



Children and Adults Safeguarding Policy

Highworth Community Church (hereafter, “HCC”)

The Bridge (church office)
8 Sheep Street
HIGHWORTH
Wiltshire
SN6 7AA

Highworth Warneford School (Sunday worship)
Shrivenham Road
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Website:

www.highworthcommunitychurch.org

Affiliated to: Evangelical Alliance: www.eauk.org

Registered with the Charity Commission, Charity Number: 1080002

Insurance Company: Ansvar Insurance Company, with Public Liability.

1. Highworth Community Church activities

HCC holds most of its Sunday activities at Highworth Warneford School. The main worship service occurs at 10.30am on Sunday mornings, as well as activities for children that include: a parent led crèche for preschool, A group for school years Reception to six (Xplorers) is held weekly. Once a month a larger event (Supersize) replaces this and is designed with non church children in mind. Secondary school age (youth) work is provided on 50% of Sunday mornings and is sequenced alongside a Monday evening event; Miracle School.

Additional activities are provided for children and young people of varying ages at other times. These are usually held at The Bridge, the Highworth Community Centre or a worker's home. In addition, school years 7-13 take part in occasional residential activities in partnership with other local churches.

HCC has direct links with local schools, where assemblies, lessons and clubs are held. Each of the schools has their own safeguarding policies, usually using the Local Safeguarding Children Board policies. HCC is also an active member of Highworth Schools Team from the local churches, running joint work such as seasonal trails and workshops e.g. Easter/Christmas/Moving On to Secondary School.

HCC welcomes adults with various needs and some church members specifically seek to meet the needs of adults who have care and support needs (previously referred to as 'vulnerable adults').

HCC members also have significant roles in running the Highworth branches of CAP (Christians Against Poverty debt-counselling) and Food Collective charities.

2. The Leadership commitment¹

- We acknowledge children's and adults right to protection from abuse, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. We consider that the welfare of children is paramount. We will follow legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice in order to protect vulnerable people in our church.
- We will seek to establish a caring environment in which there is an informed vigilance about the dangers of abuse. This will be supported by careful selection and training of those with relevant responsibility in the church, both those employed and those who volunteer. We will continue this with ongoing support, supervision and advice. We will make use of relevant statutory guidance and the Disclosure and Barring Service for this.
- We will appoint a Safeguarding Coordinator and Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator, who will have specific responsibilities for safeguarding, notwithstanding safeguarding is a whole church responsibility.
- We will ensure that activities are organised in such a way as to promote a safe environment and minimise the risk of harm to children and adults.
- We will respond without delay to every complaint made which suggests that an adult, child or young person may have been harmed, or put at serious risk of harm.
- We will co-operate with the Police, Swindon Borough Council, and any other relevant statutory authority as required during any relevant investigation in line with legislation.
- We will refer all relevant concerns about staff or volunteers that meet the relevant criteria to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- This policy will be reviewed annual under the oversight of the charity trustees.
- This policy and the HCC Safe from Harm guidelines are based on the ten **Safe and Secure** safeguarding standards published by *thirtyone:eight*²

The 10 standards are:

- 1. Safeguarding Policy**
- 2. Developing Safeguarding Awareness Training**
- 3. Safe recruitment**
- 4. Management of workers**

¹ 'Leadership' within this document includes both HCC Leaders and Trustees.

² <https://thirtyoneeight.org/>

5. Working safely
6. Communicating effectively
7. Responding to concerns
8. Pastoral care
9. Managing those who pose a risk
10. Working in partnership

3. Recognising and responding to an allegation or suspicion of abuse.

3.1 Understanding abuse and neglect

Defining child abuse or abuse against an adult is a difficult and complex issue. A person may abuse by inflicting harm, or failing to prevent harm. Children and adults in need of protection may be abused within a family, an institution or a community setting. Very often the abuser is known or in a trusted relationship with the child or adult. Abuse and neglect can occur anywhere: in the home, at a church event or in a public place.

There are many forms of abuse and neglect; sexual abuse, physical abuse, psychological abuse, bullying; online and in person, CSE, criminal exploitation, non-recent abuse, emotional abuse, grooming, trafficking, domestic abuse, discriminatory abuse, financial abuse & neglect.

In order to safeguard those in our places of worship and organisations we adhere to the principal that everyone has the right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

Detailed definitions, and signs and symptoms of abuse, as well as how to respond to a disclosure of abuse, are included in the **Safe from Harm Guidance** document.

3.2 Safeguarding awareness

The Leadership is committed to on-going safeguarding training and development opportunities for all workers, developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help protect everyone. All our employees & volunteers will receive induction training and undertake recognised safeguarding training on a regular basis; including the HCC Safeguarding Co-ordinator using the HCC Safe from Harm Guidance, thirtyone:eight's *Facing the Unthinkable*, and other resources.

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

3.3 Responding to allegations of abuse

- o The Trustees have nominated both a Safeguarding and Deputy Safeguarding Lead to act on their behalf in dealing with the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including referring the matter on to the statutory authorities.

- o The Current leads are:
 - Paul Fisher, Trustee - Safeguarding Lead
 - Jon Hares, Families Evangelist - Deputy
 - Graham Thorne, Adult Safeguarding

The role of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or deputy is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information on to statutory agencies that have a legal duty to investigate.

- o Anyone receiving a report should report the matter to either the Safeguarding Coordinator or the Deputy Coordinator. The HCC Safe from Harm Guidance contains the detail of the processes, names and contact details for the Coordinators.
If the suspicions implicate both the Safeguarding Coordinator and the Deputy, then the report should be made in the first instance to **thirtyone:eight**, Social Services or the Police.
- o Where the concern is about a child, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator should contact Swindon Children's Services. Where the concern is regarding an adult in need of protection, contact Adult Social Services or take advice from thirtyone:eight as above.
- o The Safeguarding Co-ordinator may need to inform others depending on the circumstances and/or nature of the concern. Some examples are: the Chair of Trustees to log that a safeguarding concern is being dealt with; Insurance company to log that there is a possibility of a serious incident concerning safeguarding; or a Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) if allegations have been made about a person who has a role with under 18's elsewhere.
- o Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. A written record of the concerns should be made in accordance with these procedures and kept in a secure place.
- o Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, the absence of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or Deputy should not delay referral to Children's Services, the Police or taking advice from **thirtyone:eight**.
- o The Leadership will support the Safeguarding Coordinator or Deputy in their role, and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.
- o It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make a direct referral to the safeguarding agencies or seek advice from **thirtyone:eight**, although the Leadership hope that members of the place of worship / organisation will use this procedure. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Safeguarding Coordinator or Deputy has not responded appropriately, or where

they have a disagreement with the Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) as to the appropriateness of a referral, they are free to contact an outside agency direct.

3.4 Allegations of abuse against a person who works with children or young people

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

In consultation with the designated officer, consideration should be given as to whether a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) should be made, which maintain lists of those people deemed unsuitable for working with children or adults with care and support needs. If a local authority designated officer is not involved, but the nature of concern leads to HCC to end the worker's employment or voluntary role, or the worker has left voluntarily, then HCC needs to contact DBS.

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

The Care Act 2014 places the duty upon Adult Services to investigate situations of harm to adults with care and support needs. This may result in a range of options including action against the person or organisation causing the harm, increasing the support for the carers or no further action if the 'victim' chooses for no further action and they have the capacity to communicate their decision. However, this is a decision for Adult Services to decide not the church.

4. 'Whistle-blowing'

When an accusation is made by another HCC worker, against either a Children's or Adults worker, it may be considered as 'whistle-blowing'. The 'whistle-blowing' accusation will be taken with the assurance that either an HCC Leader or Trustee will be allocated to provide support (to the worker disclosing) throughout the safe-guarding process.

5. Prevention

5.1 Safe recruitment

The Leadership will ensure all workers will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with government guidance on safe recruitment. For employed or youth-work students, this includes:

- o There is a written job description or person specification for the post.

- o Those applying have completed an application form
- o Qualifications, where relevant, have been verified.
- o Those short listed have been interviewed.
- o Safeguarding has been discussed at interview.
- o The applicant has completed a probationary period.

In addition, whether employed, student or a volunteer, safe recruitment also includes:

- o Written references have been obtained, and followed up where appropriate.
- o Those applying have completed a self declaration form.
- o A Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS) check has been completed. (We will comply with Code of Practice requirements concerning the fair treatment of applicants and the handling of information).
- o A suitable training programme is provided for the successful applicant.
- o The applicant has been given a copy of the organisation's safeguarding guide and knows how to report concerns.

5.2 Management of Workers – Codes of Conduct

As a Leadership we are committed to supporting all workers and ensuring they receive support and supervision. All workers have been issued with a code of conduct towards children, young people. HCC's code of conduct with children is known as the *Safe from Harm Guide*. The Leadership undertakes to follow the principles found within the 'Abuse of Trust' guidance issued by the Home Office and it is therefore unacceptable for those in a position of trust to engage in any behaviour which might allow a sexual relationship to develop for as long as the relationship of trust continues.

6. Pastoral Care

6.1 Supporting those affected by abuse.

The Leadership is committed to offering pastoral care, working with statutory agencies as appropriate, and support to all those who have been affected by abuse who have contact with or are part of the place of worship or organisation. The Leadership will also support them to access a Christian counselling agency, such as *The Willows*, and or a centre for Christian healing, such as the *Harnhill Centre*.

6.2 Working with offenders

When someone attends HCC's place of worship and is known to have abused children, or is known to be a risk to adults with care and support needs, the Leadership will supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care. A leader and the safeguarding lead trustee will discuss the circumstances and set boundaries for that person and outline the support HCC will offer them. It will be tailored specifically to the individual's circumstances and, ideally, be informed by risk assessments from statutory agencies.

6.3 Practice Guidelines

As an organisation and place of worship working with children, young people and adults with care and support needs, we wish to operate and promote good working practice. This will enable workers to run activities safely, develop good relationships and minimise the risk of false or unfounded accusations. To facilitate this aim with children and young people, we have specific good practice guidelines for every activity we are involved in. This document is HCC's Safe from Harm Guide, which includes examples of consent forms etc. It is regularly reviewed and updated. For events at The Bridge & Prayer Room where children or adults with care and support needs may attend, but the events are not organised specifically for them, Safeguarding Guides are provided for the hosts.

7. Working in Partnership

The diversity of organisations and settings means there can be great variation in practice when it comes to safeguarding children, young people and adults. This can be because of cultural tradition, belief and religious practice or understanding, for example, of what constitutes abuse. We therefore have clear guidelines in regards to our expectations of those with whom we work in partnership, whether in the UK or not. We will discuss with all partners our safeguarding expectations and have a partnership agreement for safeguarding. It is also our expectation that any organisation using our premises, as part of the letting agreement, will have their own policy that meets **thirtyone:eight's** safeguarding standards.

**Agreed by the leadership and trustees of Highworth Community Church
16th May 2022.**