have legal duty to refer information to the DBS:

- Regulated activity suppliers (employers and volunteer managers);

Personnel suppliers that may be an employment agency, employment business or an educational institution;

Further investigation

If further investigation is needed to decide upon disciplinary action, the designated safeguarding lead and the LADO should discuss whether the employer has appropriate resources or whether the employer should commission an independent investigation because of the nature and/or complexity of the case and in order to ensure objectivity. The investigation should not be conducted by a relative or friend of the member of staff.

The aim of an investigation is to obtain, as far as possible, a fair, balanced and accurate record in order to consider the appropriateness of disciplinary action and / or the risk of harm to children. Its purpose is not to prove or disprove the allegation.

If, at any stage, new information emerges that requires a child protection referral, the investigation should be held in abeyance and only resumed if agreed with LA children's social care and the police. Consideration should again be given as to whether suspension is appropriate in light of the new information.

The investigating officer should aim to provide a report within ten working days.

On receipt of the report the employer should follow their disciplinary procedures.

Sharing information for disciplinary purposes

Wherever possible, police and LA children's social care should, during the course of their investigations and enquiries, obtain consent to provide the employer and/or regulatory body with statements and evidence for disciplinary purposes.

If the police or CPS decide not to charge, or decide to administer a caution, or the person is acquitted, the police should pass all relevant information to the employer without delay.

If the person is convicted, the police should inform the employer and the LADO straight away so that appropriate action can be taken.

Resignations and 'compromise agreements'

Every effort should be made to reach a conclusion in all cases even if:

- The individual refuses to cooperate, having been given a full opportunity to answer the allegation and make representations;

It may not be possible to apply any disciplinary sanctions if a person's period of notice expires before the process is complete.

'Settlement agreements' (sometimes referred to as compromise agreements), by which a person agrees to resign if the employer agrees not to pursue disciplinary action, and both parties agree a form of words to be used in any future reference, should not be used in cases of refusal to cooperate or resignation before the person's notice period expires. A settlement/compromise agreement which prevents the employer from making a DBS referral when the criteria are met for so doing would likely result in a criminal offence being committed for failure to comply with the duty to refer. Nor should they be used as a way of concluding any disciplinary investigation where there is a substantiated outcome. Such an agreement will not prevent a thorough police investigation where that is appropriate.

The organisation must make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service to consider whether to add the individual to the barred list. This applies irrespective of whether a referral has been made to local authority children's social care and/or the designated officer or team of officers. It is an offence to fail to make a referral without good reason.

Learning lessons

The employer and the LADO should review the circumstances of the case to determine whether there are any improvements to be made to the organisation's procedures or practice.

General responsibilities when investigating an allegation

Support to the child and family involved.

The organisation, together with LA children's social care and / or police, where they are involved, should consider the impact on the child concerned and provide support as appropriate. Liaison between the agencies should take place in order to ensure that the child's needs are addressed.

Keeping parents/cares and children informed

The employer must inform the parents of the child/ren involved of the allegation and the process that is being followed unless this will impede the disciplinary or investigative processes. The LADO can advise the employer whether or not the parents should be informed. However, in some circumstances, the parent/s may need to be told straight away (e.g. if a child is injured and requires medical treatment);

The parent/s and the child, if sufficiently mature, should be helped to understand the processes involved and be kept informed about the progress of the case and of the outcome where there is no criminal prosecution. This will include the outcome of any disciplinary process, but not the deliberations of, or the information used in, a hearing.

Responsibilities to employees/volunteers alleged to have caused harm.

Support to the accused member of staff

As soon as possible after an allegation has been received, the accused member of staff should be advised to contact their union or professional association. Human resources should be consulted at the earliest opportunity in order that appropriate support can be provided via the organisation's occupational health or employee welfare arrangements.

Keeping the accused member of staff informed

Subject to restrictions on the information that can be shared, the employer should, as soon as possible, inform the accused person about the nature of the allegation, how enquiries will be conducted and the possible outcome (e.g. disciplinary action, and dismissal or referral to the DBS or regulatory body).

The accused member of staff should:

- Be treated fairly and honestly and helped to understand the concerns expressed and processes involved;

- Be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation and the implications for any disciplinary or related process;
- If suspended, be kept up to date about events in the workplace.

The employer may need to seek advice from their LADO, the police and / or LA children's social care about how much information should be disclosed to the accused person. However, providing information to the accused person throughout the process of dealing with the concern or allegation is an essential part of the common law duty to act fairly. The person that is alleged to be responsible for abuse and/or neglect should be provided with sufficient information to enable them to understand what it is that they are alleged to have done or threatened to do that is wrong and to allow their view to be heard and considered. This also needs to be seen in the wider context of prevention, for example, information can be used to support people to change or modify their behaviour. Feedback should be provided in a way that will not exacerbate the situation or breach the Data Protection Act 2018 or General Data Protection Regulations.

Consideration should be given to withholding information in the following circumstances:

- Whether it is safe to disclose – this applies both to any child/ren and any witnesses particularly where there is domestic abuse;
- If the matter is subject to police involvement, the police should always be consulted so criminal investigations are not compromised.

The Local Government Ombudsman and the Parliamentary and Health Ombudsman can provide advice and the Information Commissioner provides advice on sharing information.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered. Apart from keeping the child, parents and accused person (where this would not place the child at further risk) up to date with progress of the case, information should be restricted to those who have a need to know in order to protect children, facilitate enquiries and manage related disciplinary or suitability processes.

The police should not provide identifying information to the press or media, unless and until a person is charged, except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. an appeal to trace a suspect). In such cases, the reasons should be documented and partner agencies consulted beforehand.

Reporting restrictions regarding allegations against teachers

Parents and carers should also be made aware of the requirement to maintain confidentiality about any allegations made against teachers whilst investigations are ongoing as set out in Section 13 of the Education Act 2011 (which amended the Education Act 2002). If parents or carers wish to apply to the court to have reporting restrictions removed, they should be advised to seek legal advice.

The restrictions remain in place unless or until the teacher is charged with a criminal offence, though they may be dispensed with on the application to the Magistrates' Court by any person, if the court is satisfied that it is in the interests of justice to do so, having regard to the welfare of:

- a. The person who is the subject of the allegation, and
- b. The victim of the offence to which the allegation relates.

Appendix 3 – Concerns about Radicalisation

The government's 2011 Prevent strategy describes extremism as vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the law, individual freedom and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Also included in the definition of extremism are calls for the death of members of the armed forces, whether in this country or overseas.

The government's 2011 Prevent strategy defines radicalisation as the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.

The government 2015 Counter Extremism Strategy defines extremism as 'the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and respect and tolerance for different faith and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist.'

The government website Educate Against Hate says the signs that a young person is being radicalised may include:

- Refusal to engage with, or becoming abusive to peers who are different from themselves;
- Becoming susceptible to conspiracy theories and feelings of persecution;
- Changes in friendship groups and appearance;
- Rejecting activities, they used to enjoy;
- Converting to a new religion;
- Isolating themselves from family or friends;
- Talking as if from scripted speech;
- An unwillingness or inability to discuss their views;
- A sudden disrespectful attitude towards others;
- Increased levels of anger;
- Increased secretiveness, especially around Internet use;
- Expressions of sympathy for extremist ideologies and groups, or justification of their actions;
- Accessing extremist material online, including social media;
- Possessing extremist literature; and
- Being in contact with extremist recruiters and joining or seeking to join extremist organisations.

Young people who are at risk of radicalisation may have low self-esteem or be victims of bullying or discrimination. It is important to note that these signs can also be part of normal teenage behaviour. Adults who come into contact with young people should have confidence in their instincts and talk to the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator.

The Designated Safeguarding Coordinator will then contact Waltham Forest Prevent Team (Community Safety) by phoning 0208 496 3000. This will not get the young person in trouble, so long as they have not broken the law, it will just help the local authority consider how they can help the young person.

If a person believes that a young person is involved in planning terrorism, they should contact the anti-terrorism hotline on 0800 789 321.

Appendix 4 – Child Sexual Exploitation

CSE refers to exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people receive something such as food, accomdation, drugs, alcohol, gifts, mone or affection in exchange for engaging in sexual activities. Sexual exploitation can take many forms ranging from seemingly consensual relationships to serious organised crime by gangs and groups. Young people may not consider themselves being exploited and signs of abuse may not be obvious. Children sexually exploited may uncharacteristically have lots of money to spend, move away from established friendship groups, connect with other vulnerable young people, go missing for periods of time, arrive home late and miss school. Concerns relating to CSE should be referred using the normal procedures to the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator.

Appendix 5 – County Lines

County lines is the police term for urban gangs suppling drugs to suburban areas, market and coastal towns using dedicated mobile phone lines or 'deal lines'. It involves Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) as gangs use children and vulnerable people to courier drugs and money.

Children as young as twelve years old are being exploited by gangs to courier drugs out of their local area; fifteen to sixteen is the most common age and both males and females are being exploited.

A young person's involvement in County Lines activity often leaves signs. A young person might exhibit some of these signs, either as a member, or as an associate, of a gang dealing drugs. Any sudden changes in a young person's lifestyle should be discussed with them.

Some indicators of County Lines involvement and exploitation are:

- ❖ Persistently going missing and being found in another area;
- ❖ Unexplained acquisition of money, clothes or mobile phones;
- ❖ Excessive receipts of texts/phone calls;
- ❖ Relationships with controlling older individuals or groups;
- ❖ Leaving home without explanation;
- ❖ Suspicion of physical assault/unexplained injuries;
- ❖ Carrying weapons;
- ❖ Gang association

If adults within the Church have concerns, they should follow the normal safeguarding procedures.

Appendix 6 – Modern Slavery and trafficking

Modern slavery is a complex crime and may involve multiple forms of exploitation. It encompasses:

- human trafficking
- slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour.

An individual could have been a victim of human trafficking and/or slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Victims may not be aware that they are being trafficked or exploited, and may have consented to elements of their exploitation, or accepted their situation. If you think that modern slavery has taken place, the case should be referred to the local police as our Church cannot make a referral to the National Referral Mechanism. Anyone can make the report to the police, as anyone can report a crime.

If it involves a child. It should also be referred to Waltham Forest Child Services the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator or an Elder.

Appendix 7 – Private Fostering

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (without the involvement of a local authority) for care of a child under the age of 16 years old (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative, in their own home, with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more. As a Church we do not have a mandatory duty to report it to the local authority. However, if the parties have not reported the arrangement to the Local Authority, they have committed a crime and as a Church we would be wise to talk to either of the parties and then if our suspicions are not satisfied, a referral should be made through the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator, to Waltham Forest Child Services.