



Rivers of Life Church Safeguarding Policy

Last updated: 13th May 2025
Next update: 1st May 2026 (and annually
afterwards)

(Policy to be reviewed at least annually.)

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(with support from <https://thirtyoneeight.org>)

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1. Key Information

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|---|---|
| Place of Worship | Correspondence address: Rivers of Life Church 123 Edgeway Road, Marston, Oxford. OX3 0HF Tel: 01865 434620 Email: info@riversoflife.org.uk Meeting address: Rivers of Life Church, Sutton Road, Northway, Oxford OX3 9RB |
| Designated Safeguard Leads (DSL) | Marcos Castro - Designated Safeguard Lead for Adults with additional care and support needs [marcos.safeguard@gmail.com] Bruce Wilson - Designated Safeguarding Lead for Children - [bruce@riversoflife.org.uk] |
| Deputy DSL | Stephen Roberts - Lead Pastor - stephen@riversoflife.org.uk Lorna Smith - Safeguarding Recruiter [lorna.safeguard@gmail.com] |
| Charity number | 1115184 |

2. Introduction

1.1 As Rivers of Life Church, we commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all, especially children, young people and adults with additional care and support needs. It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children, young people, and adults with additional care and support needs and to report any abuse discovered or suspected. It is our aim to create a culture of vigilance where all decisions are made in the best interests of the child, young person, or adult with additional care and support needs. We recognise that our work with children, young people and adults with additional care and support needs is the responsibility of the whole church.

1.2 Good governance helps an organisation prevent abuse and means it can respond quickly and with integrity when concerns arise. Central to this, is the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees is appointed to have independent authority and legal responsibility for how an organisation or charity is run and have a critical role in decision making and compliance as well as setting the values, standards and behaviours of the organisation.

3. Legal Framework

3.1 This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children and adults with additional care and support needs, namely:

- a. Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019
- b. The Care Act 2014
- c. The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- d. Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims (Amendment) Act 2012
- e. The Equality Act 2010
- f. The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- g. Mental Capacity Act 2005
- h. Sexual Offences Act 2003
- i. The Human Rights Act 1998
- j. The Data Protection Act 1998
- k. Children Act 1989
- l. Relevant Government guidance on safeguarding children
- m. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The Church's Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) with overall designated responsibility for safeguarding are Marcos Castro (Safeguard Adults with additional care and support needs) and Bruce Wilson (Safeguarding Children). We have deputy designated safeguarding leads, Stephen Roberts (Lead Pastor) and Lorna Smith (Safeguarding Recruiter) to ensure there is always appropriate cover for this role. The responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Leads are described in detail in Appendix A.

4.2 The Board of Trustees is collectively responsible for ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are fully embedded within the Church's ethos and reflected in the practice.

4.3 All Church attenders, trustees, volunteers, and external visitors know how to recognise signs and symptoms of abuse, how to respond to children and adults who disclose abuse and what to do if they are concerned about a child and / or adult.

4.4 Our Church acknowledges the need to treat everyone equally, with fairness, dignity, and respect. Any discriminatory behaviours are challenged, and children are supported to understand how to treat others with respect. We also have a statutory duty to report and record any of the above incidents.

5. Supporting Children

5.1 Our Church will support children by:

- ensuring the content of the Church's Sunday School Curriculum includes social and emotional aspects of learning; ensuring that pupils are taught about safeguarding so that they 'recognise when they are at risk and how to get help when they need it'.
- encouraging them to talk about feelings and listening to them; providing pupils with a range of appropriate adults to approach as needed.
- considering intra familial harms and any necessary support for siblings following a report of sexual violence and/or harassment.
- having clear procedures are in place for addressing and minimising the risk of child-on-child abuse, including harmful sexual behaviours, sexual violence and sexual harassment.

- acknowledging the importance of 'contextual safeguarding', <https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/> which considers wider environmental factors in a pupil's life that may be a threat to their safety and/or welfare. (Working together to safeguard children July 2018 and KCSIE September 2022).
- alerting the authority if it is aware of any child being looked after under a Private Fostering arrangement.
- acknowledging that a child that is looked after or has been previously looked after by the Local Authority potentially remains vulnerable and all Church attenders and volunteers have knowledge and understanding to support these children.

6. Supporting Adults with additional care and support needs

6.1 Our Church will support adults with additional care and support needs by:

- Committing to safeguarding adults and to ensuring their well-being.
- Recognising that we all have a responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual, spiritual, financial, psychological, discriminatory abuse, neglect and self-neglect as well as domestic abuse of adults and to report any such abuse that we discover or suspect.
- Recognising the personal dignity and rights of adults and ensuring all our policies and procedures and practice reflect this
- Ensuring that all adults can enjoy and have access to every aspect of the life of this place of worship
- Taking proper care in the appointment and selection of those who will work with adults with care and support needs, or those who will be in positions of trust. We will promote safer practice and support, resource and train and regularly review those who undertake this work
- Keeping up to date with national and local developments relating to safeguarding. We will follow statutory, denominational and specialist guidelines in relation to safeguarding adults and we will ensure that all workers will work within the agreed procedure of our safeguarding policy.
- Implementing the requirements of the Care Act 2014 and the Equality Act 2010 and all other relevant legislation
- Supporting everyone in the place of worship who may be affected by abuse of any kind

- Recognising that Adult Social Care has the lead responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse where there are concerns about a vulnerable adult. Where an allegation suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed, the police should be contacted as a matter of urgency

7. Dealing with a disclosure

7.1 If a Church member, trustee, volunteer or external visitor has a concern about a child or adult with additional care and support needs or if they make a disclosure, Church attenders, trustees, volunteers or external visitors will appropriately respond by listening and offering reassurance. They should:

- Make an accurate factual record (**See appendix B**) as soon as possible including details of:
 - Dates and times of their observations
 - Dates and times of any discussions in which they were involved
 - Any injuries
 - Explanations given by the child / adult
 - What action was taken
 - Any actual words or phrases used
 - Any questions the Church member, trustee, volunteer or external visitor asked (remembering not to ask any leading questions).

The records must be signed and dated by the author (or equivalent on electronic based records). Concerns at Rivers of Life are kept by the DSLs in password protected documents on a secure computer drive.

- Listen to wishes and feelings of the person with the disclosure, but not to promise any confidentiality.
- Report it to the DSL/DDSL

7.2 The DSL will consider if there is a requirement for immediate medical intervention, however urgent medical attention should not be delayed if the DSL is not immediately available.

7.3 Safeguarding records are kept in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

7.4 In the absence of the DSL or DDSL, Church attenders, trustees, volunteers and external visitors will refer directly to:

- For reporting child abuse:
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/keeping-children-and-young-people-safe/report-child-abuse>
- For raising safeguarding concerns for an adult:
<https://service.oxfordshire.gov.uk/raiseconcernforadult>

8. Information Sharing

8.1 We recognise that all matters relating to Safeguarding are confidential.

8.2 All volunteers have a responsibility to share information with other agencies to safeguard children and adults.

8.3 All volunteers who come into contact with children will be given appropriate training to understand the purpose of information sharing in order to safeguard and promote children's and adult's welfare.

8.4 We will ensure that volunteers are confident about what they can and should do under the law, including how to obtain consent to share information and when information can be shared without consent.

9. Safer recruitment

9.1 Rivers of Life is committed to ensuring the development of a safe culture and that all steps are taken to recruit volunteers who are safe to work with our pupils and staff.

9.2 The Board of Trustees and Leadership Team are responsible for ensuring that the Church follows safe recruitment processes outlined within guidance.

9.3 We advise all staff to disclose any reason that may affect their suitability to work with children or adults with additional care and support needs that could be a transferable risk to their role.

9.4 All volunteers must undertake a DBS check. New volunteers are required to provide a reference from either an employer, church leader or school / college leader.

9.5 Where volunteers come from outside the UK, Rivers of Life will undertake necessary background checks on those who are applying to work with children and adults with care and support needs.

10. Training

10.1 All volunteers are expected to be aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse and must be able to respond appropriately.

10.2 Our DSLs and Deputy DSLs undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out their role. Our DSLs and any members of our DSL team undergo their training every 2 years to enable them to fulfil their role.

10.3 Training is provided for all volunteers every 3 years and regular updates around safeguarding are shared with volunteers regularly.

10.4 Separate training is provided to all new volunteers on appointment as part of their induction process.

10.5 The Designated Safeguarding Leads will provide briefings to the Church on any changes to safeguarding legislation and procedures and relevant learning from Safeguarding Practice Reviews in line with Working Together 2018. These will occur annually or more frequently when necessary.

10.6 The Safeguarding Recruiter (Lorna Smith) will maintain accurate and up to date records of volunteer induction and training.

10.7 The Board of Trustees attend appropriate training every 3 years to provide them with the knowledge required to carry out their role.

11. Whistleblowing in safeguarding context

11.1 Whistleblowing is a term that is used when staff want to report a concern within their organisation that involves their manager or a person senior to them in the organisation which may prevent them from following the normal reporting systems.

There are a limited number of areas that can be called Whistleblowing, and the policy protects staff from being punished for raising concerns.

11.2 Within Rivers of Life, the Lead Pastor (Stephen Roberts) is the senior manager and responsible for all church attenders, volunteers, trustees and external visitors. If you are concerned that any volunteer within the Church is not following safeguarding processes or behaving in a way that is placing children or adults with care and support needs at risk, you should, in the first place, make Stephen Roberts aware.

11.3 If your concern is about the Lead Pastor, you should raise this Pastor David Earl at Marston Neighbourhood Church, Marston, Oxford.

11.4 If you would prefer to raise your concerns outside of the Church, then you are able to report your concerns directly using the links below. If your concern is an emergency, you should contact the Police (tel: 999):

- For reporting child abuse:
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/keeping-children-and-young-people-safe/report-child-abuse>
- For raising safeguarding concerns for an adult:
<https://service.oxfordshire.gov.uk/raiseconcernforadult>

11.5 If you believe that a member of the Church is harming a child or adult with care and support needs (an allegation) and this has been reported to the Designated Safeguarding Leads and no / insufficient action has been taken, or the member of Church you have concerns about is the Lead Pastor, then you are able to contact the Designated Officers team (LADO) on 01865 810603 or email lado.safeguardingchildren@oxfordshire.gov.uk

11.6 If you believe that a child is being abused by individuals outside the church, you can make a referral to Children's Social Care by calling: 0345 050 7666 or by using this form:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/keeping-children-and-young-people-safe/report-child-abuse>

12. Site Security

12.1 The Church has a responsibility to ensure our buildings and grounds are safe, this includes ensuring the safety of any visitors on site.

12.2 Visitors are welcomed onto site by members of the welcoming team. The welcome team checks the building for safety before the start of the church meeting.

12.3 The Church will not accept the behaviour of any individual that threatens any member, child or adult, to feel unsafe. Such behaviour will be treated as a serious concern and may result in a decision to refuse the person access to the site.

13. Adult:Child Recommended Ratios for Sunday School

13.1 'Sunday school' is an education system in Church whereby parents are able to send their children during the meeting. Rivers of Life aims to support children in Sunday school as best as possible. While there are no legal requirements, wherever possible, leaders aim to adhere to the adult:child ratios, as outlined by the NSPCC (see below). Whenever this is not possible, leaders will take action to risk-assess the type of activity, the numbers of children and children's behaviour, ability and mobility before making a decision. The ratios serve as a minimum recommendation and more adults should be considered depending on the type of activity and the behaviour, ability and mobility of children.

| Age of child | Adult:Child ratio |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 0-2 years | 1:3 |
| 2-3 years | 1:4 |
| 4-8 years | 1:6 |
| 9-12 years | 1:8 |
| 13-18 years | 1:10 |

13.2 Further recommendations from the NSPCC also state that a minimum of 2 adults should be present to safeguard the children and adults.

13.3 If the group has both boys and girls, there should be at least one male and one female adult present to supervise children in the toilets.

13.4 Adults who haven't previously volunteered and haven't had the necessary vetting checks shouldn't be left alone with children or take them to the toilet unaccompanied.

13.5 At least one adult with the group should be first aid trained.

13.6 If travelling with children, it is recommended that a minimum of one adult driving, and one adult for supervision, is adequate.

14. Quality Assurance

14.1 We will ensure that monitoring systems are in place to ensure implementation and compliance of the procedures listed in this policy are adhered to.

15. Policy Review

15.1 This policy and the procedures will be reviewed at least once every calendar year.

15.2 The Designated Safeguarding Leads will ensure that Church attenders, volunteers, and trustees are made aware of any amendments to policies and procedures

15.3 Additional updates to the safeguarding policy and appendix will take place when needed.

Appendix A

Safeguarding Lead Role

The safeguarding leads act as the main source of support, advice and expertise for safeguarding in the church:

Advising and supporting the leadership team in developing and establishing the church's approach to safeguarding.

Playing a lead role in maintaining and reviewing the church's plan for safeguarding.

Creating, reviewing (annually) and distributing the safeguarding policy, procedures and safeguarding resources throughout the church.

Ensuring that the church follows a robust recruitment, selection and training procedures for staff and volunteers. This includes completing an application and self-declaration form, discussion of safeguarding at interview, obtaining a reference and appropriate criminal reference check and safeguarding training as part of the induction prior to starting work.

Advising on training needs and development, providing or sourcing training where appropriate.

Providing safeguarding advice and support to staff and volunteers. Ensuring all staff are aware of who the safeguarding leads and deputy safeguarding leads are and how and when to contact them.

Managing safeguarding concerns, allegations or incidents reported to the church.

Managing referrals to key safeguarding agencies (e.g. social services or police) of any incidents or allegations of abuse and harm.

Maintaining accurate and secure records.

Ensuring the church has sufficient safer recruitment procedures.

Completing safeguarding leads training at regular intervals.

Appendix B - A disclosure

Initial of person disclosing: _____

Initial of who the concern in about: _____

Date of disclosure: ____ / ____ / ____

Time: _____ : _____ am / pm

Any injuries:

Explanations given by the child / adult: (please use actual words / phrases used and be factual)

What action was taken:

(if you require more space than provided, please attach additional notes separately)