

RIVER OF LIFE CHURCH WORTHING SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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SECTION 1

Details of the place of worship / organisation

River of Life Church

19a Broadwater Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN14 8EP

01903 215915 Email: mail@riveroflifechurch.co.uk

Membership of Organisation - Pioneer Network

Church leader – Denise Langham

The vision and mission statement of River of Life church is “Loving God, Loving people”. Everything we do should be an expression of this statement. We want to be a vibrant Christian community demonstrating God’s love in us and through us. We want to see people encountering Jesus and lives transformed.

In fulfilling this vision the church:

- has a programme of activities with children and young people - these include The Ark (carers and toddlers group), Messy Church, children’s groups on a Sunday morning during our worship time, and Crafty Creations craft mornings.
- welcomes children and young people into the life of our community
- organises social activities for adults
- makes our premises available to other groups or organisations working with children and adults.

Our commitment

As a Leadership we recognise the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children, young people and adults. We acknowledge that children, young people and adults can be the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and neglect. We accept the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant of Human Rights, which states that everyone is entitled to “all the rights and freedoms set forth herein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. We also concur with the Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that children should be able to develop their full potential, free from hunger and want, neglect and abuse. Children 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 adopted the procedures set out in this safeguarding policy in accordance with statutory guidance. We are committed to building constructive links with statutory and voluntary agencies involved in safeguarding.

The policy and attached practice guidelines are based on the ten **Safe and Secure** safeguarding standards published by Thirtyone:eight (previously Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service - CCPAS)

The Leadership undertakes to:

- endorse and follow all national and local safeguarding legislation and procedures, in addition to the international conventions outlined above;
- provide on-going safeguarding training for all its workers and will regularly review the operational guidelines attached;
- ensure that the premises meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and all other relevant legislation, and that it is welcoming and inclusive;
- support the Safeguarding Coordinator/Deputy in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children and vulnerable adults.

SECTION 2

Recognising and responding appropriately to an allegation or suspicion of abuse

It is the duty of each church member to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children and young people, to respond to concerns about the well-being of children and young people and to report any child abuse disclosed, discovered or suspected.

Understanding abuse and neglect

Defining child abuse or abuse against an adult is a difficult and complex issue. A person may abuse by inflicting harm, or failing to prevent harm. Children and adults in need of protection may be abused within a family, an institution or a community setting. Very often the abuser is known or in a trusted relationship with the child or adult.

In order to safeguard those in our places of worship and organisations, we adhere to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and have as our starting point the definition of abuse in Article 19:

“1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.”

Also, for adults, we adhere to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 5 which states:

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Detailed definitions, and signs and symptoms of abuse, as well as how to respond to a disclosure of abuse, are included in detail in section 6 of our Safeguarding policy hand book and as Appendix 1 at the end of this document.

For “How to respond to a child wishing to disclose abuse”, see Appendix 2.

Safeguarding awareness

The Leadership is committed to on-going safeguarding training and development opportunities for all workers, developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help protect everyone. All our workers will receive induction training and undertake recognised safeguarding training on a regular basis using the Pioneer Network and Thirtyone:eight training sessions and materials provided by both organisations..

The Leadership will also ensure that children and adults with care and support needs are provided with information on where to get help and advice in relation to abuse, discrimination, bullying or any other matter where they have a concern.

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

Under no circumstances should a worker carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. The procedures below should be followed.

- The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse should report concerns as soon as possible to Lisa Humphrey (hereafter the "Safeguarding Co-ordinator") (tel. no: 07579 802338) who is nominated by the Leadership to act on their behalf in dealing with an allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including referring the matter on to the statutory authorities.
- In the absence of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or, if the suspicions in any way involve the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, then the report should be made to Denise Langham (hereafter the "Deputy ") (tel. no: 07913 632013). If the suspicions implicate both the Safeguarding Co-ordinator and the Deputy, then the report should be made in the first instance to Thirtyone:eight, tel. no. 0845 120 4550 / 01322 517817 Address: PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ. Alternatively contact Social Services or the police.
- The role of the safeguarding co-ordinator/deputy is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information on to statutory agencies which have a legal duty to investigate.
- Where the concern is about a child, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator should contact Children’s Social Services. Where the concern is regarding an adult in need of protection, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator should contact Adult Social Services or take advice from Thirtyone:eight as above.
- The Safeguarding Co-ordinator **may** need to inform others depending on the circumstances and/or nature of the concern; for example, the designated Trustee, to log that a safeguarding concern is being dealt with, an Insurance company to log that there is a possibility of a serious incident

concerning safeguarding or a Designated Officer if allegations have been made about a person who has a role with under 18's elsewhere.

- Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. A written record of the concerns should be made in accordance with these procedures and kept in a secure place.
- Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, the absence of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or Deputy should not delay referral to Social Services, the Police or taking advice from Thirtyone:eight
- The Leadership will support the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy in their role, and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.
- It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make a direct referral to the safeguarding agencies or seek advice from Thirtyone:eight although the Leadership hope that members of the place of worship / organisation will use this procedure. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) as to the appropriateness of a referral they are free to contact an outside agency direct. We hope by making this statement that the Leadership demonstrate its commitment to effective safeguarding and the protection of all those who are vulnerable.
- **Contact details:**
 - The local Children's Social Services office telephone number (office hours) is 01403 229900. The out of hours emergency number is 03302 226664. The LADO contact number is 0330 2226450.
 - The local Adult Social Services office telephone number is 01243 642121, or complete the online adult safeguarding alert form on <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/social-care-and-health>.
 - For Police Protection Team - telephone 101 and ask for the Safeguarding Investigations Unit or, in an emergency, dial 999.
 - For Thirtyone:eight, telephone 0845 120 4550 / 01322 517817. Address: PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ

Detailed procedures where there is a concern about a child

Allegations of physical injury, neglect or emotional abuse

If a child has a physical injury, a symptom of neglect or where there are concerns about emotional abuse, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy will:

- Contact Children's Social Services, Pioneer Network Safeguarding Manager or Thirtyone:eight for advice in cases of deliberate injury, if concerned about a child's safety or if a child is afraid to return home.
- Not tell the parents or carers unless advised to do so, having contacted Children's Social Services.
- Seek medical help if needed urgently, informing the doctor of any suspicions.

- For lesser concerns, (e.g. poor parenting), encourage parent/carer to seek help, but not if this places the child at risk of significant harm.
- Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, offer to accompany them. In cases of real concern, if they still fail to act, contact Children's Social Services direct for advice.
- Seek and follow advice given by Thirtyone:eight (who will confirm their advice in writing) if unsure whether or not to refer a child to Children's Social Services.

Allegations of sexual abuse

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy will:

- Contact the Children's Social Services Department Duty Social Worker for children and families or Police Child Protection Team direct. They will NOT speak to the parent/carer or anyone else.
- Seek and follow the advice given by Thirtyone:eight if, for any reason they are unsure whether or not to contact Children's Social Services/Police. Thirtyone:eight will confirm its advice in writing for future reference.

Detailed procedures where there is a concern that an adult is in need of protection

Suspicious or allegations of abuse or harm including: physical, sexual, organisational, financial, discriminatory, neglect, self-neglect, forced marriage, modern slavery, domestic abuse

If there is concern about any of the above, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy will:

- Contact the Adult Social Care Team which has responsibility under the Care Act 2014 to investigate allegations of abuse. Alternatively, Thirtyone:eight can be contacted for advice.
- If the adult is in immediate danger or has sustained a serious injury, contact the Emergency Services, informing them of any suspicions.

Allegations of abuse against a person who works with children/young people and vulnerable adults

If an accusation is made against a worker (whether a volunteer or paid member of staff) whilst following the procedure outlined above, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, in accordance with Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures, will need to liaise with Children's Social Services about the suspension of the worker, also making a referral to a designated officer formerly called a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

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

If you see another worker acting in ways which concern you or might be misconstrued, speak to the DPS about your concerns as soon as you can. This includes the actions or behaviours of those in leadership positions in the church.

SECTION 3

Prevention

Safer recruitment

The Leadership will ensure all workers will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with government guidance on safe recruitment. This includes ensuring that:

- There is a written job description / person specification for the post
- Those applying have completed an application form and a self-declaration form
- Those short listed have been interviewed
- Safeguarding has been discussed at interview
- Written references have been obtained, and followed up where appropriate
- A disclosure and barring check has been completed where necessary (we will comply with Code of Practice requirements concerning the fair treatment of applicants and the handling of information)
- Qualifications where relevant have been verified
- A suitable training programme is provided for the successful applicant
- The applicant has completed a probationary period
- The applicant has been given a copy of the organisation's safeguarding policy and knows how to report concerns.

Management of Workers – Codes of Conduct

As a Leadership we are committed to supporting all workers and ensuring they receive support and supervision. All workers have been issued with a code of conduct towards children, young people and adults with care and support needs.

SECTION 4

Pastoral Care

Supporting those affected by abuse

The Leadership is committed to offering pastoral care, working with statutory agencies as appropriate, and providing support to all those who have been affected by abuse and have contact with, or are part of, the church.

Working with offenders

When someone attending the place of worship is known to have abused children, or is known to be a risk to vulnerable adults, the Leadership will supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but, in its safeguarding commitment to the protection of children and vulnerable adults, set boundaries for that person, usually in the form of a contract, which they will be expected to keep.

SECTION 5

Practice Guidelines

As a place of worship working with children, young people and vulnerable adults, we wish to operate and promote good working practice. This will enable workers to run activities safely, develop good relationships and minimise the risk of false or unfounded accusation.

As well as a general code of conduct for workers, we are working to develop good practice guidelines for every activity we are involved in.

Working in Partnership

The diversity of organisations and settings means there can be great variation in practice when it comes to safeguarding children, young people and adults. This can be because of cultural tradition, belief and religious practice or understanding, for example, of what constitutes abuse.

We will discuss our safeguarding expectations with all partners and it is also our expectation that any organisation using our premises, as part of the letting agreement, will have their own policy that meets Thirtyone:eight safeguarding standards.

Good communication is essential in promoting safeguarding, both to those we wish to protect, to everyone involved in working with children and adults and to all those with whom we work in partnership. This safeguarding policy is just one means of promoting safeguarding. We will display the Thirtyone:eight helpline number as well as other useful helpline numbers.

We undertake to review and update this document annually.

Signed by:

Kevin McCormac (for and on behalf of the Trustees)

Date: 1 May 2021

APPENDIX 1

Types of abuse

- Physical** May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, cutting, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. Physical abuse is anything that causes physical hurt or harm to a children's or young people's bodies.
- Sexual** 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 sex or non-penetrative sex. This may also include non-contact activities such as exposing them to pornographic images or watching sexual activities or encouraging them to behave inappropriately.
- Emotional** Is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe effects on the emotional development of that child. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, inadequate, or valued only to meet the needs of another person.
- They may be frightened by threats or taunts or are given responsibilities beyond their years.
- 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 even occur during pregnancy. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food or clothing, shelter, including abandonment, or protecting a child from physical and emotional harm. It may also include a child's basic emotional needs, inadequate medical treatment or supervision.
- Spiritual** As a church community we must be ready to identify the inappropriate use of religious belief or practice, which may harm somebody spiritually, emotionally or physically.
- Peer on Peer abuse** - Children can abuse other children. This is generally referred to as peer on peer abuse and can take many forms. This can include (but is not limited to) bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting and initiating/hazing type violence and rituals.
- Up skirting** This typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm'.
- Coercive control** Coercive control is an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim. This controlling behaviour is designed to make a person dependant by isolating them, depriving of independence and regulating their everyday behaviour.

APPENDIX 2

How to react when a child/young person wants to talk about abuse

General Points

- Accept what the child/young person says (however unlikely it may sound).
- Keep calm.
- Look at the child/young person directly.
- Be aware that the child or young person may have been threatened.
- Listen to the child – DO NOT directly question him/her.
- Watch your body language, try not to look shocked or move away from the child.
- Above all listen, stay calm.
- Show acceptance and belief of the child.
- Reassure them you will help.
- Don't offer confidentiality.
- Don't ask leading questions like 'Did he do X Y etc.?'
- Do try to reflect back what they say to check you have heard correctly.

Do not say

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it.
- Are you sure this is true?
- Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- Never make statements such as "I am shocked – don't tell anyone else" or "do you realise you could get (name of alleged perpetrator) into a lot of trouble about this." This is a matter for others to deal with.

Concluding

- Again, reassure the child/young person that they were right to tell you.
- Let the child/young person know what you are going to do next, and that you will let them know what happens.
- Immediately refer to the Children's/Youth Work Leader (Named Person), or if they cannot be contacted immediately, speak to your congregation leader or Designated Safeguarding Person.
- All suspicions, observations and investigations should be kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know.

DO NOT inform the parents/carers of the disclosure when they come to collect their child unless instructed to by your leadership or safeguarding advisors.

Although this may be very difficult for you, especially if you know the family, you should not tell them unless instructed. There are many reasons for this.

- Trained personnel will be better placed to inform the family of what has happened. This is devastating news for a family to receive. As a parent they may be so distressed by the news that it compromises their driving, or they could go to the accused and take matters into their own hands and find themselves on the wrong side of the law rather than the abuser.

- You could compromise the case should it go to court.
- The child may have been too scared to give the real name and used a different name to protect the identity of the parent or other person. Children who are being abused are blackmailed and threatened with harm to themselves and people they love if they tell anyone the identity of their abuser.
- Cases have been compromised by parents/carers going back to their home, destroying evidence and silencing their child/ren.

Remember to make notes as soon as possible - (preferably) within an hour of the interview, writing down exactly what the child/young person said and when he/she said it, what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. description of activity). Use the language they did – do not change what they may have called particular body parts to a grown up medical version, stick as closely to the real conversation as possible.

- Record dates and times of these events and when you made the record. Give notes to the Named Person you are accountable to who will then contact the relevant people.

Remember

- Do not panic. Do not delay. Do not start to investigate.
- In most scenarios, you will just have collected a small piece of information. It will be for others, with more training and experience, to evaluate this information.
- Over reaction can be extremely harmful to the child or young person, the accused, the group, the authorities and yourself!
- Your immediate responsibility is to contact your Children's/Youth Work leader or the Named Person you are accountable to.
- Do not do anything by yourself.
- Following the correct procedure is vital to the child's best interests. A record should be made as soon as possible, giving accurate details of what the child said, when and to whom.
- If workers are concerned that the Named person is involved in any of the allegations, they should approach the congregation leader.
- Only in a case where serious and recent physical or sexual abuse is talked of and you suspect the child is in immediate danger, and you cannot contact the Named Person you are accountable to or the congregation leader (or you feel the situation has not been dealt with appropriately) should you directly contact the local Children's Services, LADO, or the police. Telephone numbers are on page 4 above.
- We will keep all records of concerns from Care Diaries, or full disclosure notes for 10 years, as advised currently by the NSPCC.
- We will share information as appropriate. We will be open and honest with those we can be, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate. It will be shared as necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure. If it is stored we will record what is shared with whom and for what purpose.
- Last but not least you may need to chat to someone pastorally about what you have experienced. Whoever you feel most appropriate for you to go to and share this with is fine, however we would ask that you do not use the real names of the people involved. You can also book time in with the Designated Safeguarding Person if you feel this would help clarify things with you. They have experience in dealing with these situations more regularly than others so they could offer a constructive and supportive time for you if needed.