

HOUSE

CHURCH

Safeguarding Policy

Approved by Board of Trustees
Implementation

14th June 2021
1st July 2021

Amendment drafted
Approved by Board of Trustees

1st September 2022
17th January 2023

Review Date

1st January 2026

Contents

	Page
Section 1	5
1. Introduction	
1.1	Why is a Safeguarding Policy necessary?
1.2	Legal Requirement
1.2.1	Safeguarding Children
1.2.2	Safeguarding Adults
1.2.3	Definitions
1.2.4	Adult Abuse?
1.3	Biblical Requirement
1.4	Our own Protection
1.5	Today's Society
1.6	Safeguarding Policy Statement
Section 2	13
2. Abuse	
2.1	What is Child Abuse?
2.2	What is Adult Abuse?
2.3	Substance Abuse
2.4	Domestic Violence
2.5	Bullying
2.5.1	Protective Measures
2.5.2	How to deal with Bullying
2.6	Self-harm and Suicide
2.7	Principles of Safe Boundaries
Section 3	24
3. Responding, Reporting and Recording	
3.1	Responding to the concerns of a child or an adult at risk
3.2	The Reporting Process
3.3	Disclosure and Barring Service
3.4	Recording of Information
3.5	Managing Offenders
3.6	Dealing with Complaints and Grievances
3.7	Confidentiality: who needs to know what?
3.8	Reporting Concerns
3.9	Protected Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy
Section 4	35

4. Areas of Responsibility	
4.1	The Role of the Leadership Team
4.2	The Role of the Safeguarding Team
Section 5	38
5. Recruitment and Selection	
5.1	The Recruitment and Appointment Process
5.2	General Vetting Principles
5.3	Training
5.4	Register of all Leaders, Volunteers and Helpers
5.5	Common Protocol
5.6	Employment of Paid Workers
5.7	Involvement of Volunteers
Section 6	43
6. Working Together	
6.1	Responsibilities of all Leaders
6.2	Teamwork
6.3	Working with Parents and Carers
6.4	Code of Behaviour
Section 7	48
7. Good Standards and Practice	
7.1	General Aims of Youth and Children's Work at House Church
7.2	General Principles
7.3	Physical Contact
7.4	Recommended Ratios
7.5	Transport
7.6	Residential Programmes and Outings
7.7	Photographic Policy
7.8	Working with Children and Adults with Additional Needs
7.9	Safeguarding Adults
8. Technology	58
8.1	Using Computers

8.2	Children and the Internet	
8.3	Church Online Policy	
8.4	Communication with Young People via the Internet	
8.5	Communication with Young People via Mobile Phone	
Section 9		63
9. Health and Safety		
9.1	General Safety	
9.2	Risk Assessment	
9.3	Insurance	
9.4	High Risk Activities	
9.5	Fire	
9.6	First Aid	
Section 10		67
10. Legal Matters		
10.1	Relevant Legislation in Northern Ireland	
10.2	Data Protection	
10.3	Data Protection and Safeguarding	
11.	Section 11: House Church Documentation	71
12.	Section 12: List of Appendices	107

(Documents in this section are for information and reference ONLY and will not be considered as active part of this Safeguarding Policy)

SECTION 1

1. Introduction

House Church seeks to create and promote the highest possible quality of care for children and vulnerable adults within a safe environment because we believe people matter to God. The Leadership of House Church consists of a Board of Trustees, a Board of Elders and the Lead Team, however it is the Board of Trustees who have the responsibility for the enacting, management, and review of the Safeguarding Policy.

Every week, many different people come into contact with House Church including children and adults at risk. House Church has a legal duty to care for and to look after these people, as well as to safeguard the welfare of children within a safe environment.

This document outlines Safeguarding Procedures for everybody involved in working with children and young people who are in contact with House Church through the range of activities offered. These procedures are designed to ensure that children, young people and adults can enjoy their time at House Church in a safe place, free from the threat of harm or abuse. These procedures also seek to give awareness to the leaders of signs of distress, which may indicate that a child or an adult has been harmed, and to provide a framework by which to respond. This document is fully compliant with the Northern Ireland safeguarding policy framework as outlined in:

- Adult Safeguarding: Prevention, Protection and Partnership (2015)
- Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2017)

House Church commits to work in partnership and to cooperate fully with the Social Services Gateway Team, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), and the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland.

To ensure best practice within House Church, the Church Lead Team:

- has appointed a Safeguarding Team,
- will follow a robust process for the recruitment and appointment process for new leaders and volunteers which includes a vetting process,
- will ensure that there are adequate numbers of leaders present at activities for the number of children or adults at risk present,
- will ensure that all leaders, volunteers and helpers undertake child safeguarding training,
- and will ensure that all leaders, volunteers, and helpers are made fully aware of the reporting process in case a safeguarding concern or incident arises.

In adopting and implementing these procedures, House Church commits that the safeguarding of children and adults will be at the forefront of every activity. This will ensure that the standard of care provided by House Church can be recognised as best practice and that the wider community will recognise that this is a place where children and adults will be safe.

1.1 Why is a Safeguarding Policy necessary?

There are many reasons why House Church needs to have a safeguarding policy and this policy has therefore been developed to encourage best practice in all House Church's activities for the children and adults in the church, so that they may develop and grow in a secure and caring environment, where opportunities for others to cause harm are removed.

In church activities are leaders, volunteers, and helpers, which are defined as follows:

- A leader is an adult, over the age of 18 years old, working in either paid or a voluntary position, four or more times a year, in direct contact with children or adults at risk. This includes those with a specific role on a Sunday, such as Additional Needs Leader, Worship Leader and Small Group Leader. This is a regulated position.
- A volunteer is an adult, over the age of 18 years old, who is engaged in voluntary activity which involves regular contact with children or adults but is not directly responsible for the activity. This too, is a regulated position,
- A helper is a person aged under 18 years who assist in organisations or activities which involves working with children. A helper is deemed to be a supervised volunteer and, as such, this is not a regulated position.

1.2 Legal Requirement

There is not only a legal requirement for House Church to have a safeguarding policy in place, but House Church also has a duty of care towards the children and adults at risk who engage with the church.

1.2.1 Safeguarding Children

Within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child it states: "children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence. They must be kept safe from harm. They must be given proper care by those looking after them." Please see Section 2.1 of this document for complete definitions of Child Abuse.

This key aspiration has been also embodied within The Children (NI) Order 1995 which emphasises five key principles of Child Care:

Paramount Consideration – It is a fundamental principle in childcare law and practice that the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration in decisions taken about him/her.

Parental Responsibility – Parents have a responsibility to children rather than rights over them. There may be situations where other significant adults share this responsibility with one or both parents. It is to be noted, however, that this can be complicated due to the complex nature of modern family life, and that not every adult in a perceived family group has parental responsibility over every child in the group.

Prevention – While the safeguarding response is always correct once a situation arises, prevention of harm happening in the first place is always preferable.

Awareness of the signs of abuse and robust responses to concerns, allegations and disclosures can enable early intervention to take place.

Partnership – The most effective way of ensuring that a child’s needs are met is by working in partnership. The provision of services must therefore consider the views of parents and other caregivers.

Protection – Children must be kept safe and must be protected by intervention if they are in danger at harm or at risk of abuse.

As teaching, supervising, and caring for children is understood to be **regulated activity**, leaders and volunteers in a children’s or youth ministry will be required to apply to Access NI for an Enhanced Disclosure with Barred List check.

As helpers are, by definition, supervised volunteers, there is no legal requirement for them to be vetted by Access NI. For more information on the Access NI vetting process, see Section 5.2.

A child is a person under 18 years old. Where either children or young people are mentioned in these guidelines, both are intended to refer to persons under the age of 18 years old.

1.2.2 Safeguarding Adults

There is also a legal duty on House Church to treated adults with respect and dignity. There are adults within the House Church family and others who make use of services such as the Foodbank, who may be at risk of harm. Some of these may become at risk for a limited time, due to what is happening in their lives, such as a medical procedure, an accident or relationship issues. House Church commits to ensure that they know that the Church provides a place of safety and cares for them.

1.2.3 Definitions

An **Adult at Risk of Harm** is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- a) personal characteristics **AND/OR**
- b) life circumstances

Personal characteristics may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain. Life circumstances may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors, and environmental living conditions.

An **Adult in Need of Protection** is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- a) personal characteristics **AND/OR**
- b) life circumstances **AND**
- c) who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests; **AND**
- d) where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed.

Adults at Risk of Harm may not be able to protect themselves against significant harm or unfair treatment. This may be because they have a mental health problem, a disability, visual or hearing problems, are old and frail, or are ill. Because of this, these adults may receive a care service in their own home or in the community. They may live in a residential care home, nursing home or a similar setting.

1.2.4 Adult abuse

Adult abuse can take a number of forms and cause victims to suffer pain, fear and distress. Please see Section 2.2 of this document for complete definitions of Adult Abuse.

Victims may be too afraid or embarrassed to raise any complaint. They may be reluctant to discuss their concerns with other people, or unsure who to trust. There may be some situations where victims are unaware that they are being abused or have difficulty in communicating this to others. Further information can be found in the House Church Complaints Policy (Section 3.6).

It is important that if there is a concern, allegation or disclosure about adult abuse made to a leader or volunteer, this is to be reported to the Safeguarding Team as soon as possible, who will refer the matter to the PSNI or to Social Services if necessary. If a Safeguarding Team cannot be contacted for any reason, the leader or volunteer may contact the local authorities directly (for contact information, see Section 12.4).

At the time of writing, it is only necessary for those who apply to work as a volunteer or in a paid post with adults at risk in a regulated position within Northern Ireland, to undertake the vetting process through Access NI. House Church does not engage in regulated activity with adults but may encounter adults at risk or adults in need of protection through its regular activities. (For more information see Section 5).

1.3 Biblical Requirement

House Church believes in the importance of living out Christian values in everyday life within the local community. So, while there are legal responsibilities, House Church also believes very much in the principle of “loving your neighbour”. There are therefore clear biblical duty of care guidelines, for example, as found in 1 Peter 5:2:

“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be.”

Jesus also placed a high priority on the care and protection of children and adults facing challenges in their lives: House Church does the same. Safeguarding children and adults at risk are surely some of the most important things Christian believers can do as part of actively demonstrating the love of Christ in word and deed.

1.4 Our Own Protection

House Church’s Safeguarding Policy document does not just set out a policy and provide procedures for the protection of children and adults, it also seeks to protect the leaders and volunteers who are involved in working with them. There may be a

perception that the guidance in the Safeguarding Policy document is unnecessary because it is “common sense”, however the policy and procedures are set down for the protection of leaders and volunteers as well.

By adhering to the principles and following the guidelines, leaders and volunteers can be assured of their own protection from false allegations. Leaders and volunteers must never be on their own with children and adults at risk in an environment where their behaviour cannot be seen by others. It is not enough for them to rely on their reputations and to disregard the procedures within this policy is foolhardy and could ruin a good reputation built up over many years.

1.5 Today’s Society

Without doubt the world of today is a very dangerous place and it is commonplace to encounter situations where trusted people misusing their position to cause harm to children or adults. That coupled with a more claim conscious society means that House Church is proactive in both the prevention of harm and the safeguarding of those who may have been harmed.

House Church is only too aware that children and young people are more often harmed by people who care for them and less often by strangers. The harm may be significant or less so, intentional or unintentional or it may be caused through thoughtlessness or inadequacy. Some of the children within the House Church community may be harmed at home. Sadly, there are also some people who are looking for opportunities to harm children and adults, so therefore may seek to establish relationships with potential victims through the local church.

By having robust rigorous recruitment and vetting procedures in place, this will minimise some of these issues. However, it is also recognised, as previously mentioned, that workers may unnecessarily place themselves in situations where their actions cause concern, or they are open to allegation or suspicion. There may also be survivors of child abuse or adult abuse within House Church who will want reassurance that the church is doing everything possible to prevent harm from happening to others.

These are some of the reasons why we have a Safeguarding Policy; we as a church we want to seek to do all we can to protect our children, promote good practice and prevent abuse.

1.6 Safeguarding Policy Statement

Children

House Church is committed to a practice that protects children and young people from harm. House Church accepts and recognises the responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues that cause children harm and will endeavour to safeguard children by:

- Protecting them from harm, whether physical, sexual, or emotional whilst in the care of House Church and to report any abuse discovered or suspected,
- Adopting Safeguarding procedures, guidelines for good practice and a code of behaviour for all who work with children and young people,

- Sharing information on the Church website about House Church's approach to Safeguarding with children, with those with Parental Responsibility, and with leaders, volunteers and helpers.
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know and involving Parent(s)/Guardian(s) and children appropriately.
- Undertaking to exercise proper care in the selection and appointment of those working with children and young people, whether paid or volunteer,
- Committing to supporting, resourcing, and training those who work with children and young people, and to providing supervision,
- Following the best practices and procedures that are available to us in working with children and young people,
- Providing a safe environment in which to convene activities for children and appropriate transport when required,
- Reviewing our policy, procedures, guidance, and code of behaviour for good practice at regular intervals,
- House Church commits to the nurturing, protection, and safekeeping of all, especially children and young people. We will also endeavour to preserve and support the family units from which these young people come,
- We recognise that our work with children and young people is the responsibility of all will be conducted in a way that reflects Biblical principles,
- Appointing the suitably vetted members to be the Safeguarding Team. The Safeguarding Policy relates to all activities that occur within House Church. They are displayed clearly within the church premises and are also included in the Appendices of this document.

Adults

The abuse of adults is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights; it can take many forms.

The staff and volunteers in House Church are committed to practice which promotes the welfare of Adults at Risk and safeguards them from harm.

Staff and volunteers in House Church accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues that cause adults harm, and to establish and maintain a safe environment for them. Any form of abuse wherever it occurs or whoever is responsible will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

House Church is committed to promoting an atmosphere of inclusion, transparency and openness and are open to feedback from the people who use our services, carers, advocates, our staff and our volunteers with a view to how we may continuously improve our services/activities.

House Church will endeavour to safeguard adults by:

- Adhering to the church safeguarding policy and ensuring that it is supported by robust procedure,
- Carefully following the procedures laid down for the recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers,

- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, and training,
- Implementing clear procedures for raising awareness of and responding to abuse within the organisation and for reporting concerns to statutory agencies that need to know, while involving carers and adults at risk appropriately,
- Ensuring general safety and risk management procedures are adhered to,
- Promoting full participation and having clear procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints,
- Managing personal information, confidentiality and information sharing and safeguarding adults at risk by implementing a code of behaviour for all involved with the organisation, including visitors,
- Reviewing the safeguarding policy, procedures, code of behaviour and practice at regular intervals, at least once every three years.

These have been formally adopted by the Leadership and provision will be made for each leader, volunteer, and helper to be aware of their responsibilities in the area of Safeguarding. They will also be required to confirm that they have read, understood and are in agreement with the Safeguarding Policy.

House Church will ensure that everybody involved in the life of the Church will be involved through regular safeguarding training. House Church will ensure that all parents and carers whose children are involved in the activities of the Church will be provided with access to the Safeguarding Policy.

The Leadership has agreed that they will review all of the policies, procedures, codes of behaviour and practice at regular intervals, and at least once every three years.

SECTION 2

2. Abuse

2.1 What is Child Abuse?

There are many different types of abuse and a child may suffer from more than one. Irrespective of the reason, abuse is always wrong, and it is never the child's fault. Indeed, it is a fact that many perpetrators of abuse are known to their victims. It is vital that when abuse is discovered that it is stopped. The sooner action can be taken to prevent further abuse the more likely the child can recover from his or her experiences.

Abuse may involve direct actions by an adult, such as physically beating a child or it may happen when an adult fails to act, by failing to provide proper food or care for example. However, children may be abused not only by parents, carers, known adults, or strangers but also other children and those in their teenage years. Indeed, there is a growing concern about older children abusing younger children or their peers.

It needs to be recognised that child abuse may be an isolated incident or a chronic and repeated pattern of behaviour, and that does not refer solely to sexual abuse. There are four main types of child abuse and a basic working definition of abuse is: "Child abuse is the ill treatment or neglect which leads to physical, sexual or emotional injury or harm to a child."

The following definitions are derived from "Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland" (March 2016) which provides the overarching policy framework for safeguarding children and young people, namely all persons under the age of 18 years old.

Physical abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child. It may take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, or suffocating a child.

The Signs of Physical Abuse may include:

- Unexplained recurrent bruising, cuts, or burns - especially in areas where you would not expect a child to be accidentally injured,
- Injuries inconsistent with the explanation given for them or that have not received medical attention,
- Self-destructive tendencies,
- Fear of physical contact – shrinking back if touched.

Sexual abuse occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

The Signs of Sexual Abuse may include:

- Sexual knowledge, including drawing sexually explicit pictures, or use of language inappropriate for the child's age,
- Being over affectionate in a sexual way that is inappropriate to the child's age,
- Regression to younger behavioural patterns such as thumb sucking,
- Self-mutilation, suicide attempts, running away, overdosing, anorexia,
- Eating disorders including over-eating or loss of appetite,
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and a knowledge of adult sexual behaviour,
- Disturbed sleep, nightmares, and bedwetting.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. It may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate.

It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views; deliberately silencing them; or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games, or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

Signs of Emotional Abuse may include:

- Sudden changes in behaviour, such as when a child becomes very quiet or withdrawn,
- Aggressive behaviour or tantrums,
- Delays in physical, mental, and emotional development,
- Sudden under-achievement or continual belittling themselves,
- Fear of being placed in new situations,
- Signs of emotional withdrawal or depression,
- Neurotic behaviour or inappropriate response to pain.

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

Signs of Neglect may include:

- Under nourishment, constant hunger, or unexplained tummy pains,
- Untreated illnesses and constant tiredness,
- Inappropriate dress or clothing,
- Lack of or poor personal hygiene.

Exploitation is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms

such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

If any leader, volunteer, or helper is in any way concerned about a child or young person in their care, they must take the matter further. Guidance about what to do is given in Section 3: Responding, Reporting and Recording.

2.2 What is Adult Abuse?

Adult Abuse is a 'single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to another individual or violates their human or civil rights'. Abuse is the misuse of power and control that one person has over another. It can involve direct and indirect contact and can include online abuse.

"Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership" (DOH and DOJ, July 2015) outlines the main forms of abuse:

Physical abuse is the use of physical force or mistreatment of one person by another which may or may not result in actual physical injury. This may include hitting, pushing, rough handling, exposure to heat or cold, force feeding, improper administration of medication, denial of treatment, misuse or illegal use of restraint and deprivation of liberty.

Sexual violence and abuse is 'any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful, or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability).

Sexual violence and abuse can take many forms and may include non-contact sexual activities, such as indecent exposure, stalking, grooming, being made to look at or be involved in the production of sexually abusive material or being made to watch sexual activities. It may involve physical contact, including but not limited to non-consensual penetrative sexual activities or nonpenetrative sexual activities, such as intentional touching (known as groping). Sexual violence can be found across all sections of society, irrelevant of gender, age, ability, religion, race, ethnicity, personal circumstances, financial background, or sexual orientation.

Psychological abuse is behaviour that is psychologically harmful or inflicts mental distress by threat, humiliation, or other verbal/non-verbal behaviour. This may include threats, humiliation or ridicule, provoking fear of violence, shouting, yelling and swearing, blaming, controlling, intimidation and coercion.

Financial abuse is actual or attempted theft, fraud or burglary. It is the misappropriation or misuse of money, property, benefits, material goods or other asset transactions which the person did not or could not consent to, or which were invalidated by intimidation, coercion, or deception. This may include exploitation, embezzlement, withholding pension or benefits or pressure exerted around wills, property, or inheritance.

Institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult by a regime or individuals in settings which adults who may be at risk reside in or use. This can happen in any organisation, within and outside Health and Social Care (HSC) provision.

Institutional abuse may occur when the routines, systems and regimes result in poor standards of care, poor practice and behaviours, inflexible regimes and rigid routines which violate the dignity and human rights of the adults and place them at risk of harm. Institutional abuse may occur within a culture that denies, restricts or curtails privacy, dignity, choice and independence. It involves the collective failure of a service provider or an organisation to provide safe and appropriate services, and includes a failure to ensure that the necessary preventative and/or protective measures are in place.

Neglect occurs when a person deliberately withholds, or fails to provide, appropriate and adequate care and support which is required by another adult. It may be through a lack of knowledge or awareness, or through a failure to take reasonable action given the information and facts available to them at the time. It may include physical neglect to the extent that health or well-being is impaired, administering too much or too little medication, failure to provide access to appropriate health or social care, withholding the necessities of life, such as adequate nutrition, heating or clothing, or failure to intervene in situations that are dangerous to the person concerned or to others particularly where the person lacks the capacity to assess risk.

Exploitation is the deliberate maltreatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over another person; to take advantage of another person or situation usually, but not always, for personal gain from using them as a commodity. It may manifest itself in many forms including slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, domestic violence and abuse, sexual violence and abuse, or human trafficking.

This list of types of harmful behaviour is not exhaustive, nor listed here in any order of priority. There are other indicators which should not be ignored. It is also possible that if a person is being harmed in one way, s/he may very well be experiencing harm in other ways.

“Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership” does not include self-harm or self-neglect within the definition of an ‘adult in need of protection’. Each case will require a professional Health and Social Care assessment to determine the appropriate response and consider if any underlying factors require a protection response. For example, self-harm may be the manifestation of harm which has been perpetrated by a third party and which the adult feels unable to disclose.

2.3 Substance Abuse

As House Church is involved in a wide range of diverse, multi-faceted activities, this brings the church into contact with young people and adults who are also at risk of being exposed to various substances of abuse such as solvents, alcohol, smoking and drugs. Leaders, volunteers, and helpers need to be aware of danger signs and must report any concerns to the Safeguarding Team.

2.4 Domestic Violence

There has been a significant increase in the detection and prosecution of violence against both women and men in the home. This is considered a serious crime and its extended effects are seen to cause enormous health and social problems and emotional and psychological damage, not only to the victims, but also to their children. This is because children are often the silent witnesses to what has occurred and can be affected by the anxiety and personal threat to themselves.

The crime of Domestic Violence is the most common interpersonal crime, yet it is the least reported due to several factors. Leaders, volunteers, and helpers should be aware that children may not only overhear or observe violence in the home, but may become direct victims as any abused adults, either accidentally or deliberately. The social pressures to remain within a violent home and the stigma which parents perceive in relation to living in refuges or temporary accommodation as single parents should not be underestimated.

Therefore, it is important for leaders, volunteers, and helpers to be aware that agencies such as the PSNI and Health and Social Care Trusts have developed policies to help in situations of domestic violence and that advice, support and help are available from the Women's Aid Federation (NI). Men experiencing domestic violence may also have to seek refuge and accommodation may be available from charities in the homelessness sector, such as the Simon Community (NI).

Domestic Violence can have a massive impact on both children and adults and can lead to physical, psychological, and behavioural disorders and may subsequently affect them when they become parents. As such, many of these concerns will require a pastoral or safeguarding response from the Church.

House Church is aware that Domestic Violence can happen in any walk of life and seeks to help and to keep abreast of the issues of Domestic Violence. House Church will provide support, signposting and assistance to any member of staff who discloses that they are suffering Domestic Violence.

2.5 Bullying

Bullying is the repeated use of power by one or more persons to intentionally harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others (NI Anti Bullying Forum). Although bullying is not defined as abuse, in its more extreme form it would be regarded as a form of abuse. Bullying can take many forms, but the main types are: Emotional; Physical; Racist; Sexual; Homophobic; Transphobic; Verbal; and Cyberbullying.

The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm. In these circumstances bullying should be considered as child abuse and treated as such.

Given the nature of these signs and symptoms it may be difficult for a church worker to decide if a child is being abused. Some may appear in children who are not being abused but who are ill or under stress. Most, though not all abused children will exhibit a cluster of these symptoms however the key thing to remember is that

advice and help are available and that it is important to seek that help at the earliest possible stage.

House Church seeks to ensure that it is a place that is safe and welcoming for all children. This means that all kinds of bullying are wrong and will not be tolerated within our activities or organisations. Therefore, House Church seeks to develop a culture of openness where children and leaders feel able to say if they or their friends are being bullied.

Bullying is often thought of as something that just occurs within the confines of an educational setting.

However, it is well recognised, and researched, that bullying has spread well beyond classroom and permeates all areas of our lives including work and church settings. Within the school and work environment this has been robustly tackled through proactive interventions and policies and needs to be equally pursued within the church setting as well.

What is bullying? The government has given a general definition of bullying as, “Deliberately hurtful behaviour repeated often over a period of time” That means that Bullying can happen anywhere to anyone and that anyone has the potential to bully others.

What forms does it take? Bullying is multi-faceted in its presentation and can be as simple as name calling or teasing. However, it can also be of a physical nature where victims are pushed, punched, kicked, and hit. The victims can be forced to do things they do not want to do or are left out of games or ignored by others. Cyber bullying is when bullies contact their victims via text messaging or the internet and as such, they have little escape or respite from their bullies which often intensifies the bullying.

2.5.1 Proactive Measures

House Church commits to the prevention of bullying within the church activities and organisations and, if it does happen, it will be dealt with and not ignored. The House Church Anti-Bullying Policy can be found in Section 11.11 and this is based on the Safeguarding Policy. The Anti-Bullying Policy will be reviewed every three years, along with this policy, to meet the needs of each group within the Church. It is considered good practice that children and young people should be a part of that process, so they will be involved with that as much as possible.

When children and young people are new to any group or seem to spend a lot of time on their own, leaders, volunteers and helpers should encourage others to befriend them. It is well recognised that one of the best defences against bullying is having friends around you. Leaders should always reward and acknowledge positive behaviour, especially young people who befriend others or prevent or stop bullying.

Indeed, it might be worthwhile openly discussing bullying within the group with the young people regularly encouraged to talk to the leaders about anything that is bothering them. Adults displaying the signs of being bullied should be gently approached about the matter and help and assistance offered.

2.5.2 How to deal with bullying

Should bullying be suspected or disclosed within a House Church activity, leaders, volunteers and helpers must make the following response:

- Talk to the victim(s) and find out what has happened. Reassure them that it is not their fault and they have made the right decision in telling you. Make sure they are supported throughout the process,
- Meet with those involved. It might be suitable to discuss the issue with all members of the group, not just those who are bullying. It is not necessary to mention the victim by name,
- Talk about how they would feel if they were being left out or called names,
- Discuss how the situation could be improved - if bullying is happening, how it can be stopped and how everyone can feel happier in the group. Make sure everyone within the group is adhering to the code of behaviour or anti-bullying policy. Once everyone has agreed that bullying should not take place, agree what the consequences should be if it were to continue,
- If the bullying continues, make sure the agreed consequences are carried out,
- If the bullying is serious, report it to the Safeguarding Team and to parents,
- Ensure that adequate support is in place for the one who has been doing the bullying and all attempts have been made for them to be discouraged from repeating this behaviour,
- Keep the situation under constant review.

Should a child or young person disclose to a leader, helper or volunteer about bullying that is taking place outside of the House Church context, this should be reported to the Safeguarding Team for advice and guidance or action.

2.6 Self-Harm and Suicide

Anybody involved in working alongside children and adults may be confronted with the reality of them self-harming. Self-harm has been described in its simplest terms as “the inflicting of physical pain to mask an emotional imbalance.” It is evident that those who find themselves in this situation will need to be provided with some sort of support and referable to an appropriate practitioner.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists observed that, ‘Deliberate self-harm is a term used when someone injures or harms themselves on purpose. Common examples include “overdosing” (self-poisoning), hitting, cutting, or burning oneself, pulling hair, or picking skin, or self-strangulation. It can also include taking illegal drugs and excessive amounts of alcohol. Self-harm is always a sign of something being seriously wrong.”

As such when a young person discloses that they are self-harming it cannot, nor should, it be ignored. It is a clear indication that someone needs help, and that self-esteem is low. It is important not only on how this issue is managed but that advice should be sought.

Those who self-harm do not always automatically progress towards suicide, neither is it true that those who have attempted suicide will automatically have self-harmed. However, it is conceivable that suicide can sometimes be seen as the ultimate act of self-harm. Therefore, if a young person or an adult discloses that they have suicidal

thoughts then this should be treated as a safeguarding issue and the reporting processes as outlined in Section 3 must be followed immediately.

It is vital that leaders, volunteers, and helpers must be aware that if a child discloses that they are suicidal then they have a duty to inform parents or make sure they are informed by somebody more responsible. As in the case of all other pastoral concerns, it is important to ensure that individuals of any age who are feeling suicidal are safe and have a network of support.

Signs of potential suicide may include:

- Withdrawing from friends and family,
- Loss of interest in usual activities,
- Signs of sadness, hopelessness, and irritability,
- Making negative remarks about themselves,
- Talking or writing about suicide,
- Putting their affairs in order,
- Giving away personal items,
- A sudden change from extreme depression to appearing to cope and being calm.

These are not definitive signs but may be possibly displayed by someone who is suicidal. Others may show no sign of their pain at all and therefore the only way to address our concern is to ask them.

What to do if you think or know that a young person or an adult is suicidal?

- Listen to how they feel,
- Take them seriously,
- Offer your support,
- Encourage them to seek further help from people like a doctor, professional counsellor, family member or friend,
- Follow the reporting process (See Section 3),
- If they appear acutely suicidal and unable to talk, it may be necessary to seek immediate help through hospital's emergency department.

2.7 Principles of Safe Boundaries

Some simple principles that establish safe boundaries for leaders, volunteers and helpers include:

RECOGNISING: Some children and adults are naturally more affectionate and relaxed about physical contact than others so it's important to be aware of the messages that the child or adult is sending. If you become aware that a child or adult is uncomfortable about something you are doing, then you should stop at once. Things that some people think are fun are often disliked by others, for example tickling.

RESPECTING: Children are not passive participants in their development; they are active, socially aware beings who have an increasing contribution to make to their

own care. When the child needs assistance with a personal function such as toileting or during sudden illness always seek to involve the child by asking the child's permission or explaining your actions. Asking permission encourages the child's participation in its own care. Explaining actions can serve to eliminate any confusion over why an event occurred.

Communicating like this to both children and adults shows respect for them and promotes independence. It shows that the person's wishes are important, and that leaders, volunteers and helpers do take their wishes into account. It also helps the leader, volunteer or helper to avoid performing unnecessary personal functions which the person is able to do itself. Further information can be found in the House Church Equal Opportunities Policy (Section 11.15).

RECORDING: Routine recording should include brief notes on accidents, unusual events or personal functions. Parents and carers should automatically be told the about these things anyway and records will help make it clear to the parents and carers what has occurred and why.

Children have the following rights in particular:

- To be safe,
- To protect their own bodies,
- To say if someone is doing something to them that they feel is wrong,
- To get help against bullies,
- To tell,
- To be believed,
- Not to keep secrets.

It is good to work out a set of rules with parents for the children to follow when they are out alone, and this can be reinforced to the younger children too. Adults at risk can benefit from the same approach. Leaders, volunteers, and helpers can help children to learn how to protect themselves and to develop confidence and independence.

This is good practice which will not only benefit the child but will make the parent's job easier, especially when you are working with school age children who may go out to play alone. The children's charity "Kidscape" provide excellent materials for encouraging "Good Sense Defence" in children. These would be of help to parents and children's workers in preparing children to look after themselves.

Some simple advice would include:

- Encouraging them that it is right to tell adults about any worries they have,
- When they are out without an adult to stay together with other children in groups or pairs,
- Always take the same route home from school,
- If they are in danger and someone is hurting or threatening them to run, scream, shout, kick, punch or and even lie - their safety is all that matters,

- They can choose for themselves who they want or allow to kiss, cuddle, and hug them. They should not be made to do any of these things against their will, especially where they feel it's wrong or it is making them unhappy,
- By building up an open, respecting and trusting relationship with them you will create an atmosphere where they feel able to come to you for help and protection, whoever is hurting them.

Putting the child's needs first will not spoil the child. It is just another way of recognising that children have the same right to be heard as adults.

Caring adults who take the time to listen to what children are trying to tell them will help make the child's world a safe and secure place to be and will help them to understand something of the heart of God towards them.

SECTION 3

3.Responding, Reporting and Recording

3.1 Responding to the concerns of a child or an adult at risk

Issues that a child may face include incidents, accidents, concerns, disclosures and allegations. House Church commits to respond correctly to issues of this nature, in terms of recording all relevant information and reporting to the PSNI and Social Services as appropriate.

Responding to incidents and accidents:

The issues that are often brought to the attention of a leader have nothing to do with the welfare of a child or an adult. Many are usually about a minor problem - in other words, an incident, or an accident. An example of an incident would be a male leader who takes a young girl home by himself without previous knowledge from or communication to parents/carers or other leaders. An example of an accident would be an adult falling over in the Compassion Centre and needing first aid treatment. It is important that leaders know how to handle problems, no matter how minor, and that they are able to respond to more serious concerns.

Each House Church Activity will have copies of the Accident/Incident Report form to record details of accidents and incidences. These forms must be used for the recording of accidents, incidents, injuries, and any action taken. Each entry should be signed by the leader in charge. Parents/carers should also be informed in person or by phone of the accident/incident as soon as possible. A sample of an Accident/Incident Report form can be found in Section 15.8.

Responding to concerns:

If a concern about a child or an adult is raised it may refer to an incident when a child or adult has shown signs of abuse or there has been a disclosure of abuse by the child or adult to another person. The concern may also refer to inappropriate or difficult behaviour that another adult has shown towards a child or an adult at risk.

Responding to such concerns must be based upon a clearly defined reporting process that is within these guidelines. That is: Knowing what to do, who to contact and who needs to know will ensure that the incident is dealt with appropriately. The primary responsibility is to report any concern as soon as possible and ensure that the concern is taken seriously.

If there is ever a concern that a child or an adult at risk might be in danger, then do not hesitate to contact the PSNI immediately. Particularly, in the event of a concern involving alleged or suspected child or adult abuse, then a Report of Concern form must be completed and passed to the Safeguarding Team who should be made aware of the situation as soon as possible. On no account should there be gossip on such matters – this is an extremely sensitive area and confidentiality is essential.

Responding to a disclosure that a child or adult at risk has been abused or to an allegation made against a member of staff, leader, volunteer, or helper.

Things to do

- Stay calm,
- Listen – listen – listen,
- Give time for the child to say what they want,
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling,
- Write down what was said to you or what you observed as soon as possible,
- Write down the exact words that the child used,
- Continue to provide a warm and friendly relationship with the child,
- Use the Report of Concern form,
- Ensure that the Safeguarding Team is informed without delay,
- In the event of a serious concern do not hesitate to contact the Social Services Gateway Team who can offer appropriate advice.

Things not to do

- Do not panic,
- Do not make a child repeat the story unnecessarily,
- Do not question, probe, or push the child for explanations,
- Do not promise to keep secrets,
- Do not investigate,
- Do not assume someone else will help the child, you may be the only one who knows or realises what is happening,
- Under no circumstances must a leader, volunteer or helper attempt to deal with the problem alone.

Responding to a child or adult at risk who wants to talk about abuse

In the work of the church, House Church seeks to create an atmosphere of trust, where children and adults know that they will be respected, listened to, and believed. This may encourage them to share their concerns, and they may take the opportunity to disclose matters which may amount to abuse.

- Accept what the child or adult says, keeping calm and looking at the child/young person directly,
- Let them know you need to tell someone else – you cannot keep some things secret,
- Reinforce that they are not to blame and that they are right to tell you never push for more information,
- Be aware that the child or adult may be under threat,
- Let the child or adult know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.

Five phrases that can be said to a child or an adult at risk

- I believe you,
- I am glad that you came and told me about this, you have done the right thing in telling,
- I am sorry that this has happened to you,
- It is not your fault,
- We are going to do something together to get you some help.

What to do next

It is crucial not to panic! In most scenarios, the person to whom disclosure is made will have just collected a small piece of information. It will be for others, with more training and experience, to evaluate this information. Overreaction can be extremely harmful to the child or adult at risk, the accused, the group, the authorities and to yourself!

The immediate responsibility is to contact the “Ministry Leader” in the church – either directly or through the Programme Manager. It is important not to do anything by oneself.

Following the correct procedure can be vital to the child or adult’s best interests. An appropriate written record must be made as soon as possible of what was said by the child or adult at risk, when it was said and to whom, signed and dated and kept securely.

Only in a case where serious and recent physical or sexual abuse is talked of and it is suspected that the child or the adult at risk is in immediate danger, and it has not been possible to contact the Safeguarding Team, the correct course of action is to make direct contact with the local Social Services Gateway Team, NSPCC or the PSNI Public Protection Unit (Contact details are found in Section 12.4).

Sexual abuse is a crime – where it may be possible to help situations of physical or emotional abuse or neglect in consultation with the family concerned in conjunction with social services – matters concerning sexual abuse must be dealt with differently. The Safeguarding Team in the church will know who to contact in the Social Services so that such allegations can be dealt with properly.

Things to Remember

- Listen, listen, listen - and make it clear that you believe them.
- Do not interrogate – Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- Affirm the child’s feelings.
- House Church, as an organisation, will refer the child on to the Gateway Team in Social Services, the PSNI or NSPCC by our own procedures.
- Write down what has been shared as soon as possible, preferably within one hour, recording the conversation accurately with the date & time of making the notes.
- All hand-written notes must be kept indefinitely, even if subsequently typed.
- It may be important to follow up and support the child.

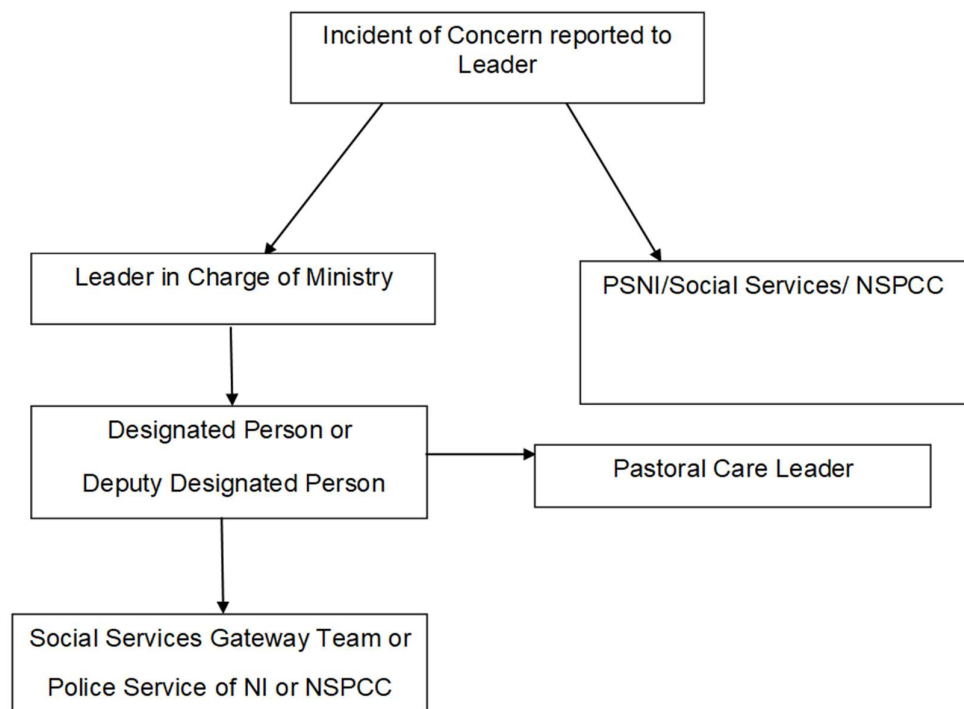
Who is the House Church Safeguarding Team?

The following people are available at any time to help or to discuss any concerns you have about any safeguarding issue:

- Safeguarding Officer: Natalie Porter (Executive Pastor): 07928659179
- Designated Person: Jim Murdock: 07966914812
- Deputy Designated Person: Debbie Taylor (Finance Administrator): 07747385269
- Deputy Designated Person: Suzanne Gillespie: 077 0232 4363

3.2 The Reporting Process

FLOWCHART EXPLAINING THE REPORTING PROCEDURE



The process for reporting Safeguarding concerns is as follows:

If a child or an adult at risk is in danger or a criminal offence has taken place, then the PSNI or Social Services must be informed immediately. This must not be delayed under any circumstances, for example, by holding a meeting. It is important to remember that the task of deciding whether abuse has occurred or not rests with the professional agencies.

- The person who has the concern should tell the leader in charge. If the concerns involve the leader, then contact the Safeguarding Team or Deputy,

- The leader in charge should inform the Safeguarding Team and complete incident form and Report Form for 'Concerns, Suspicions or Allegations of Abuse',
- The Safeguarding Team should consider all the information available and decide to whom, if anyone, it needs to be reported,
- Consideration must be given by the Department Head to offering support to the leader or other person who made the initial report,
- In the congregational context, information should be restricted to the Safeguarding Team and Department Head.

If there is a disagreement with the Safeguarding Team or Ministry Leader on whether to refer a concern to the relevant Gateway Team or the PSNI, any individual, as a concerned citizen, may still make a referral.

It should be noted that where a third party alleges that a child is being abused the information they supply, along with their details, must be shared with the Safeguarding Team. On consideration of this information the Safeguarding Team may refer all the details to the Social Services who may subsequently contact them if necessary.

Reasons for not contacting parents or carers

If a parent is informed of the allegations, they may take matters into their own hands and confront the person under suspicion. This would inadvertently alert the abuser and could jeopardize any subsequent police investigation. The alleged abuser may also try to silence the child and will have the opportunity to dispose of any incriminating material. Therefore, it is important that no one from the church informs the parents or carers of such allegations. This decision should be left to Social Services or the PSNI.

3.3 Disclosure and Barring Service

It is a legal requirement that a Church must inform the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) if they remove a person from volunteering or working in regulated activity with children or adults at risk in Northern Ireland.

According to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007, a regulated activity provider, such as House Church, must refer to the DBS when they have withdrawn permission for a person to engage in regulated activity because they think that the person meets the following criteria:

- The person has received a caution or a conviction for a relevant offence. This would be a serious offence that automatically bars a person from working with children or vulnerable adults. For example, the rape of a child.
- The person is suspected of being engaged in relevant behaviour. Examples include behaviour which endangers a child or vulnerable adult or is likely to endanger them and behaviour of a sexual nature involving a child. This behaviour could be acts of omission or commission.
- When the harm test is satisfied. The harm test is where it is thought that a person may harm a child or vulnerable adult, cause them to be harmed, or where a person has put a child/vulnerable adult at risk of harm, attempted to harm a

child/vulnerable adult or incited another to harm a child/vulnerable adult. For example, a volunteer confided in a minister that he had a sexual interest in children but had never acted upon this interest.

More information about the DBS can be found on the URL below:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/disclosure-and-barring-protecting-children-and-vulnerable-adults>

3.4 Recording of Information

Child's words: When a disclosure occurs, it is important that adequate records are kept of any disclosure and in particular the specific words a child says are recorded accurately. So, if a child says something of concern to a leader, this should be recorded immediately on any piece of paper at hand and then the Report of Concern form written up at a later stage. Once completed, the Report of Concern form should be given to the Safeguarding Team and kept securely.

Report of Concern form: The person who has reported the concern should complete a Report of Concern form which is available in Section 15.8.

It is important to have available the following information:

- The name and address of the child.
- Age of the child.
- The nature of any injury or complaint.
- The need for medical attention (if any).
- What your concern is.
- What course of action you have already taken (if any).
- Any other information you may have, such as the name of the school they attend or the name of their General Practitioner

If any meeting is held in relation to a Safeguarding issue, a written record must be kept of the meeting. The record should also indicate what the concern was and whether a decision was taken to report to an outside agency. Again, any record must be treated and confidential and kept in a safe and secure place. Such records are discoverable and may be sought and examined if an investigation is carried out.

3.5 Managing Offenders

House Church believes that within the context of grace and forgiveness, attendance at any worship services is open to everyone including former offenders. At the same time, the protection of children and adults at risk always remains paramount. A person who has cautions or convictions on their record may still be involved in the life and witness of the Church. However, if a person has convictions of abuse against children, then they will never be in a position of leadership with children. As House Church has adopted and implemented these guidelines, it means that all new leaders wishing to be involved in regulated positions will undergo the vetting procedure and then any convictions will be known through this process.

Should a person begin to attend church and it is or becomes known that this person has been convicted of offences against children, further advice will be sought and

taken to ensure that their attendance becomes safe for the protection of the children and adults at risk who attend church and for the offender themselves. If an offender has restrictions placed upon them from PSNI or Probation Services, the church must work in partnership with these agencies.

3.6 Dealing with complaints and grievances

If a young person, adult, parent, or carer has a general complaint about the running of an activity or organisation or about the behaviour of a leader, volunteer or helper, such complaints will be dealt with under the church's complaints procedure. As an organisation with a Christian ethos and purpose at its heart, House Church seeks to implement policies regarding dispute resolution that are consistent with the law and best practice guidelines and follow guidance in Scripture regarding how disputes should be settled. House Church will therefore endeavour, wherever possible, to encourage anyone with a complaint to resolve issues informally on a one-to-one basis. If this leads to the desired resolution, then there is no need for the matter to be taken any further.

It is hoped that most issues can be dealt with by way of an informal discussion and volunteers are encouraged to attempt this method of resolution in the first instance where possible. If, however an informal discussion has not brought a resolution or the complainant feels the matter is too serious to be dealt with by way of informal discussion, the following procedure will apply: -

Step 1 – set out the complaint in writing

The complainant should write/email the relevant Department Head. If the complaint is about the Department Head, then the complainant should write to the Leadership Team, setting out the basis for the complaint in as much detail as possible.

Step 2 – meeting and outcome

Upon receipt of the written complaint, the complainant will be invited within two weeks to a meeting to discuss the complaint. The complainant has the right to be accompanied at the meeting by another person. Notes of the meeting will be taken and agreed with the complainant. Following the meeting to discuss the complaint, further investigations may be carried out if necessary and the complainant will be advised in writing of the outcome within a further two weeks of the meeting.

Step 3 – appeal

If the complainant disagrees with the outcome given in relation to the complaint, the complainant will have the right to speak to the Board of Elders. The complainant should set out the basis for the appeal in writing in as much detail as possible. The complainant will be invited to an appeal meeting to discuss the appeal and again, will have the right to be accompanied. Notes of the meeting will again be taken and agreed with the complainant.

Following the appeal hearing, the complainant will receive written notification of the outcome of the appeal within a further two weeks of the meeting and the complaints procedure will be at an end.

House Church reserves the right to engage the services of a third party to help with or to chair any meeting convened in accordance with this policy.

3.7 Confidentiality: Who needs to know what?

As previously mentioned, it is vitally important that all safeguarding issues are treated confidentially and that records are stored securely, with only those who need to know about a concern, disclosure or allegation being informed. This will mean that where the Safeguarding Team considers that a child or an adult is at risk of abuse, or that a criminal offence may have been committed, it must be reported to Social Services or the PSNI.

Depending on what the concern, disclosure or allegation about a child or an adult is, parents or carers may need to be informed. In such circumstances, advice should be sought and taken from the PSNI or Social Services. If an allegation has been made against a leader or a volunteer, advice must similarly be sought and taken as to whether they should be informed.

3.8 Reporting Contacts

Within Northern Ireland, all abuse issues relating to children in Northern Ireland will be dealt with either by the PSNI or Social Services.

Within the PSNI, there are Child Abuse Investigation Units (CAIU) that deal with all issues relating to children. They are part of the overarching Public Protection Unit; there is one CAIU in each of the eleven policing districts. They are made up of male and female detectives who work in plain clothes and are specially trained to investigate all alleged and suspected cases of child abuse. Contact the central number 101 in the event of an emergency phone 999.

Within the Health and Social Service Trusts, all reports of a safeguarding nature are dealt with by the local Gateway Team. They provide integrated health and social care services across Northern Ireland.

Contact details for Social Services located within each Trust can be found on the Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland website www.n-i.nhs.uk and are also found in Section 12 of the Safeguarding Policy.

3.9 Protected Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy

Introduction

House Church is committed to the highest standards of openness and accountability. Any leader, volunteer or helper who has and concerns regarding the organisation's performance, standards or behaviour are free to raise those concerns. Any concerns that may be personal to their circumstances could be better dealt with under the House Church grievance procedure.

Aims and scope

The aims of this policy are: -

- to encourage employees/volunteers to feel confident about raising concerns,
- to provide a method by which employees/volunteers may raise concerns and know that they will be protected against victimisation because of raising a complaint,

- to ensure that employees or leaders and volunteers know how to pursue concerns if not satisfied with the response,
- to help the us to act within the law.

Certain disclosures are defined in as “qualifying disclosures”. Disclosures are qualifying disclosures where it can be shown that the organisation commits a ‘relevant failure’ by:

- committing a criminal offence,
- failing to comply with a legal obligation,
- being responsible for a miscarriage of justice,
- endangering the health and safety of an individual,
- causing environmental damage, and
- concealing any information relating to any of the above.

These acts can be in the past, present or future, so that, for example, a disclosure qualifies if it relates to a criminal offence that has happened, is happening or is likely to happen.

The procedure

Anyone wishing to report any concerns should raise these with their line manager or ministry leader who will deal with the disclosure in confidence. If the issue relates to the individual’s line manager or ministry leader, they should report the matter to a more senior person in the organisation.

When the House Church Leadership Team is made aware of an issue, the response will depend upon the nature of the concern raised. An internal investigation may be appropriate, or an external agency or regulatory body may be appointed to investigate the complaint.

It is expected, however, that in almost all cases raising concerns internally would be the most appropriate course of action.

However, if for whatever reason, it is felt that the concerns cannot be raised your internally and it is reasonably believed that the information and any allegations are substantially true, the relevant legislation recognises that it may be appropriate for the matter to be raised with another prescribed person, such as a regulator or professional body or an elected member of the Council, the Legislative Assembly of the national parliament. A list of the relevant prescribed people and bodies for this purpose and the areas for which they are responsible is available from Public Concern at Work. It is recommended that advice is taken before raising a concern externally.

Right not to suffer a detriment

The law gives employees and volunteers the right not to suffer a detriment for making a protected disclosure. House Church takes very seriously any concerns which are brought under this legislation. If anybody feels that they are suffering a detriment as a result of making a protected disclosure, the Leadership Team must be alerted as soon as possible so that steps can be taken to provide assistance.

Employees and volunteers are encouraged to avail of this procedure if they are concerned about any wrongdoing in their employment or service at the church. It is understood that concerns may be raised in good faith that may not turn out to be true or capable of being substantiated. However, if the procedure has not been invoked in good faith, then the employee or volunteer who raised the issue may be liable to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal or stepping down from the ministry.

SECTION 4

4.Areas of Responsibility

4.1 The Role of the Leadership

The Leadership is responsible for the protection of children within the congregation and its organisations. The exceptions to this would be independent organisations such as local community groups who are using the premises.

The Leadership will assign one of the Lead Team Safeguarding Officer who will act as both Designated Officer for Child Safeguarding and Adult Safeguarding Champion and will be responsible for the overall responsibility for the Everybody Matters Safeguarding Policy.

The Leadership will also appoint at least one Safeguarding Team and one Deputy Safeguarding Team whose role is to implement the policy and to manage the area of Safeguarding within the church. Once appointed, they will be supported in their role by the Leadership.

The Leadership has formally adopted this Safeguarding Policy and will carry out a review of the policy every three years and this review will be more of a 'health check' to look at issues that have risen, how they have been dealt with and any further work which needs to be done.

As the Leadership has the responsibility to appoint and oversee all new leaders, they need to be informed of each new appointment. It is also their responsibility to be aware of safeguarding issues and concerns relevant to their congregation. Once appointed, these leaders, volunteers and helpers will be supported in their role by the Ministry leaders.

That said, the Leadership may not always be made aware of the details of every incident or issue because of confidentiality reasons. The Leadership will be kept up to date on safeguarding issues, so "Safeguarding" will be a standing item on the agenda at each Board meeting.

The following people are responsible for the implementation of the Everybody Matters Safeguarding Policy within House Church:

- Safeguarding Officer: Natalie Porter (Executive Pastor): 07928659179
- Safeguarding Team: Jim Murdock: 07966914812
- Deputy Safeguarding Team: Debbie Taylor (Finance Administrator): 07747385269
- Deputy Designated Person: Suzanne Gillespie: 077 0232 4363

4.2 The Role of the Safeguarding Team

There are six main roles of the Safeguarding Team:

- The Safeguarding Team must be consulted with if a safeguarding incident arises. If this were to occur the guidelines in Section 3 should be followed.
- To organise Safeguarding training for leaders, helpers, and volunteers within the congregation.

- To oversee the appointment process for new leaders including co-ordinating the distribution of applications forms and making sure those leaders are vetted where appropriate and reference request forms are sent. Other leaders and administrative staff can help with this process.
- The Safeguarding Team will normally be part of any interviewing panel for new leaders.
- To remain a point of contact with external agencies (SBNI, Gateway Team, NSPCC, PSNI) and to ensure that relevant updated information regarding Safeguarding can be disseminated to key personnel.
- To report to the Leadership Team, Board of Trustees, and Board of Elders on a regular basis about any Safeguarding issues. This does not include specific details about a Safeguarding incident (as this information may have to remain confidential) but for example, changes to the vetting system, information about a training sessions or concerns to do with leader compliance of the policy in one of the organisations.

SECTION 5

5. Recruitment and Appointment

5.1 The Recruitment and Appointment Process

There is a wide range of different roles within the House Church Children's and Youth Ministry Teams which would be understood as regulated activity. This includes Youth Leader, Small Group Leader, Teacher, Programme Manager, Helper, Audio Visual Operator, Kid's/Youth Band, Additional Needs Leader, and Sunday Co-ordinator.

While the Church does not engage in regulated activity with Adults, some of the Ministries, such as Foodbank, Christians Against Poverty and Solace, do bring leaders and volunteers into contact with Adults potentially at risk. It is therefore necessary to have a recruitment and appointment policy in place to select leaders in order to provide a safe environment for children and young people.

A proper appointment procedure is one of the most sensible and effective ways of assessing a person's suitability to work with children and young people and may act as a deterrent to potential abusers. This is often felt to be an unnecessary burden, particularly if the person is part-time, a volunteer or already known to the minister or members of the congregation. However, the more routine the procedure becomes, the less intimidating it will be to all concerned.

By having good standards of practice in our organisations, people are more likely to want to join. Increasingly parents want evidence of good recruitment. Care needs to be taken to ensure that anyone who may be unsuitable for working with young people is not given the opportunity to become a leader. It is important to ensure that everyone participates in a selection procedure, even if they are recognised as people of good standing.

The Appointment of Leaders and Volunteers Process:

Job Description/Personal Specification: Each role within the House Church Youth and Children's Ministries and the relevant adult ministries has a written job description and personal specification so that all volunteers know what is required of them. Participation in the work of House Church in any of these specific roles is fully open to Church Members and/or regular attenders for more than six months who are in good standing with the Church Fellowship.

Application Form: An application form must be completed by everyone applying to work with children and young people in regulated positions and with the relevant adult ministries. The application form includes the vetting process according to legislation and good practice. Applicants will be asked to declare any past criminal convictions.

Referees: The names of two referees must be given by the applicant and provision is made for this on the relevant application form. The referees should not be family members or either of the interviewers and, ideally, references should be from people who have had first-hand knowledge of the applicant's work with children/young people and who have known the applicant for at least two years. Any references will be destroyed once their content has been confirmed.

Interview: The ministry leader along with one other person as appropriate must meet the person and ensure that they have the ability and commitment required for the role. At the interview, the Safeguarding policy must be provided and explained.

Leadership Approval: All applications must be approved by a member of the Lead Team to say that as far as they are aware, the applicant is suitable for the role for which they are applying.

Access NI Forms: It is at this stage that appropriate vetting will take place in line with current legislation and practice. The Safeguarding Team will distribute and collect the completed Access NI of the successful applicant and then forward these to Access NI for processing.

Only when the vetting process is complete, and the Safeguarding Team has received confirmation of the outcome, can the applicant be formally appointed and undertake duties involving children and young people. The applicant will also receive a certificate directly from Access NI.

5.2 General Vetting Principles

To comply with the law and good practice, all leaders and volunteers taking up a regulated position to work with children and young people must be vetted. The process of vetting leaders involves a criminal records' check which will show if an applicant has any criminal convictions.

The vetting process does take time and because of this, it is therefore important to ensure that the recruitment process is carried out well in advance. Vetting is, however, only a part of the appointment process. Just because a person does not have a criminal record, does not mean that they are suitable to work with children: it simply means they have no criminal record.

A person who does have a criminal conviction may not necessarily be barred from working with children and young people within a church setting. Only convictions considered relevant will be taken into consideration when an appointment is made. All certificates, forms and conviction information remain the private personal data of the individual concerned and will be treated sensitively and confidentially by House Church. House Church will only record whether a person is suitable or not and will under no circumstances hold a copy of any disclosure information.

Within Northern Ireland all new leaders (since April 2005) who are working in a regulated position with children and young people must complete the most recent application form which includes an Access NI form.

Those leaders are on a rota basis for organisations such as crèche or children's church for example, should only complete the application form if they meet the frequency test, namely four or more times a year. It is also important that all leaders in charge of each Youth Ministry are also be vetted. The current best practice recommendation is that this vetting should be carried out every three years.

5.3 Training

House Church will not only ensure that all leaders and volunteers are appointed properly but will also support leaders and volunteers to provide adequate training to carry out their roles.

House Church recognises that Safeguarding Training is essential to all people who work in relevant ministries with children and adults whether they are staff members or volunteers. House Church will therefore ensure that all leaders, volunteers, and helpers will undertake Safeguarding Training and will keep them up to date with any changes to policy, law, and practice as well as possible resources.

Safeguarding Training will be required on a regular basis and will be made available at least annually. This will include all those working with children and young people. Even those who have a good knowledge of safeguarding issues in another field should attend as the training as part of our on-going responsibility towards children and young people.

House Church will keep a record of all training that has been undertaken and who has attended. The Safeguarding Team will normally be the one to organise the training for all leaders and may offer this training if they are competent to carry this out.

5.4 Register of all Leaders, Volunteers and Helpers

House Church registers all leaders, volunteers and helpers working in regulated activity within the life of church. which will be reviewed every three years.

5.5 Common Protocol

There is a Common Protocol that is an agreed procedure for all churches relating to independent organisations working with children and young people and regularly using church premises.

The Protocol has been agreed by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Church of Ireland, Methodist Church in Ireland and Boys' Brigade (NI), Girls' Brigade (NI), the Scouting Association and Girl Guiding Ulster. It also has application with any other Christian, sporting, arts or leisure groups using church premises. The protocol can be found in Section 12.2.

While House Church is in agreement with this protocol and will seek to work in conjunction with the General Principles, there are currently no activities or organisations involved in the life and ministry of the Church that is not directly accountable to the Leadership. The principles of the Common Protocol will be adhered to should this change at any time in the future.

5.6 Employment of Paid Workers

The Leadership, when employing someone to work in regulated activity with children or adults, will ensure that the normal appointment process is followed (5.1). In doing so, the Leadership will also have regard to all current Health and Safety Issues within the church.

Any appointment to a paid position will normally carry a conditional successful completion of a six-month probationary period before confirmation in post. In line

with good practice, members of staff will normally be supported through regular performance reviews and an annual appraisal carried out to allow both the employee and employer to review progress in different areas of the job.

Once appointed, the employee will be given a copy of the House Church Safeguarding Policy and attend Safeguarding Training if they have not already done so within the previous twelve months.

5.7 Involvement of Volunteers

When involving volunteers to work with children or adults The Leadership will ensure that the normal appointment process is followed (5.1). In doing so, the Leadership will also have regard to all current Health and Safety Issues within the church.

All volunteers will be required to complete a three-month trial period and review before confirmation in post. In line with good practice, volunteers will be supported through regular individual and regular team meetings. There will also be an annual meeting to review progress in different areas of the job.

Once appointed the volunteer will be given a copy of the House Church Safeguarding Policy and attend Safeguarding Training if they have not already done so within the previous twelve months.

SECTION 6

6. WORKING TOGETHER

6.1 Responsibilities of all Leaders

House Church commits to ensure that everyone responds in a correct and prompt manner to accidents and incidents, concerns, disclosures, and allegations within all activities an organisation and therefore all activity leaders must confirm that:

- There are accident/incident report forms available at the start of each activity.
- There is immediate access to names, addresses and phone numbers of the children/young people attending.
- There is access to a phone in the event of an emergency.
- All volunteers and helpers are aware of the reporting procedure in the event of a concern or accident/incident (the Report of Concern form is available in Section 11.8).
- They are aware of the name and contact details number of the Safeguarding Team.
- There is an awareness and an understanding of the need to keep personal details of young people, adults and other leaders confidential.
- They are sensitive to the backgrounds, medical history and family circumstances of all children involved in the activity and, where appropriate, exercise confidentiality to ensure that none of this personal data is breached.

6.2 Teamwork

In order to ensure that all activities progress smoothly and that all leaders, volunteers and helpers contribute to a harmonious environment, the following principles will be observed by everyone:

- All leaders, volunteers and helpers must be fully acquainted with the Safeguarding Policy and reporting process.
- Each Department Head must draw up clearly defined aims and objectives for its overall running and review this on an annual basis.
- Each leader, volunteer and helper must be acquainted with and be in full support of the House Church Code of Behaviour. Each leader, volunteer and helper will be required to evidence of their awareness and acceptance of the Code of Behaviour its content.
- Within each activity, a clearly defined line of accountability is in place, whereby all leaders, volunteers, and helpers report to the Programme Manager. It is the responsibility of each Programme Manager to ensure that every volunteer and helper is aware of this.
- At any given meeting, leaders, volunteers, and helpers must be both informed of the specific programme and be clear about one another's responsibilities.
- The activity leaders will acquaint the team (especially new leaders and helpers) with useful advice on getting to know the children or adults attending, such as, how to get to know the names of the participants as quickly as possible; talking to them about themselves; and making self-disclosures to the participants.

- At the conclusion of the weekly meeting, there must be an evaluation of the programme, when leaders, volunteers, and helpers can share information about issues and any difficulties that may have arisen.

6.3 Working with Parents and Carers

The responsibility of parents/carers: House Church recognises that those with parental responsibility are the primary carers of the children. It is they alone who have the responsibility to sign and return consent forms promptly and within the agreed deadlines; to inform organisational leaders of any changes to their child's medication or circumstances; and to encourage their child(ren) to abide by the rules of the organisation.

Parental Consent forms: A Parental Consent form must be completed when a child enrolls in an organisation. Copies of all relevant forms can be found in Section 11 and must be signed by the Person with Parental Responsibility for the Child as defined in the Children (NI) Order 1995. One form must be completed for each child in a family up to a maximum of three children in each age group.

These Consent Forms cover all the normal youth and children's activities of the Church, although for certain one-off activities, a special Parental Consent may also be used.

The forms will remain valid for up to seven years or for however long the individual child remains part of the House Church family. However, those with parental responsibility will be contacted on an annual basis so that any changes in contact details, family circumstances or medical information that the leaders need to be made aware of are recorded and acted upon by the leaders. It will be the responsibility of those with parental responsibility to inform House Church of any change in their children's circumstances.

The information on consent forms and sign in sheets will be kept confidential to the leaders of the activity. The consent forms will be stored in a secure location on church premises in a lockable filing cabinet, however they will also be accessible when the activity meets. If the activity group is on an outing or residential, leaders will ensure that they have the information contained on consent forms with them, stored in a secure location.

Sign-in sheet: For the purposes of a one-off event or drop-in activity, such as an outreach night or youth club, a sign-in sheet will be used instead of parental consent forms. This can only be used for children aged eleven plus and only in situations where it is not deemed possible to obtain parental consent forms.

A sign-in sheet must be used on every occasion when an activity takes place and leaders must ensure that young people sign out as well as sign-in. This is to ensure that leaders know how many people are in the building at any one time. Young people will also be asked to provide an emergency contact number and to disclose medical information in case of an emergency.

Incidents and Concerns: Depending on the nature of any incident, such as a concern or a disclosure or allegation being made, parents or carers may need to be informed and in certain circumstances, the PSNI or Social Services may be consulted regarding what is the best course of action.

6.4 Code of Behaviour

House Church is aware that in every aspect of life, organisations function best where there are clear guidelines and structures. It is therefore important that all leaders, volunteers, and helpers know what the boundaries and rules for church activities are and that these are explained to children and parents.

All leaders, volunteers, and helpers are required to give their signed consent to a specific Code of Behaviour, which is found in Appendix 11.13. The Code of Behaviour ensures the creation of a safe, secure environment and an atmosphere where children will feel that they can relate to the leaders and helpers. If a leader, volunteer, or helper the Code of Behaviour or agreed rules, then sanctions will be put in place and carried out to ensure a safe environment for all.

When engaging with children and young people, leaders, volunteers and helpers will adhere to the following:

Unacceptable Behaviours:

- Use of force such as smacking or hitting.
- Discipline out of anger.
- Use of 'put-downs' with children/young people.
- Humiliate a child or young person.
- Reject the child, making it sure that only their behaviour is being challenged.
- Allow particular children to take all your time and energy.
- Compare children with each other.
- Being on their own with a child at any time.

Positive Behaviours:

- Treat all children and young people with respect, integrity, compassion and love.
- Pray for wisdom, discernment, understanding and the wellbeing of the children.
- Work on each individual child's positive characteristics.
- Be a good role model and set a good example.
- Take care to give quieter and well-behaved children attention.
- Behave consistently and work together as a team.
- Ensure other leaders know what you have said – this avoids manipulation.

Behaviours to be avoided

- Taking a child on a car journey on their own
- Doing tasks of a personal nature that a child can do on their own.

There is also a Code of Behaviour for children and young people when attending activities, drawn up at the commencement of the year's activities and referred to at least once during every activity. Children and young people will be involved in the drawing up and review of the Code of Behaviour with the help of the leaders. Giving the young people a part in deciding what these boundaries should be will mean that it can be easier to ensure ownership and enforcement of them.

However, House Church recognises that this may not always be appropriate, and for some activities, it may be more suitable that the leaders decide on the boundaries and acceptable behaviour in consultation with parents. Parents will be provided with a copy of the Code of Behaviour once it is agreed upon (a copy of the children and young people's Code of Behaviour is found in Section 11.13).

If a young person breaks the Code of Behaviour or agreed rules, then sanctions will be put in place and carried out to ensure a safe environment for all.

6.5 Safeguarding Adults

While most of the requirements in this section of the Safeguarding Policy are specifically geared towards the safeguarding of children and young people, the spirit of them will be applied to all House Church activities with adults who may be perceived to be at risk:

- Activity leaders will be responsible for the safety of all adults in House Church activities and will ensure the correct and secure processing of all personal data.
- All leaders, volunteers, and helpers involved in activities which involve adults will always comply with the House Church Code of Behaviour.
- Adults will not be compelled to do anything without their consent and leaders will ensure that they are aware who is in the building at any given time.
- Adults will be always treated with respect and, where appropriate, adults will be made aware of their responsibilities while participating in an activity. If necessary, adults behaving inappropriately will be asked to leave the premises.

SECTION 7

7. Good Standards of Practice

7.1 General Aims of youth and children's work at House Church

- To value each child and young person, recognising their individuality and seeking to develop their potential – spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional – and to maximise their contribution to the group and society at large.
- To encourage each child and young person to engage with, enjoy and grow in a relationship with Jesus Christ, experiencing personally His salvation by faith and acknowledging His Lordship in their day-to-day lives.
- To help children understand, receive, and apply the Word of God to their lives, using methods appropriate to their age and development.
- To help each child find their place in the Body of Christ as a fully active member.
- To treat children and young people with dignity and respect and to encourage them to do likewise in their relationships with each other.
- To endeavour to choose and train leaders whose contribution to the group will be positive and in keeping with the standards we promote as a church.
- To have each group formulate their own specific statement and aims and objectives, and to make them known to all leaders, parents, children and young people.
- To use appropriate language with young people and children, and to encourage them to speak to each other in ways which build up dignity and mutual respect.
- To avoid and discourage put-downs.
- To have programmes which are age appropriate and well planned.
- To have adequate leadership in terms of child/adult ratios.
- To ensure there is a contact address and telephone number on file for each child and young person (see Section 6.3).
- To be aware of the parents/guardian arrangements for the collecting of children/young people from church activities, and generally to maintain good communication with parents.

7.2 General Principles

All leaders, volunteers and helpers must apply the following principles when working with children and young people:

- To observe and listen to the children and young people.
- To talk and play with them, being aware of their likes, dislikes, and concerns,
- To register those attending each week.
- To maintain up to date health forms.
- To report and record any accidents, however minor, in the accident book.
- To report and record concerns or suspicious injuries.

- To refer concerns to the Safeguarding Team/Deputy Safeguarding Team who will take action to ensure that parents and/or statutory organisations are contacted as required.
- To attend organised training sessions.
- To refuse to apply corporal punishment, even at the request of a parent.
- To contact the parents of disruptive children or young people where necessary.
- To inform the parents/carer if you have spoken to a child involving a discipline issue – tell them what you said and why.
- To participate in organised fire drills.
- To ensure that the required supervision ratios are always maintained.

House Church seeks to achieve this by:

- Explaining to leaders, volunteers, and helpers how the church will provide for children attending our groups and events.
- When applicable, for example for Children with Additional Needs, consulting with those with parental responsibility for children about their child's needs, likes, dislikes and health issues as well as seeking their views on child management or arrangements.
- Keeping written records regarding accidents or personal care that parents can see if required.
- Communicating to them the positive things a child has done.
- Making them aware of our Safeguarding Policy and good practice principles.

Leaders, volunteers, and helpers must never:

- Be on their own with a young person in an uncontrolled environment at any time.
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.
- Invade the privacy of children or young people when they are using the toilet or showering.
- Engage in rough games involving physical contact.
- Allow or engage in any sexually provocative games or any inappropriate touching of any form.
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child, even in 'fun'.
- Allow allegations of any nature made by a child to be ignored.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Allow ridiculing or bullying.
- Use or permit the use of corporal punishment.
- Use physical force to remove a child unless it is for the child's own safety or you are concerned for the safety of other people or property.

Parents of children attending crèche on Sunday will have indicated on their registration form whether they consent to one leader taking their child to the toilet or if they would prefer to be called out of the service to help. This also applies to nappy changing.

General Safety: In order to safeguard children from harm, everybody needs to be safety conscious.

House Church commits to having the following required general standards:

- Adequate facilities.
- Adequate toilet facilities.
- Adequate lighting and heating.
- Safety of electrical sockets, electrical appliances, heaters, windows, and floors,
- Emergency evacuation procedure in place.
- Location of the first aid box is located by the defibrillator at the front entrance. It must be returned after use.
- There is an epi-pen stored in the first aid box.
- The accident book is also located by the defibrillator at the front entrance. It must be returned after use.
- Contact forms must be completed and available for all children. These must include the child's name, address, and telephone number, date of birth, special medical needs and emergency contact details.
- The premises and equipment must be of a suitable standard prior to use. Defective equipment should be removed and reported to the Executive Pastor. The premises must be left clean and tidy after use.
- All leaders must be aware of the emergency evacuation procedures.

If it is noticed that a child is distressed or injured when they arrive, the matter should be discussed with the parents. If a volunteer or helper is not satisfied with the parent's explanation, they must discuss the issue with the activity leader who will refer the matter on to the Safeguarding Team or Deputy Safeguarding Team.

In extreme circumstances, if it is discovered that the child requires immediate medical attention, this should be sought as soon as possible. It will then be the responsibility of the medical staff or the PSNI to discuss the matter with those with parental responsibility for the child.

If a child or young person is ill when they arrive, you should ask the parents/carer to take them home in case they are infectious.

7.3 Physical Contact

It is recognised that physical contact with children will occur and cannot be avoided. However physical contact must always be initiated by the child and must always be appropriate to the age and gender of the child. If a child is in distress, it may be perfectly acceptable (and sometimes necessary) to offer comfort and reassurance by placing a hand on their shoulder or taking their hand. This is a valid way of expressing concern and care for a child and most children will feel comfortable with it.

Making staff and volunteers frightened of any physical contact with children is not an effective way of reducing abuse. Leaders must avoid being on their own with a child. However, if a child wishes to speak confidentially with them, they should always

remain visible to other adults. All leaders must avoid physical contact which may be misconstrued by a young person or other observer.

Therefore, leaders must never:

- Spend an excessive amount of time alone with children away from others unless working one-to-one with a child for a particular reason.
- Take children to your home without the child's parents and the leader of the organisation or other responsible person knowing.
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching in any form.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments about, or to, a child, even in fun.
- Let allegations of any nature made by a child go unchallenged or unrecorded.
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.
- Engage in rough or inappropriate behaviour.
- Rely solely on their reputation to protect themselves from allegation.

Although personal care, such as toileting and administering medication remains the responsibility of those with parental responsibility, House Church understands that, sometimes, it may be necessary for leaders to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very young or have a disability. In such situations, leaders must always be sensitive to the child and undertake personal care with the utmost discretion.

Unfortunately, some situations may arise that will require action to protect the child from harming themselves or others, or seriously damaging property. While the priority will always be to protect all children from harm, the policy of House Church would be to contact the child's parents immediately, or in extreme cases, to contact the PSNI. If necessary, all other children may be removed from the situation for their own safety.

7.4 Recommended Ratios

Within all activities the House Church Leadership require that the following recommended ratios of children and young people to leaders must be adhered to. In determining the ratios of staff to children, all leaders should bear in mind that there should be a minimum of at least two leaders, volunteers or helpers present at all times. There must always be a gender mix of leaders with a mixed gender group of children or young people.

Ratios for indoor activities:

Under 8 years:	0 to 2 years = 1 leader to 3 children
	2 to 3 years = 1 leader to 4 children
	3 to 7 years = 1 leader to 8 children
8 years and over:	8 years and over = 1 leader to 10 children/young people.

Ratios for outdoor activities:

Under 8 years:	0 to 2 years = 1 leader to 3 children
----------------	---------------------------------------

	2 to 3 years = 1 leader to 4 children
	3 to 7 years = 1 leader to 6 children
8 to 13 years:	The recommended ratios for children after 8 to 13 years and over are 2 leaders to 15 children. One additional leader for every 8 extra children, or part thereof.
13 years and over:	The recommended ratios for young people aged 13 and over are 2 leaders to 20 children (preferably one of each gender). One additional leader for every 10 young people, or part thereof.

Helpers, who are under the age of 18, must not be left alone in any supervisory capacity with children. They may, however, be counted in the ratios so long as other adult leaders are present and in charge.

7.5 Transport

Within the range of activities that House Church provide, inevitably the work may involve transporting young people at some stage. This may only ever be undertaken by coach or minibus and never in private cars.

When planning an outing, activity leaders must always organise transport through a reputable bus company, so that all risks are managed externally.

Private Cars: Leaders must not transport a child or young person on their own. However, if a situation does occur when a leader is obliged to transport a child alone, they must ensure that at least one other leader is present, and that the child is in the back seat. If possible, parents must also be made aware that their child will be in the car with leaders, affording them the opportunity to make alternative arrangements.

Seatbelts and child restraints: Leaders who do transport other people's children in cars must make sure they use child restraints for each child carried, or adult seatbelts appropriately. Child restraints are rearward-facing baby seats, forward-facing child seats, booster seats and booster cushions. Seatbelts must be worn for any journey, no matter how short.

Using minibuses: If a minibus is hired for an event or activity, children over 3 years old must wear seatbelts or use child restraints if available.

On larger buses and coaches all seated passengers aged 14 years and above must wear seatbelts if they are fitted. The driver must notify passengers when they board that they have to wear their seatbelts and/or signs must be displayed at every seat.

When booking a minibus, bus or coach, leaders must make sure it is fitted with seatbelts and they must enquire whether child restraints can be provided or whether one's own can be used. Leaders must be aware that it may not be possible to fit them properly because the seats and seatbelts are different from cars.

Supervision while travelling: Leaders who accompany young people in minibuses, coaches, boats, trains or aeroplanes must, where possible, sit among the young people and be dispersed in the vehicle. For example, there should be at least one adult travelling in the back of a minibus and preferably near the exit points of the vehicle. Their group members must be always in the sight of a leader.

7.6 Residential Programmes and Outings

House Church may offer a wide range of activities outside church premises, which may include day trips to the seaside, forest parks, theme parks, visits to the cinema, theatre, museums and shopping trips. As well as this, residential programmes often become the highlight of any youth programme, offering more opportunity to enhance friendships within the group. While recognising the tremendous impact these trips and activities can have on a young person's emotional, physical and spiritual development, the leader in charge ought to note the following:

The Residential Centre: The location and accommodation provided by the Residential Centre must be checked out in advance to ensure that it is adequate for the groups and activity. The centre must have adequate insurance cover for the group and the activities it hopes to engage in. Insurance must cover high-risk activities such as rock climbing, canoeing, and abseiling.

The Residential Centre must inform the leaders of its rules and regulations. Leaders must make every effort to be aware of the residential Centre timetable, including arrival and departure times, mealtimes, and lights-out time. The Residential Centre must provide access to on-site first aid facilities and advise of medical cover arrangements in the event of an emergency. The Residential Centre must also provide separate sleeping accommodation for males and females.

Parental Consent: The consent of those with parental responsibility must be obtained before taking any young person away for any activity or outing, including residential or overnight stays.

Where possible, a pre-residential briefing for the parents will be arranged, to provide information and to give parents an opportunity to meet the leaders, volunteers, and helpers. Before taking a group away, leaders must ensure that parents and carers must be made aware of the following:

- The programme and activities their child will be expected to participate in, especially any high-risk activities, such as bouldering, canoeing or abseiling,
- Whether there will be shopping trips or other free time in town areas and, if so, the level of supervision during such trips,
- The names of leaders/helpers accompanying the group and a contact number,
- The Residential Centre telephone number and address,
- The group's 'contract', that is the rules the young people will be asked to abide by, and possible consequences if these are broken,
- What clothes and other items the young people might be expected to need,
- An upper limit on how much pocket money will be required,
- That the names and contact details of all young people and leaders attending a residential activity will be left with a nominated person in the congregation.

Young people: Young people must have the consent of the person with parental responsibility to participate in the residential programme and its named activities. Young people will be fully informed of the nature of the residential programme and what is expected of them. Young people will never be coerced or forced into any activity with which they are uncomfortable. Young people will be involved in the

drawing up of rules and a contract for behaviour and be made aware of sanctions should they fail to comply.

Risk assessment: A risk assessment must be undertaken by leaders when planning events, so that risk reducing measures are implemented to minimise the dangers from hazards and risks that the group will come across during the time that the children are in their care.

A risk assessment form must be completed for each outing, residential or event outside of the church premises. More information on risk assessments can be found in Section 9.2, but the main issues can be addressed by considering the checklist below:

- What is the best time to go – time of year; time of week; time of day.
- How will the group get there?
- How much will it cost?
- Has a risk assessment form been completed?
- Is the venue you are visiting suitable for the age range you are taking?
- Is the proposed outing age appropriate, such as an appropriate film classification or suitable theatre show?
- Can the venue cater for any children who have additional needs?
- What food will be provided, and will this be appropriate for children who have allergies?
- Are there sufficient leaders to meet the ratio requirements?
- Is there a suitable gender mix of leaders (if appropriate)?
- Does the outing warrant additional insurance?
- Has consent been sought from and given by those with parental responsibility?
- Has consideration been given to places to stop for refreshments/toilets?
- Is there a contingency plan if the venue is weather dependent?
- Has a nominated person from House Church been provided with information of the exact location of the activity, contact mobile phone number and home contact numbers in case of emergency for all children, young people, and leaders.
- When the outing or residential is over, leaders must carry out a review and ask what went well and what could be improved on.

7.7 Photographic Policy

Since the Data Protection Act was introduced in 1998, churches have had to be particularly careful in their use of photographs, videos and webcams that clearly identify people. Restrictions have been tightened since the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation Act of 2018.

There is provision on the Kids and Youth Ministries Consent Forms for those with parental responsibility to give consent for the taking and the use of images of children for general church purposes. There is a statement which indicates that this remains valid for a period of up to seven years, when forms must be disposed of and renewed, or if the child attains the age of 18 years old. However, this may be reviewed by the church or the parents at any time

The following rules must be adhered to when using photography in children's activities:

- Permission must be obtained from everyone who will appear in a photograph, video or webcam before images are taken or footage recorded. Verbal permission is adequate from adults, but written permission from the person with parental responsibility must be sought and given before any image of a child is recorded.
- It must be made clear why that person's image is being used, what use will be made of it, and who might want to look at the images.
- Children and young people must not be identified by name or other personal details, including phone number and email or postal address.
- When using photographs of children and young people, it is preferable to use group pictures.
- Careful consideration must be given to location and pose.
- Even if consent has been given, if a child does not wish to participate, the child must not be coerced.
- Written and specific consent from those with parental responsibility must be obtained before using photographs of a child on a website.

Young people taking photographs of each other: Leaders must discourage young people from photos or recording images of each other, especially if they are intending these to be posted on the internet. The young people must inform their friends if it is their intention to post the images online, giving their friends the opportunity to object. Young people need to be continually reminded that once photographs are posted on the internet, they have no control over where they end up. This is therefore included within the young people's Code of Behaviour.

7.8 Working with Children and Adults with Additional Needs

House Church is a place where all children and their families are welcome. This means, therefore, that all activities within the church are inclusive and to provide opportunities to participate for children, young people, and adults of all abilities, regardless of any medical conditions or disabilities.

House Church commits to be kept well informed about the needs of those who will attend the church activities. This will be achieved through talking with parents or carers to ascertain what a child's specific needs are and how they are normally met at home or at school. House Church assumes nothing and will not be afraid to ask for further clarification and insight, to ensure that everything is done to make the young person or adult's participation in church as meaningful as possible.

House Church also recognises that some children with additional needs may require one-to-one help in a group or activity, so a dedicated team exists to ensure that if extra leaders are required for this will be provided. Parents will be asked if one-to-one help is needed, and the Additional Needs team will communicate with parents or carers and coordinate any action this in conjunction with the Department Heads.

Personal care: Research has shown that children and young people who have a disability can be at greater risk of abuse. These children will often require more help with personal care, such as washing, dressing, toileting, feeding or mobility, may have limited understanding or behave in a non-age-appropriate way.

Although personal care, such as toileting and administering medication remains the responsibility of those with parental responsibility, House Church understands that, sometimes, it may be necessary for leaders to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very young or have a disability. In such situations, leaders must always be sensitive to the child and undertake personal care with the utmost discretion. House Church will ensure that, as far as possible, the same leader or group of leaders of the same gender as the child is involved in helping them.

House Church commits to a principle of inclusivity. As far as possible, House Church will ensure that all children can participate in the activities organised and will try not to rely on one particular method of teaching, training or instruction. For example, a word search is not a suitable activity for a child who is dyslexic; other children may struggle with running or ball games due to poor mobility skills. Indeed, the Bible does teach that, although every person is different, all special to God.

7.9 Safeguarding Adults

While most of the requirements in this section of the Safeguarding Policy are specifically geared towards the safeguarding of children and young people, the spirit of them will be applied to all House Church activities with adults who may be perceived to be at risk:

- Physical contact with adults, especially adults at risk will always be at the initiative and with the consent of the adult.
- Adults at risk will be subject to the same protection as children, should they be transported as part of a church activity.
- Consent will be required from adults at risk before an image is recorded and used as part of a church activity.

SECTION 8

8. Technology

Technological advances over the past number of years have meant there are increasing opportunities for children and adults to be abused through the use of multi-media such as through the misuse of the internet, text messaging, video and other media. While House Church recognises that such media can be beneficial, the church commits to be vigilant and alert to the possibilities of misuse and the consequent harm to young people and adults that can result.

8.1 Using Computers

Where computers are used within the House Church programme of activities, the following guidelines are in place to ensure that they are used for the correct purpose and that they are looked after properly.

- All House Church computers are secured with up-to-date virus checker and appropriate parental controls enabled.
- The primary purpose of using computers as part of any church programme is as an audio-visual tool.
- Computers will not be used for playing games. All computer games will be played on a non-internet enabled console, such as a Nintendo Wii.
- Computers will not be used by children to access the internet. However, adults will have this opportunity as part of the drop-in service, where relevant guidelines are agreed by the participants to ensure safe usage.

Young people and adults can only use their own devices on the church premises through the House Church internet guest facilities.

8.2 Children and the Internet

The development of the internet has revolutionised communication systems throughout the world and appropriately used is an excellent resource. House Church recognises the responsibility to take care when using the internet to ensure that the safety of a child is not compromised. House Church is also fully committed to making children aware of online safety in the same way they are taught road safety.

As well as ongoing instances of online grooming, children can often be the victims of cyber bullying. Bullying by social media is more intense and can be more difficult to escape than bullying children experience within the playground or school.

House Church is committed to incorporate online safety training as part of Safeguarding training for leaders, volunteers, and helpers, making use of the training available through the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

8.3 Church Online Platform

House Church has an online platform available at the following URL:

www.housechurchni.com

Content for the Church Online Platform confirms to the following principles:

- Consent of those with parental responsibility will be obtained before using any pictures of a child/group of children on a website.
- Photographs of individual children, which can be easily copied on to other websites, will not be used. A group photograph will be used instead.
- Names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses and all other items of personal data will not be used under any circumstances.
- Leaders have been made aware that generally advertising dates and times of events online leads to the possibility that other people, who would not have otherwise heard of an event, may target the event, and turn up without warning.
- It has been made very clear to all involved with the Church that the Online Platform must not be used to make arrangements to meet up with each other casually. All private communications must be behaved through the individual's own online facilities.
- All House Church online data is held securely on a 'closed' site which is password protected. There are strict guidelines in place as to who has access to this.

House Church, like many congregations, now record services for home ministry purposes and it is possible that images of young people or adults can be captured. If this does happen, House Church will not identify the young people.

8.4 Communication with Young People via the Internet

Social media is considered the preferred means of communication for many young people and adults. So, when working with young people it often requires a balancing act between being part of the world in which they live, in order to reach them effectively, and yet maintaining online safety for those in a leadership role.

House Church is committed to understanding young people and the culture they live in, while at the same time, seeking to be a role model for them. No place is this balancing act more difficult to get right than around technology, namely the internet and, in particular, social networking sites, blogs, micro-blogs and other public domain publishing methods.

If used well, methods of communication via the internet can be effective tools. For example, social networking sites have a group facility which allows online groups to meet in a virtual space where all information and comments are seen by everyone in that group but no-one else.

However, it is worth noting that everything posted on the internet – comments, opinions and photos – can potentially be seen and copied by other internet users. Many social networking sites have privacy settings for this reason and these settings limit what any other person, particularly one you have not accepted as a friend, can view.

While communication via the internet can be highly effective, all such communication with children and young people should, as far as possible, be within an open forum, so that both young people and leaders are protected.

The following principles will always be maintained:

- Leaders, volunteers, and helpers must never, under any circumstances, add a child or young person in the activity in which they are leaders as a friend or follower on a social networking site.
- Leaders, volunteers, and helpers must never, under any circumstances, post photographs of young people from the organisation in which they are leaders, on a social networking site or anywhere on the internet.
- Leaders, volunteers, and helpers must be vigilant and evaluate photos of themselves that are posted on these sites and consider deleting or 'un-tagging' any photos in which they are depicted in what could possibly be construed as compromising situations, thus preventing the photograph or other material being used inappropriately.

Comments made on the internet must be considered the same as if they were made in a public place. While this is very bad practice, if a child discloses something to a leader via a social networking site, a chat room or any other public domain publishing method, then the disclosure must be dealt with by following the normal reporting process (see Section 3).

If a leader, volunteer, or helper is concerned about something that a young person communicates to him or her via the internet, they must speak to their Department Head immediately or to the Safeguarding Team. Guidance could well need to be sought from Social Services or the PSNI about how best to support and encourage the child, taking the matter forward appropriately.

8.5 Communication with Young People via Mobile Phones

Those who work with children are only too aware of the opportunities for abuse through the misuse of mobile phone and text messaging. While good use of such media can be beneficial, House Church remains vigilant and alert to the possibilities of misuse and consequent harm that can result to young people.

Leaders, volunteers, and helpers are required to take care and to protect themselves and should take an active role to ensure that good practice is maintained.

As a rule, leaders, volunteers, and helpers must not contact children and young people directly by mobile phone. Leaders, volunteers, and helpers involved in youth and children's work should only have access to young peoples' mobile numbers as part of a communication forum such as WhatsApp or Instagram.

Consent from those with parental responsibility must be sought for permission to contact young people as part of a mobile communication group. A method of accountability exists if everybody within the group receives the communications. It is the responsibility of all individual leaders, volunteers, and helpers to ensure that their devices are password protected and that access to the communication forum is not made available to inappropriate people.

If a leader has access to a young person's phone number it should only be used for the purposes it has been given, namely the communication forum. The leader must not share this information with any other person.

All ministry leaders by the Church are provided with a separate phone for work purposes rather than using their personal phone for contacting young people.

Church employees are reminded that communication with young people through work mobile phone is only for giving information, not for conversation, chat or sharing funny pictures and videos.

- Texts and messages are for the purposes of reminding young people about events which are forthcoming.
- Texts can also be used to encourage the young people as a group if it is appropriate, such as 'I hope the exams go ok'.
- If this turns into a conversation, communication must be ended immediately. A leader can suggest discussing the subject further at the next activity or meeting.

SECTION 9

9. Health and Safety

9.1 General Safety

House Church has in place a robust Health and Safety policy which guides the Church in all matters relating to the safety of everybody involved in the life of the Church. The Health and Safety policy deals specifically with the safety of all individuals, which is of prime importance during any activity and this policy ensures that a safe environment can be created for everyone.

Therefore, it is important to recognise that this responsibility does not just belong to the leader in charge but all leaders, volunteers and helpers. Before the premises are used, they will be checked so that any obvious hazards or potential risks can be identified in advance and appropriate action taken.

This means that:

- House Church will ensure that anything that should not be there or may cause a potential risk to the members of the user group will be removed,
- House Church will ensure there is adequate supervision always provided, particularly when sports equipment is being used,
- Areas where maintenance work is taking place will never be used and will be screened off. The Leadership Team will keep organisation leaders informed about maintenance work.

The leader in charge should have:

- Access to a phone in case of emergency (make sure there is adequate mobile phone reception if there is no landline on church premises).
- Accident report forms readily available.
- Contact details for all children and young people.
- Knowledge of how many people are present at each event and log of all present (in case of an evacuation).

9.2 Risk Assessment

The Leadership requires that all organisations and activities undertake a Risk Assessment for their activity on at least an annual basis or more frequently in the event of new activities being introduced. A risk assessment form must also be completed for each outing, residential, community event or outreach event.

There may be times when risk assessments are carried out for a specific purpose or period of time, for example when an individual with a temporary mobility issue or a leader, volunteer or helper who is pregnant. It is the role of the Department Head, along with others to help them if necessary, to complete the risk assessment form (found in Section 11.11) as they will be most familiar with the activities and members of the group. The completed forms must be returned to the Executive Pastor, who is responsible for all aspects of health and safety.

The completed risk assessment form for each organisation or activity will be collated and scrutinised by the Executive Pastor to ensure that all potential

hazards have been highlighted and evaluated, and that the controls suggested are appropriate to minimise the risks. It is important that if a risk is identified on a risk assessment form, adequate control measures are put in place.

The Leadership Team will ensure to include Health and Safety issues as a regular agenda item at their meetings.

When completing a risk assessment form the following may help:

- A hazard is something which may cause harm, for example chairs being piled high which a small child could climb on to.
- A risk is the chance that a person may be hurt by a hazard. Risks may vary according to different age groups who attend the organisation, for example the piled-up chairs would probably not be considered a risk to an older person but would definitely be a risk to a toddler or small child.
- A control is something that can be put in place or something that can be changed to minimise the risk, for example the stacked chairs could be set around the room instead or only piled together in pairs or groups of three.

It is impossible to remove any risk completely, but House Church is committed to manage risks in order to ensure that activities can continue safely, particularly those which may be considered high risk.

Should an accident happen and there is an insurance claim made against the church, House Church commits to be able to demonstrate that 'reasonable care' was taken to protect the children and adults attending their organisations.

9.3 Insurance

While the provision of insurance protection for churches remains a complex issue, House Church has arranged for insurance cover to be in place to offset legal expenses in the event of a claim, whether public liability cover relating to claims for inadequate supervision and negligence, as well as management indemnity to cover errors, omissions, negligent advice, or a wrongful act. House Church has also arranged adequate employers' liability insurance to cover any risks relating to the employed staff of the church.

9.4 High Risk Activities

There are some activities such as trampolining and bouncy castles that are described as 'high risk' by insurance companies. House Church ensures that any activities arranged by Department Heads that include these types of high-risk activities will be subject to a specific risk assessment to see if extra supervision by trained personnel or other safety measures are required.

High risk activities will require specific consent from those with parental responsibility and Department Heads must inform the House Church Leadership Team in case additional insurance is needed to cover these activities. Activities may not go ahead if adequate insurance cover is not available. As part of forward planning, Department Heads must check with the House Church Leadership Team who can consult with our insurance broker in advance of the event.

9.5 Fire

All leaders, volunteers and helpers must be aware of the location of fire exits and ensure that access is not obstructed. Leaders, volunteers, and helpers must also know where the nearest fire extinguishers are located. Fire extinguishers must be checked on at least an annual basis by a suitably qualified person.

Fire drills will be conducted at least twice a year to ensure that all members know what evacuation procedure to follow in the event of a real fire. Fire drill must be recorded in a Fire Log which can be inspected by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

9.6 First Aid

House Church commits having in place procedures by which leaders, volunteers and helpers are aware of any medical conditions, additional needs, or allergies that children have and any medication they are currently taking. This information will be requested on consent forms signed by those with parental responsibility.

The activity leader must ensure that this information, along with contact details for parents or carers, is easily accessible to them when the activity takes place on the premises as well as on any outings, residential programmes, and camps.

Leaders, volunteers, and helpers will never administer medication without specific written consent from those with parental responsibility acting on the advice of their doctor. House Church will not routinely store any medication on the premises, but if medication is given to activity leaders for use in extremis, it must be clearly marked and be kept out of reach of children. Volunteers and helpers must speak to activity leaders if unsure as to what to do and activity leaders in charge must consult with those with parental responsibility for the child before any action of this nature is taken.

House Church commits to having at least one nominated and adequately trained first aider on duty at every activity of the church. All leaders, volunteers and helpers must be aware who the first aiders are and alert them in the event of an injury or accident.

Once first aid has been administered, an accident form must be completed, and activity leaders must make every effort to communicate with those with parental responsibility for the children about what has happened and any treatment that has been given. If a child needs taken to the hospital, activity leaders must make every effort to contact those with parental responsibility for the children as soon as possible.

A first aid kit will always be available on church premises and at planned events away from the church. The first aid kit will be stocked with all the appropriate and in-date items and equipment. The Executive Pastor will ensure that the first aid kit is checked every three months and that a nominated person will be responsibility for replacing items especially if they have been used by various organisations within the church.

SECTION 10

- 10.1 Relevant Legislation in Northern Ireland
- 10.2 Data Protection
- 10.3 Data Protection and Safeguarding

10. Legal Matters

10.1 Relevant Legislation in Northern Ireland

The main relevant legislation relating to Safeguarding in Northern Ireland includes and measures from these are relevant for this Safeguarding Policy:

- The Criminal Law Act 1967
- Mental Health (NI) Order 1986
- The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989)
- The Children (NI) Order 1995
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Sex Offenders Act 1997
- The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order 1998
- The Criminal Justice (Children) (NI) Order 1998
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Public Disclosure (NI) Order 1998
- Section 75 Northern Ireland Act 1998
- The Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012)
- Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008
- Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (NI) 2015

10.2 Data Protection

Under the General Data Protection Regulation Act (2018), registered organisations are made aware of their legal responsibilities when handling personal data belonging to employees, members of the church and congregation, children and leaders, including but not exclusive to names, phone numbers, addresses and medical information.

House Church will only hold data which is adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the legal and necessary purposes for which it is held. House Church will ensure that personal data is accurate and where necessary, kept up to date. House Church commits to do whatever is necessary to prevent unauthorised or accidental access to personal data and will hold data for no longer than necessary. Therefore, House Church will adhere to the following principles in answer to the questions below:

Where will all forms be kept?

- All recruitment documentation, consent forms, accident forms, medical information and all other personal information on employees, children or leaders will be kept in locked filing cabinets in a lockable office on church

premises. House Church has a robust keyholding policy that limits access to the information,

- All relevant forms will at no time be removed from the premises or kept in a person's own home for long periods of time,
- Leaders will ensure that they have easy access to relevant data such as children's contact details and medical information when the organisation is meeting,
- Incident/accident forms will also be held securely on church premises.

Who has access to information on children and leaders?

- Access to personal Information about children and leaders will only be on a need-to-know basis,
- The exception to this is medical information where it is important that all leaders in a supervisory role are aware of conditions that children have,
- Information about leaders and children should not be given to any external party but only used for the purpose for which it was given.

What about data kept on computers?

- Personal information about employees, children, and leaders on computers, including ChurchSuite is confidential,
- Personal information on ChurchSuite is restricted to ChurchSuite account holders and are password protected,
- There is a set of restrictions in place to ensure that ChurchSuite administrators and House Church leaders are only privy to what is necessary for them to fulfil their role,

How long all records on children and leaders will be kept?

- All recruitment and employment data will be held for no longer than six years,
- Information on Church members and members of the congregation will be held for no more than two years after the person leaves the Church.
- All information relating to children such as consent forms and medical information will be kept for up to six years after the child has left the organisation, while safeguarding records will be kept until the 25th birthday of the children they relate to.
- Once the appropriate period of time has been reached, the information will be confidentially destroyed,
- Incident/accident forms and the register of all leaders will be kept in perpetuity.
- All personal information on leaders will also be retained for up to six years after they have left their position before being confidentially destroyed,

The General Data Protection Regulation Act (2018) provides privacy protection for individuals for whom personal data is stored. House Church has adopted the following general principles to comply with this legislation:

- No personal data will be obtained or held unless the individual has given consent,

- Individuals will be made aware of the exact information held,
- House Church has a robust photographic policy that permission is obtained to take, to keep and to use a photograph of an individual. (While verbal permission is sufficient for adults, it will be documented. Should any objections be raised about any photograph, its use will be immediately discontinued.)
- Data obtained for one purpose will not be used for a different purpose. (For example, the church members list must not be made available for commercial mail shots.)
- Personal data shall be adequate and relevant for the purpose for which it is to be processed. If data is given which exceeds the requirement, it will immediately be deleted or destroyed,
- Data will be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date. No data will be kept unless it is reasonable to assume it is accurate,
- Files containing personal data will be reviewed periodically to ensure information is not kept for longer than required for the purpose intended,
- Personal data will not be disclosed to anyone inside or outside the church who does not strictly need to know, without the individual's consent,
- Personal data will be kept in a secure place, for example in a lockable filing cabinet or in a room which is locked when unoccupied. Unauthorised persons will not be given access to any computer containing personal data.

10.3 Data Protection and Safeguarding

Where disclosing information might place a child at risk, then Safeguarding considerations take precedence over data protection. In certain circumstances the General Data Protection Regulation Act (2018) allows for disclosure of information without the consent of the subject. These include for the prevention or detection of crime, or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights also makes provision for the disclosure of information in connection with 'the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the rights and freedom of others and for the prevention of disorder or crime.... Disclosure should be appropriate for the purpose and only to the extent necessary to achieve that purpose.'

Children have the right to be protected from harm. Information relating to concerns that a child may be at risk should therefore not be withheld on the basis that disclosure may be unlawful. If in doubt, the information should not be disclosed to anyone, especially the parent/carer, but contact should be made with Social Services as soon as possible for advice.

SECTION 11

- 11.1 Parental Consent Form for Youth Ministry
- 11.2 Parental Consent Form for Kid's Ministry
- 11.3 Volunteer Application Forms
- 11.4 Access NI Cover Sheet
- 11.5 Room Booking Form
- 11.6 Room Booking Terms and Conditions
- 11.7 Report of Concern Form
- 11.8 Accident/Incident Form
- 11.9 Health and Safety Policy and Risk Assessment Form
- 11.10 Equal Opportunity Policy
- 11.11 Anti-Bullying Policy
- 11.12 Code of Behaviour for Children and Young People
- 11.13 Code of Behaviour for Staff and Volunteers
- 11.14 Complaints Procedure for Volunteers
- 11.15 Grievance Procedures for Volunteers
- 11.16 Anti-Bribery Policy
- 11.17 Safeguarding Policy: Leaders' Short Guide
- 11.18 Safeguarding Policy: Parents' Short Guide
- 11.19 Safeguarding Policy: Executive Summary