

**Three Rivers Church**  
**Denmark Street, Bedford MK40 3TJ**

**SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN POLICY**

**1. Introduction**

Child abuse happens when a person harms a child. That abuse may be physical, sexual or emotional, but can also involve neglect; it may involve a combination of these. The abuse may take place at the hands of someone known to the child (a family member, friend, person in church, etc.) or of a stranger. Three Rivers Church believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people, by a commitment to practice which protects them.

Three Rivers Church recognises that:

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount
- all children and young people, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

The purpose of this policy is:

- to provide protection for the children and young people who attend activities at Three Rivers Church.
- to provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding children and young people

This policy applies to all those in the church, including the trustees, paid staff and volunteers and anyone working on behalf of Three Rivers Church

Three Rivers Church seeks to safeguard children and young people by:

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children/young people, parents, staff and volunteers
- sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children/young people appropriately
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training

## **2. Recruitment and training**

The procedure for those wanting to join the church's work with children and young people will include:

- A character reference confirming their Christian commitment and integrity. This can be informal, written or verbal, and should be given by a committed Christian who has known them for at least a year.
- An informal interview with a leader/leaders involved in the ministry with children or the young people.
- A DBS check, which will include completing the Self-declaration form, allowing the church to carry out the check.

These procedures apply to anyone aged 16 or over.

Those working with children and young people will be required to attend regular safeguarding training (typically annually) which may be training organised by the church or attended as a result of their employment or work with other agencies.

The DBS update service will be checked for each individual at least every 3 years. For those not registered with the update service, a new DBS check will be requested at least every 3 years.

## **3. Nominated safeguarding lead person**

The nominated person, the Safeguarding Officer, should be notified immediately by any staff or volunteers who have concerns about:

- a child or young person (see section 4)
- a person who works with children (see section 5)

Concerns should be raised if

- a child has been harmed, or may have been,
- a criminal offence has possibly been committed against or related to a child or young person; or
- someone has behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children or young people.

The nominated person will provide advice and support to staff/volunteers unsure about how to proceed with a particular case.

The nominated person is responsible for ensuring Three Rivers Church is aware of developments in safeguarding best practice, advising on changes to policy and practice (in line with Local Safeguarding Board policies) and coordinating safeguarding audits and reporting.

One of Three Rivers Church trustees is nominated to take leadership responsibility for the church's safeguarding arrangements. This includes ensuring that staff have sufficient time, funding, supervision and support to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities effectively.

#### **4. How to raise concerns about a child or young person**

- a) If someone is at immediate risk of harm, dial 999 for the police
- b) Contact our Safeguarding Officer by phone or email or text message as soon as possible. A decision will be made which includes whether to make a referral (to the relevant local authority), who will make that referral, and how information about the concern will be securely recorded, stored and, if appropriate shared.
- c) To report a concern or to get advice:
  - NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000
  - Bedford Borough Council: 01234 718700
  - Central Bedfordshire Council: 0300 300 8585
  - Luton Borough Council: 01582 547653
  - Out of office hours : 0300 300 8123 (For all local authority areas)

#### **5. How to report an allegation made against staff or volunteers**

An allegation may relate to a person who works with children or young people who has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed. or may have harmed, a child/young person;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child/young person; or
- behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children/young people.

Any allegation against people who work with children or young people should be reported immediately to the Safeguarding Officer. The relevant local authority should then be informed by him/her (or by someone else on his/her behalf) within one working day (Local Authority Designated Officer LADO).

The local authority will provide advice and guidance on how to deal with allegations against people who work with children/young people and will also ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place to effectively liaise with the police and other agencies to monitor the progress of cases and ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process. Support and advice will be available to individuals against whom allegations have been made.

If Three Rivers Church removes an individual (paid worker or unpaid volunteer) from work (or would have, had the person not left first) because the person poses or posed a risk of harm to children, the church must make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service. It is an offence to fail to make a referral without good reason.

## **6. Independent resources for children and young people**

Children and young people can speak to an independent person outside of Three Rivers Church through making contact with either of the following:

- Childline on 0800 1111
- NSPCC helpline: 0800 328 0904

## **7. Being alert to signs of abuse and neglect and taking action**

All staff and volunteers should be alert to the signs and triggers of child abuse and neglect. Indicators of abuse and neglect may be difficult to spot. Children and young people may disclose abuse but in some cases, the indicators may be more subtle and appear over time. Everyone should be aware of the potential for children to be sexually exploited for money, power or status and individuals should adopt an open and inquiring mind to what could be underlying reasons for behaviour changes in children of all ages.

Three Rivers Church will ensure all staff and volunteers are aware of;

- the signs of abuse and neglect,
- how to handle a disclosure

through induction, training and supervision.

Children can be exposed to sexuality and sexual behaviour before they are emotionally or psychologically ready for it, and may innocently do things of a 'sexual' nature without realising the significance. In addition, an innocent gesture or touch by a team member could easily be misinterpreted. Those in the church who work with children and young people must exercise great care and avoid putting themselves in a position where the work which they carry out could be undermined due to innuendo or suspicion. Those working with children and young people also have a joint responsibility to advise each other if they feel another team member is being unwise as there are times where something perfectly innocent can look inappropriate. A quiet conversation with the person in private should usually suffice, but if the advice is ignored, the Safeguarding Officer should be contacted.

In the event that a disclosure or allegation has been made in regards to inappropriate images, staff/volunteers must not view these images, buty must report the concern to the safeguarding lead.

## 8. Information sharing

Sharing information is an intrinsic part of safeguarding children and young people. The decisions about how much information to share, with whom and when, can have a profound impact on individuals' lives. Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people at risk of abuse or neglect. No practitioner should assume that someone else will pass on information which may be critical to keeping a child or young person safe.

The seven golden rules to sharing information are:

- Remember that Data Protection and human rights law are not barriers to justified information sharing, but provide a framework to ensure that personal information about individuals is shared appropriately.
- Be open and honest with the individual (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
- Seek advice from the nominated person if you are in any doubt about sharing the information concerned.
- Share with informed consent where appropriate. Remember that you may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, there is good reason to do so, such as where safety may be at risk.
- Consider safety and well-being: Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the individual and others who may be affected by their actions.
- Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those individuals who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely.
- Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

In the ministry of Three Rivers Church, the starting point for information sharing is to follow the steps in Sections 4 or 5 of this policy.

If children and young people have access to the internet or use mobile phones during time spent with Three Rivers Church, computers will be placed where everyone can see them and use of the internet will be supervised when used by children and young people.

## 9. Code of behaviour

This section outlines the behaviour expected of Three Rivers Church staff, volunteers, peer leaders and staff from other organisations who engage with children and young people through Three Rivers Church and its activities.

This code has been developed to provide advice which will not only help to protect children and young people, but will also help identify any practices which could be mistakenly interpreted and perhaps lead to false allegations of abuse being made against individuals. Following this good practice code will also help to protect Three Rivers Church by reducing the possibility of anyone using their role within the organisation to gain access to children and young people in order to abuse them.

When working with children and young people for Three Rivers Church all staff and volunteers are considered to be acting in a position of trust. It is therefore important that staff and volunteers are aware that they may be seen as role models by children and young people and must act in an appropriate manner at all times and follow the code of conduct.

All members of staff and volunteers are expected to report any breaches of this code to the nominated person, the Safeguarding Officer. Staff who breach this code of conduct may be subject to disciplinary procedures.

Any breach of this code involving a volunteer or member of staff from another agency may result in them being asked to leave the project. Serious breaches of this code may also result in a referral being made to a statutory agency such as the Police or Children's Services Department.

Adults must:

- treat all children and young people with respect
- treat children and young people fairly, without prejudice and always avoid favouritism
- value and take seriously children's and young people's contributions
- provide an example of good conduct for others to follow
- ensure that, whenever possible, there is more than one adult present during activities with children and young people
- respect a young person's right to personal privacy/encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like
- ensure any contact with children and young people is appropriate and relates to the work of the project

- remember that someone else might misinterpret actions, no matter how well-intentioned
- be aware that any physical contact with a child or young person may be misinterpreted
- recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people
- challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspensions of abuse

Adults must not:

- have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children or young people
- act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive
- be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour
- make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children or young people
- jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- either exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues
- show favouritism to any individual
- rely on their good name or that of *Three Rivers Church* to protect them
- believe "it could never happen to me"
- take a chance when common sense, policy or practice suggests another more prudent approach
- make inappropriate promises to children and young people, particularly in relation to confidentiality
- allow allegations to go unreported
- let children and young people have their personal contact details (mobile number or address)

## 10. Links with other policies & procedures

Three Rivers Church has other policies (on health and safety, etc.) and procedures relevant our ministry with children and young people. These should be read along with this overall safeguarding policy.

## **ADOPTION OF THE POLICY**

This policy was agreed by the church trustees & leadership . It will be reviewed annually on the (date) of (month)

Signed by:

Position:

Signed by:

Position

Date:

A printed copy of this policy will be kept in a secure location in the church office. Further copies will be available on request to those with concerns regarding safeguarding or who are working with children and young people.