



Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Charity number: 1190689

Church address: 16 Sturmer Road, Bedford, MK41 7FJ

This policy last reviewed: September 2025

This policy should be reviewed annually. The next review is due: September 2026

Context

Hope Church Goldington is an independent charity registered with the Charity Commission of England and Wales. The church has a formal membership and is led by elders and deacons (who are also trustees).

Our beliefs are outlined in our Statement of Faith which is available on our website and is run in accordance with our constitution.

Hope Church Goldington is affiliated to the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC). FIEC is a membership organisation and does not exercise any authority over the church.

The church is a group of Christians who meet for Sunday services at 10am and at various times during the week. The church also runs occasional events for the local community.

The church does not provide any activities specifically for children, young people, or for adults at risk of abuse. However, we recognise that during the course of our ministry we may come into contact with vulnerable people.

Our responsibilities

We recognise that both as a charity and as Christians, we have a responsibility to:

- Protect and promote the wellbeing of those who attend the church; paying particular attention to those who may be more vulnerable than others.
- Ensure that we have suitable systems and processes in place to manage safeguarding risks, including the appointment of a Safeguarding Lead (SL).
- Ensure that those who act on our behalf are competent and safe to do so.
- Identify non-safeguarding risks and manage them effectively.
- Report any safeguarding concerns initially to the DSL and/or the Elders, who will report to the appropriate statutory services as soon as possible and certainly within 24 hours. Where immediate action is required to ensure safety, an urgent report to the Police (999)

or the appropriate Social Services department will be made without delay. This can be done by any person and not just the SL or church leadership.

- If we are unsure whether a statutory threshold has been met, we will seek advice from either the relevant statutory services or from thirtyone:eight (thirtyoneeight.org).
- Ensure that our conduct and practice is accountable and transparent and that we care well for those to whom we minister.
- Ensure that if problems occur or dissatisfaction is expressed, we examine these in an impartial and careful way and manage any conflict of interest effectively.

Our commitments

- We will treat all who engage with the church through its ministries with courtesy and respect and will seek to uphold their inherent dignity and worth.
- We will seek to support and care well for anyone who discloses to us that they have been a victim of abuse or neglect and report this to statutory services in line with local procedures where required.
- We will seek to listen well to any concerns, complaints, or other expressions of dissatisfaction and to respond in a proportionate, impartial, transparent, and accountable manner.
- We will carefully examine any allegations made or concerns raised about any member or leader and respond appropriately.
- We will ensure that our staff and volunteers are competent to fulfil their roles and the legal duties associated with safeguarding.

Governance, Oversight and Management of Safeguarding

The trustees will include a statement on safeguarding in their annual return as required by the Charity Commission. The Safeguarding Lead will be trained in the role and will update their safeguarding training every two years in line with best practice standards and Local Authority requirements. The trustees will ensure that those who act on behalf of the church are competent and appropriately trained.

Any allegations that may require a Serious Incident Report to the Charity Commission will be passed to the trustees as a matter of urgency and certainly within 48 hours. The Trustees will file the Serious Incident Report with the Charity Commission in accordance with their legal responsibilities. If the Trustees require advice or support in this duty, they will seek such from suitably qualified and experienced sources.

Handling safeguarding concerns

Any concerns that are identified or disclosures that are made must be reported to the Safeguarding Lead.

If the concern involves the SL, or if the SL is unavailable, the report should be made to the Deputy Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

The details of the concern will be clearly and accurately recorded and stored securely, online on Hope Church's Google Drive. Any written records will be kept in a box file in the SL or DSL's home.

The SL or DSL will ascertain whether any action needs to be taken. If required, support and advice will be sought from either the relevant statutory services or from thirtyone:eight.

The SL or DSL will make any necessary referrals according to local procedures.

The SL or DSL will cooperate with statutory services and provide the link between the church and those professionals involved in responding to the situation.

Records of all discussions, advice sought, decisions made, and actions taken will be retained in the confidential file.

Safer Recruitment

The church will ensure that the main leader(s) and employees are DBS checked in accordance with national guidance. Volunteers who work directly with children and/or vulnerable adults will be required to be DBS checked in accordance with national guidance.

Although the church does not engage in regulated activity with either children or adults, reasonable and proportionate assessment of the suitability and competence of staff and volunteers will be made and decisions recorded. The church will provide training where required.

Handling Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers

Allegations against staff or volunteers will be passed to the SL.

If the allegation is against the SL it will be passed to the deputy DSL.

Upon receipt of an allegation, advice will be sought to ascertain whether a statutory threshold for reporting has been reached:

- **If a statutory threshold has been reached**, the matter will be handed to the responsible statutory authority and the church will fully cooperate with the process of investigating the allegation.
- **If the statutory threshold has not been met**, a proportionate response will be developed, and implemented. Where necessary (including for the avoidance of conflict of interest) advice and support will be sought from thirtyone:eight, who will support in developing a plan to address the concerns raised.

If the person handling the allegation on behalf of the church is unsure whether the statutory threshold has been met, they will consult with either the statutory services or with thirtyone:eight to establish this.

Handling of Complaints, Grievances or Any Other Expression of Dissatisfaction

Any concern, complaint or other expression of dissatisfaction will be passed to the Church's Leadership team.

The matter will be examined impartially and proportionately, and once conclusions have been reached, the church will respond to the complainant.

If advice or support is required, this can be sought from thirtyone:eight.

Managing Ex-Offenders, Those Who Are on a Barred List, or Others Who Pose a Risk to Vulnerable People

A formal risk assessment will be made which will include input from statutory services. Advice and support will be sought from thirtyone:eight where required.

A formal contract will be drawn up that outlines the church's commitments to the individual and any control measures required.

The contract will be formally reviewed and monitored on a regular basis.

Appendix 1: Key Contact Details

The Church's Designated Safeguarding Lead is Lynn Campbell.

They can be contacted on 07971831199 or email at safeguarding@hopegoldington.org.uk.

The Church's Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead is Lily Chewter.

They can be contacted on 07710863950 or email at safeguarding@hopegoldington.org.uk.

The Local Authority is Bedford Borough Council.

They can be contacted on:

01234 276222 (Safeguarding Adults) or email adult.protection@bedford.gov.uk

01234 718700 (Safeguarding Children)

Adult Social Care can be contacted on 01234 276168

Children's Social Care can be contacted on 01234 718700.

The Church's Safeguarding Advisors are thirtyone:eight.

They can be contacted on 0303 003 1111 or by e-mail at info@thirtyoneeight.org.

Appendix 2: Definitions

Abuse

Abuse is a general term that is used to cover a wide range of harm caused to people. It always involves a violation of the person's rights. It can take various forms as described under "Categories of Abuse" later in this appendix.

Adult at risk of abuse (sometimes referred to as adult in need of protection)

These are adults who have care and support needs, however, in addition, they are at risk of abuse, and because of their support need, are unable to protect themselves.

Since these adults are unable to protect themselves, we have a legal duty to protect them.

Adult with care and support needs

An adult who requires help or support with basic and essential day-to-day tasks such as:

- Getting up, washing, or dressing
- Cooking meals
- Cleaning the house
- Shopping
- Managing their finances
- etc.

Adults with care and support needs have the right to choose whether they want support or not.

Allegation (against a member of staff of volunteer)

An allegation is a claim that a person who has a role that provides access to a vulnerable person has used their position to exploit, abuse, or otherwise harm the person they should have been caring for.

Categories of abuse

This term is used to refer to the legally recognised forms of abuse.

When considering the safeguarding of children, abuse is categorised under four headings:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Neglect

When considering the safeguarding of adults, abuse is categorised under ten headings:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological (or emotional)
- Neglect
- Domestic
- Institutional
- Financial or material
- Modern slavery
- Self-neglect
- Discriminatory

Child

A person (including an unborn child) who has not yet reached the age of 18 years.

Child protection

Child protection is defined as the protection of children who have suffered, or are at risk of suffering, “significant harm”. It is our legal duty to report all Child Protection concerns to either Children’s Social Care or the Police as per local procedures.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Frequently abbreviated to DSL, this is the person appointed by the church to take responsibility for many aspects of safeguarding, including, receiving safeguarding concerns from staff or volunteers, and passing them on to the local authority where their threshold is met.

Early Help / Child in Need

Early Help and Child in Need are the areas of safeguarding where a child who has additional needs is receiving targeted support to meet their needs. Support is consent based and so the parents (or the young person if deemed competent to make decisions for themselves) can choose whether to access the support.

Neglect

Neglect is one of the categories of abuse that is characterised by the failure to provide the basic necessities for life where we have a responsibility to do so.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a broad range of activities that range from the general duty of care that we have for everyone who comes into contact with the charity, through early intervention and targeted support to protection from significant harm. It relates to both children and adults.

Spiritual Abuse

This term has become widely used, although remains ill-defined and is not a legally recognised category of abuse. We understand this to be a term referring to emotional, psychological or spiritual harm caused within the context of a religious community, often, but not always involving the misuse of power, authority, position or scripture to manipulate, control and abuse others. This policy does not refer specifically to the different categories of abuse since it covers all forms of abuse and harm.

Universal safeguarding

This refers to the general duty of care that we must provide for everyone who comes into contact with the church.

Vulnerable adults

This term is only used as a generic term. It is no longer used as a technical descriptor for a specific group of people. A vulnerable adult is less able to protect themselves and meet their own needs than an adult who has no vulnerabilities.