

Magdalen Road Church



Safe and Sound

Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines

Updated January 2021

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The following document outlines the church’s work with children and young people under the age of 18. Voluntary Organisations have been required to fulfil this as statutory duty since 1993 with the original publication of “Safe from Harm”, a Home Office Code of Practice.

As a church we encounter children and young people in church activities throughout the week. We have a direct responsibility to prevent abuse of children and young people in our care.

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Elder responsible for Safeguarding and under 18s: Matt Hutchings

Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding statement

The elders of Magdalen Road Church take seriously the church's responsibility to safeguard and protect the welfare and safety of all people in its care, and especially children and young people. We consider it essential that all those involved in this work are fully committed to upholding this policy. It is vital that safeguarding is given paramount importance, for the sake of the children, their families, their leaders, and for the whole church, that they may be well looked after and be able to flourish and grow in faith.

Leadership and responsibility

- The elders of the church hold ultimate responsibility for safeguarding.
- One elder will be particularly responsible for overseeing safeguarding, and if possible, should receive safeguarding training directly from 31:8 as they commence their role (<https://thirtyoneeight.org/training>).
- The elders will designate a church member to be responsible for implementing this safeguarding policy and responding to concerns - the safeguarding co-ordinator.
- There will be at least one deputy co-ordinator to assist the co-ordinator in implementing this policy and in responding to concerns.
- The co-ordinator and deputy co-ordinator should attend a specific child protection module 'Safeguarding for Coordinators and Designated Leads' delivered by 31:8 training at least once, and renew annually every 3 years as a minimum (<https://thirtyoneeight.org/training/advanced-level/safeguarding-for-coordinators-and-leads>).
- The co-ordinator's contact details will be displayed at the entrance of the Old Schoolhouse and available on the church website.

The policy

- The co-ordinator will be responsible for reviewing and updating the safeguarding policy annually, in conjunction with advice from 31:8 and any other relevant developments within church life.
- The co-ordinator will ensure that input is sought from the deputy, elders, staff team, workers (paid and voluntary) and families as changes are made to the policy.
- The co-ordinator will communicate the policy and any updates to the elders, workers, families and the church as a whole as and when necessary (but not less than once a year, in September).
- The most up-to-date version of the policy and any significant updates will be accessible on the church's website.

Appointment of workers

1. Appointment of paid workers (staff)

- All prospective staff working with children and young people will be recruited through the 'Safer Recruitment' process.
- Prospective staff will complete an application form and will be interviewed by at least two members of MRC staff/eldership.
- All paid staff (and elders) of Magdalen Road Church who will be working with vulnerable people must have a clear DBS check completed before they begin their role.

2. Appointment of voluntary workers (leaders and helpers)

- All prospective leaders working with children and young people will be recruited through the 'Safer Recruitment' process.
- It is preferable that only church members are recruited as leaders.
- Prospective leaders who are new to the church will be encouraged to be part of the church for at least 6 months before volunteering.
- The church will normally contact the previous church of a prospective leader who is new to the church to ascertain their suitability to work with children.
- All prospective leaders will first read and agree to abide by the guidelines contained in this policy, before commencement of their role. (See signature page at the end of this document)
- All prospective leaders over the age of 18 will be DBS-checked for their suitability to work with children.
- Only leaders who receive a clear DBS check will be invited to volunteer with children's activities.
- DBS check information will be kept by the church on a password-protected database, which will be monitored each month to see whether any leaders' checks are due to expire and need renewing.
- Leaders will be encouraged to register for the DBS update service on receiving their DBS check.
- While under 18s can be recruited as 'helpers', they cannot be included within ratios of leaders: children and should not be left alone with children.

Training and supervising workers

- All staff and volunteers working with children will receive basic safeguarding training annually (as relevant to their roles) and more extensive training every 3 years.
- Where new leaders begin serving not at the beginning of a new year/term, they will receive an induction and basic training from the person overseeing the children's work regarding their role, working with children and young people, and safeguarding.
- All staff and volunteers will be informed on an ongoing basis of any updates to the safeguarding policy and will be encouraged to consider the elements that particularly relate to the ministries they are involved with.
- One elder will be particularly responsible for overseeing work with children and families. He will either directly oversee all staff and volunteers working with children, or will work with the person leading the children's work to oversee the team of leaders.
- The lead elder for children and young people shall ensure that at least three meetings are held each year for Junior Church workers to discuss all issues relating to children's activities. These will be held early in the autumn, spring and summer terms.
- The leaders of youth groups will meet at least three times each year to discuss all issues relating to youth activities, early in the autumn, spring and summer terms.
- Input and advice will be sought from all staff and volunteers, which will be used to further refine and develop best practice.
- Written records of any safeguarding concerns will be made and stored in the locked Safeguarding cabinet in the church office.
- Elders will be informed of any child protection issues by the safeguarding co-ordinator.

Safeguarding in Practice

1. Co-ordinating and running sessions for under 18s

- For all sessions (in person or online), at least two unrelated adults with valid DBS checks need to be present. Ideally, there would be one of each sex (especially for groups with teenagers). Where two leaders cannot be present, groups will need to be combined (if more than one group is running simultaneously) or sessions cancelled.
- Sessions should be clearly advertised to parents/carers in advance, with locations, timings and names of at least one leader who will be present shared.
- As good practice guidelines, the ratio of adults to children is as follows:

Ages 0-3 years	1 adult: 3 children
Ages 3- 11 years	1 adult: 6 children
Ages 11-16 years	1 adult: 8 children
- No child shall be allowed to attend sessions without written or electronic consent from their parents/carers. Parental consent must be collected in written form at least annually if online booking is not being used.
- Emergency contact and medical information (including that given through online bookings) will be filed and kept on church premises.
- Registers are to be kept of all children and workers attending activities with under 18s, either on paper or electronically. Paper records should be returned to the church office at the conclusion of each academic year/event.
- The discipline policy and 'guidelines for leaders' should be followed at all times to ensure children are kept as safe as possible.

2. Safety in running sessions for under 18s

a) Accident prevention:

- General risk assessments must have been completed for all activities with children and have been shared with leaders and parents/carers prior to the activity.
- Leaders should be aware of potential hazards as they plan specific activities, and should consider how to mitigate them. They are encouraged to speak to co-leaders, and may want to complete a written risk assessment to help them.
- All accidents are to be recorded in the accident log book (kept in the kitchen) and a discussion should be had about whether/what action could be taken to avoid the accident being repeated.
- Children should not be allowed unsupervised access to outside areas, the kitchen or upstairs in the church building.

b) Starts and ends of sessions:

- Children are the responsibility of their parents/carers at all times before and after sessions.
- Leaders will be physically present to receive children from their parents/carers at the start of a session and see them back to them at the end of the session.
- Primary school aged children must be dropped off and picked up by their parent or another adult. If another adult is collecting their child, the parents/carers should inform the leaders in advance.
- Leaders will seek to be timely in starting and finishing sessions promptly, and request that parents/carers are timely in dropping off and collecting their children.
- If secondary school aged children are travelling home from a session independently, with a sibling, or with another child's parent/carer, this information should be shared with leaders by the beginning of the session (ideally in writing, preferably through the booking form).
- Ideally, leaders should avoid giving lifts to children. Where this is necessary, it must never be one leader with one child in a car. More than one child, or ideally more than one leader, should

always be present, and the parents/carers should give permission in advance (written/verbal) except in the case of emergency.

c) First Aid:

- A first aid kit is kept on the church premises in the kitchen and leaders will be made aware of its location.
- The person leading children's work will review accidents logged in the accident book and be responsible for ensuring activities are risk assessed and conducted safely.
- Where possible, a first aid trained leader will be present when children's groups meet (particularly those with children under 7).
- Where a first aid trained leader is not present, leaders would not offer first aid, but would go and get the parents/carers if they are in the building and/or ring 999.
- Where possible, a first aid trained leader will be present for any activities taking place off-site. If this is not possible, leaders would not offer first aid, but would ring 999.

d) Building safety:

- The elders and any deacon for buildings will ensure the maintenance of the church building, fixtures and fittings, fire escapes and fire-fighting equipment meets adequate standards.
- All products that could be potentially harmful to children are to be kept in a secure location out of the reach of children.

e) Hygiene:

- The elders and any deacon for buildings shall ensure that kitchens and toilet facilities are maintained in a clean and hygienic state.
- Children will be encouraged to wash their hands regularly and use hand sanitiser as appropriate.
- As this is written during the Covid-19 pandemic, we also note that we will abide by government guidance for infection control or other such similar guidance, for example for social distancing, limiting numbers etc.

f) Communication and media:

- Sessions should be advertised to parents/carers and consent for attendance sought from parents/carers for all under 18s.
- Communication with young people outside of sessions should primarily occur through their parents/carers.
- Leaders should not swap phone numbers with children under 16. They can swap numbers with children over 16 only with parental consent.
- Leaders should not send private messages to children or engage with them via social media.
- Email can be used to communicate with over 16s, but one of their parents/carers should be copied into the conversation (even if the youth has replied privately).
- Leaders will not take photographs or videos of children on their personal phones/devices.
- Leaders will only take photographs or videos of children if it has been arranged in advance for a suitable purpose, and if permission has been sought from parents/carers (eg. to share in a church meeting update, or for the church website).
- Parents/carers are discouraged from photographing or recording their own/other children during or at the starts/ends of sessions.
- Young people are discouraged from taking photos with other young people in during sessions.
- If leaders are using devices in sessions, they need to make sure that they are password-protected and are not left unattended.

g) Toileting:

- Changing nappies remains the responsibility of parents/carers. A creche leader will go and get a parent/carer if a nappy needs changing.
- Children aged 3 and above are expected to go to the toilet by themselves. If needed, a leader will escort a child to the toilet block, but won't enter the cubicle with them. If the child is unable to manage this alone, a parent/carer will be called to assist.
- Children under 3 who are toilet trained will, by prior arrangement with their parent/carer, be encouraged to use a potty in a designated corner of the creche or escorted to the toilet block by a leader (although the leader won't enter the cubicle with them).

h) Food

- Snacks are served in sessions on a regular basis.
- Parents/carers must alert leaders via the booking/consent form if their children have allergies.
- Leaders will seek consent from parents/carers if more substantial/unusual food is likely to be shared in a session.
- Leaders will ensure that any food is prepared and served in a hygienic environment.

Abuse: signs and how to respond

This policy draws heavily upon the Safe & Secure document drawn up by CCPAS to help churches identify and practice healthy working relationships with Children. They identify key areas of good working practice and state that **every** church worker should understand what child abuse is and what the possible signs of it are, as well as knowing how to respond appropriately and safely to allegations.

This is why we have included this more informative section on definitions of abuse and signs of abuse, as well as a discipline policy in our safeguarding policy.

1. Definitions of Abuse

(The following definitions of child abuse are as stated in the joint government departments' document, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2018.)

a) 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.

b) Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts.

They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

c) 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 of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care/treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

d) 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 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 involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.

It may involve serious 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 of a child, though it may occur alone.

2. Signs of possible abuse

Signs suggesting physical abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries that occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc
- Injuries that have not received medical attention
- Neglect - under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care, etc
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc that do not have an accidental explanation
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse
- Changes in routine

Signs suggesting emotional abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, eg. a child withdrawing or becoming clingy.
- Also, depression/aggression, extreme anxiety.
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

Indicators of possible sexual abuse / sexual exploitation

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders - anorexia, bulimia
- Bed wetting and soiling

Indicators of possible neglect

- Signs of under nourishment (eg. constant hunger, visibly underweight)
- A failure to grow, very short for age
- Stealing or gorging food
- Illnesses and injuries that have been left untreated
- Signs of inadequate care (eg. unwashed/clothing clearly unwashed, body odour, excessively dirty teeth / fingernails)
- Unkempt appearance (eg. hair not brushed, clothes tattered / too old)

3. Responding to disclosures or concerns of abuse

How to respond to a disclosure

- a) If a child tells you of abuse, ensure that you allow the child to tell his or her story unaided. Do not classify behaviour or question their story. Do not 'put words into their mouth'.
- b) Try to ensure that you react calmly to any allegation of abuse.
- c) Tell the child you will need to let someone else (the Safeguarding co-ordinator) know so that we can help them - don't promise confidentiality.
- d) Make notes of any allegation of abuse as soon as possible using the exact words used and the date and time.
- e) Inform the Safeguarding co-ordinator immediately of any allegations of abuse, passing on any appropriate written record. If the allegation is against the Safeguarding co-ordinator or they are unavailable, report concerns to the deputy coordinator. If both the Safeguarding co-ordinator and deputy are involved or unavailable, report concerns to the pastor (Dan Steel). If the pastor is also unavailable, or the allegation is against the Safeguarding co-ordinator and pastor, report concerns to the chair of elders (Charlie Currie).
- f) Ensure that any information told to you by a child is kept confidential and only communicated to the Safeguarding co-ordinator.
- g) Where applicable, the Oxfordshire MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) team will refer your disclosure to the school the child or young person attends.

What to do if you suspect abuse

- a) If a child behaves in a manner that leads you to suspect he or she is the victim of abuse, allow the child to explain their behaviour unaided, if possible.
- b) Try to react calmly to any inappropriate behaviour or any witnessed abuse.
- c) Make notes of any inappropriate behaviour or witnessed abuse as soon as possible.
- d) If you suspect, based upon inappropriate behaviour, that a child is a victim of abuse, or are worried or concerned that this is a possibility, inform the Safeguarding co-ordinator as soon as possible, passing on any written record.

After any allegations of abuse, witnessed abuse or suspected abuse the Safeguarding co-ordinator will keep a written record which will be stored in the safeguarding cabinet in the church office. If appropriate, the Local Authority (MASH) will be contacted. Advice will also be sought from 31:8.

If you believe that a child is in immediate danger inform the Safeguarding co-ordinator immediately, passing on any written record. If it is not possible to speak to them that day please contact the police directly.

For more advice, contact Thirtyone:eight
Helpline and enquiries: 0303 003 1111 - option 2

Discipline Policy

This policy seeks to preserve a happy, safe and positive environment for all children and adults. The church seeks to be a loving and grace-filled community who worship God together, and it is vital that all children and adults attending the church have the opportunity to experience this environment. We have a discipline policy in order to protect each other and to enable the groups to function well.

We expect good standards of behaviour at all times which are governed by the following principles:

- Respect: for each other (children and adults), for property, for activities
- Kindness: to each other (children and adults)

Rules and expectations

- Rules and expectations for the session will be established clearly by leaders in advance.
- Positive reinforcement will be used in the first instance (eg. reminders of rules, thanking and praising children who are following instructions).

Sanctions

- Verbal and non-verbal cues will be used where children are not responding to other methods of management (eg. a hand gesture, saying a child's name in a firm tone of voice, a leader moving their own position or moving the position of furniture).
- Continued poor behaviour will lead to a verbal warning, then a consequence (eg. a shared resource being taken away from a child), and then the child being asked to sit apart for part of an activity, and then the child being taken aside by a leader (to another part of the room).
- If the child will not move to where the leader has asked them to, they will not be moved by force, but a parent/carer will be brought to the session.
- If behaviour still doesn't improve after these interventions, a leader will go and get a parent/carer (if this is possible and they haven't already), or the child will be asked to sit out for the remainder of the session (with a leader) if a parent/carer is not present in the building.
- There will be a discussion with the parent/carer if a child is asked to sit out for the remainder of or leave a session, about how to help the child better engage and make the setting more appropriate for them.

Advice for leaders:

- Call on more experienced / other leaders if you are struggling to manage a child's behaviour.
- Be aware of contextual issues in the child's life that you might know (eg. difficult things happening at home).
- Be aware of cultural expectations and differences between you and the child.
- Be aware of your own emotions as you seek to manage behaviour. Don't lose your temper or personalise a child's response to you.
- Look for a cause behind unwanted behaviour (Is the child tired/bored/confused? Is the activity too difficult or easy for them? Are they trying to get attention? Are they showing off? Are they having social difficulties with others in the group?)
- Make eye contact and use children's names.
- Set high expectations, but expect children to test and push the boundaries.
- Be firm, but not too teacher-esque.
- Nip poor behaviour in the bud - try not to slip into tolerating it. But also pick your battles - don't challenge everything.

- Do not act physically to make a child do something (eg. pull them, pick them up and move them, physically block them).
- Physical intervention is an absolute last resort if the child is putting themselves or others in serious danger.
- Empower children to take responsibility for their own behaviour and actions (eg. give them a choice, give them a way out with dignity, look to defuse the situation).

Guidelines for leaders

Personal conduct: Leaders should avoid using alcohol or drugs before or during sessions, and must not smoke during sessions. Leaders should keep to a minimum use of phones/devices when supervising children.

Boundaries: Make every effort to get to know the young people well, but remember to maintain appropriate boundaries and not be too pally or inappropriately intimate. Be careful what you share about yourself and your life. Be careful how you talk with co-leaders in children's presence.

Verbal communication: Consider your language and tone of voice, as well as the subjects you talk about and the way you talk about them. Consider what is appropriate for the age you are working with.

Physical communication: Think about your body language and posture. Take care with physical contact. It should always be based on the child's needs rather than the adult's, and should be initiated by the child. (Even if a child is upset, it is important that physical contact is on the child's terms and not the adult's - they should be asked and have the opportunity to say "no".) Avoid any physical contact that could be misconstrued as sexual (including but not limited to hugs, touch on the arms/shoulders/back/legs). In the creche (for children under 3 years old), physical contact is a normal and necessary part of care. Appropriate care for children under 3 includes playing, cuddling, holding, sitting on an adult's knee and lifting/carrying as appropriate.

Other forms of communication: Leaders should not swap phone numbers with children under 16 or interact with them via social media. Phone numbers should only be exchanged with 16-17 year olds with parental consent (see above).

Relating to children in groups: Treat all the children equally and show no favouritism. Aim to get to know every member of the group as well as you can. Be wary of showing greater attention to more "responsive" or "warm" children, or those you know from outside the group.

Relating to children individually: Be sensitive, caring and gentle. Be careful about expectations and responsibility you may, or they may perceive you as placing on them. Be careful not to make assumptions and remember there may be things going on or in their past that you are not aware of.

Relating to children as part of families: Relate to children as part of family units, seeking to get to know and support their parents/carers and positioning yourself as supportive of (rather than undermining) parents/carers. Aim for an open, communicative relationship with parents/carers. Consider how you can best support and encourage them as they bring up their children.

Being alone with children: Avoid being alone with a child. If you find yourself alone with a child, move into a public space/find another leader or child.

Emotional needs: Be aware of your own emotional needs and wellbeing, and be careful not to look to ministry to fulfil your own needs. Don't exert emotional pressure, and be wary of overly "close" relationships with individual children or the formation of emotional dependency and 'hero worship'. Be aware of the risk of crushes forming. If you feel an unhealthy relationship/dependency may be developing, speak to the Safeguarding co-ordinator and perhaps consider distancing yourself a little from the individual for a season.

Signature of compliance

It is vital that all those working with children in Magdalen Road Church have read this policy and take personal responsibility for seeing it implemented in the church.

Please sign this form and return it to the Safeguarding co-ordinator.

I confirm that I have read and understood this Safeguarding policy, and agree to abide by it, doing my best to see it implemented within church.

Signed.....

Date.....