

# OAKHALL CHURCH

## SAFEGUARDING POLICY FOR CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

### **1: INTRODUCTION**

**Name of church:** Oakhall Church (hereafter “the Church”)

**Address:** 181 Chaldon Road, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 5PL

**Denomination:** Independent Evangelical

**Charity Number:** 1156069

**Web site:** <https://oakhall.church>

#### **Church Statement:**

The Leadership Team (hereafter “the L.T.”) recognises the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults entrusted to the church’s care.

The Church has appointed Janet Lightfoot and Jon Gambier as their Safeguarding Co-ordinators.

The detailed Leadership Safeguarding Statement is attached as Appendix 1.

#### **Our Commitment:**

The Church has a long established children’s and youth ministry The LT recognise the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults who can be victims of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect. Jesus said “Let the little children come to me...” (Mark10:14) so emphasizing his care and concern for children and those who are vulnerable. He also spoke directly to warn against those who harm children (Mark 9:42). We believe in a God-given imperative to seek the well-being of these people, showing them Christian love without distinction. The LT have therefore adopted the procedures set out in this safeguarding policy which are consistent with biblical principles and in accordance with statutory guidance. In so doing we are committed to build constructive links with statutory and voluntary agencies involved in safeguarding.

The policy and attached good practice guidelines are based on safeguarding standards published by Thirtyone:eight.

The LT undertakes to:

- Endorse and follow all national and local safeguarding legislation and procedures

- Provide on-going safeguarding training for all its workers and regularly review the operational guidelines attached.
- Ensure that the premises meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and all other relevant legislation, and that the Church is welcoming and inclusive.
- Support the Safeguarding Coordinator(s) in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children and vulnerable adults.
- File a copy of the policy and practice guidelines with thirtyone:eight

## **2: UNDERSTANDING, RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS AND SUSPICIONS**

### **Understanding abuse and neglect**

Defining child abuse or abuse against a vulnerable 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 vulnerable adult.

### **Recognising abuse and responding to it**

Advice on how to recognise abuse is provided to workers and is detailed in Appendix 2 attached. A worker should never carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. In case of an allegation the procedure is as follows:

- Allegations or suspicions of abuse should be reported as soon as possible to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator who is nominated by the LT to act in dealing with the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including referring the matter to the statutory authorities.
- In the absence of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or, if the suspicions in any way involve the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, then the report should be made to the Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator. If the suspicions implicate both the Safeguarding Co-ordinator and the Deputy, then the report should be made in the first instance to Thirtyone:eight, PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ. Telephone 0845 120 4550. Alternatively contact Children's Social Services or the Police.
- Where the concern is about a child the Safeguarding Co-ordinator should contact Children's Social Services. Where the concern is regarding an adult in need of protection contact Adult Social Services or take advice from Thirtyone:eight as above.

The local Children's Social Services office telephone number (office hours) is 0300 123 1620. The out of hours emergency number is 01483 517 898.

- Where required the Safeguarding Co-coordinator should then immediately inform the insurance company and other key members of the LT.
- 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 securely.
- The LT will support the Safeguarding Co-coordinator/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.
- Any individual has a right as a citizen to make a direct referral to the safeguarding agencies or seek advice from Thirtyone:eight, although the LT hope that members of the Church will use this procedure. If an individual with a concern feels that the Safeguarding Co-coordinator/Deputy has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Safeguarding Co-coordinator(s) as to the appropriateness of a referral they are free to contact an outside agency direct.
- The role of the Safeguarding Co-coordinator/ Deputy is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information on to statutory agencies who have a legal duty to investigate.

### **ALLEGATIONS OF PHYSICAL INJURY, NEGLECT OR EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

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

- Contact Children’s Social Services (or Thirtyone:eight) for advice in cases of deliberate injury, if concerned about a child's safety or if a child is afraid to return home.
- Not tell the parents or carers unless advised to do so, having contacted Children’s Social Services.
- Seek medical help if needed urgently, informing the doctor of any suspicions.
- For lesser concerns, (e.g. poor parenting), encourage parent/carer to seek help, but not if this places the child at risk of significant harm.
- Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, offer to accompany them. In cases of real concern, if they still fail to act, contact Children’s Social Services direct for advice.
- Seek and follow advice given by Thirtyone:eight (who will confirm their advice in writing) if unsure whether or not to refer a case to Children’s Social Services.

### **ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE**

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

- Contact is made with the Children’s Social Services Department Duty Social Worker for children and families or Police Child Protection Team direct. They will NOT speak to the parent/carer or anyone else.
- Advice has been taken from Thirtyone:eight if, for any reason they are unsure whether or not to contact Children’s Social Services/Police. Thirtyone:eight will confirm its advice in writing for future reference.

## **SUSPICIONS OR ALLEGATIONS OF PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ABUSE OF ADULTS**

If a vulnerable adult has a physical injury or symptom of sexual abuse the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy will:

- Discuss any concerns with the individual themselves giving due regard to their autonomy, privacy and rights to lead an independent life.
- If the vulnerable adult is in immediate danger or has sustained a serious injury contact the Emergency Services, informing them of any suspicions.
- For advice contact the Adult Social Care Vulnerable Adults Team (tel. 0300 200 1005 or, if out of hours, 01483 517 898) who have responsibility under Section 47 of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 and Government guidance, ‘No Secrets’, to investigate allegations of abuse. Alternatively Thirtyone:eight can be contacted for advice.

## **ALLEGATIONS AGAINST A PERSON WHO WORKS WITH CHILDREN**

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

## **3: PREVENTION**

### **Safe recruitment of paid workers and volunteers**

The Leadership will ensure all paid workers and volunteers will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with Government guidance on safe recruitment. Where appropriate this includes ensuring that:

- Those applying have completed an application form and a self- declaration form
- Written references have been obtained, and followed up where appropriate

- There is a written job description / person specification for the post
- Those short-listed have been interviewed
- Safeguarding has been discussed at interview
- A Disclosure and Barring check has been completed (we will comply with Code of Practice requirements concerning the fair treatment of applicants and the handling of information)
- Qualifications where relevant have been verified
- A suitable training programme is provided for the successful applicant
- The applicant has completed a probationary period
- The applicant has been given a copy of the Church safeguarding policy and knows how to report concerns.

### **Management of Workers – Codes of Conduct**

- As a LT we are committed to supporting all workers and ensuring they receive support and supervision. All workers have been issued with a code of conduct towards children, young people and vulnerable adults. The LT undertakes to follow the principles found within the ‘Abuse of Trust’ guidance issued by the Home Office. 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.

### **Safeguarding awareness**

- The LT is committed to on-going awareness of safeguarding issues and the need for periodic refresher training. The LT will also ensure that children are provided with information on where to get help and advice in relation to abuse, discrimination, bullying or any other matter where they have a concern.

## **4: PASTORAL CARE**

### **Care of those abused**

The LT 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 Church.

### **Working with offenders**

When someone attending the Church is known to have abused children, or is known to be a risk to

vulnerable adults, the LT will supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care. But in its safeguarding commitment to the protection of children and vulnerable adults, it will set boundaries for that person which they will be expected to keep.

## **5: PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

As a Church working with children, young people and vulnerable adults we wish to operate and promote good working practice. This will enable workers to run activities safely, develop good relationships and minimise the risk of false accusation. Good practice guidelines are attached as Appendix 3.

Good communication is essential in promoting safeguarding, to those we wish to protect, to everyone involved in working with children and vulnerable adults and to all those with whom we work in partnership. This safeguarding policy is just one means of promoting safeguarding.

## **APPENDIX 1: LEADERSHIP SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT**

The LT of Oakhall Church, Caterham recognises the importance of its ministry with children and young people and vulnerable adults and its responsibility to protect everyone entrusted to our care.

We are committed to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and ensuring their well-being.

Specifically:

- We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect of children and young people (those under 18 years of age) and to report any such abuse that we discover or suspect.
- We believe every child should be valued, safe and happy. We want to make sure that children we have contact with know this and are empowered to tell us if they are suffering harm.
- All children and young people have the right to be treated with respect, to be listened to and to be protected from all forms of abuse.
- We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual, psychological, financial and discriminatory abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults and to report any such abuse that we discover or suspect.
- We recognise the personal dignity and rights of vulnerable adults and will ensure all our policies and procedures reflect this.
- We believe all adults should enjoy and have access to every aspect of the life of the Church unless they pose a risk to the safety of those we serve.
- We undertake to exercise proper care in the appointment and selection of all those who will work with children and vulnerable adults.

**We are committed to:**

- Following the requirements for UK legislation in relation to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and good practice recommendations.
- Respecting the rights of children as described in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Implementing the requirements of legislation in regard to people with disabilities.
- Ensuring that workers adhere to the agreed procedures of our safeguarding policy.
- Keeping up to date with national and local developments relating to safeguarding.
- Supporting the safeguarding co-ordinator/s in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children/vulnerable adults.
- Ensuring that everyone agrees to abide by these recommendations and the guidelines established by the Church.

- Supporting parents and families
- Nurturing, protecting and safeguarding of children and young people
- Supporting, resourcing, training, monitoring and providing supervision to all those who undertake this work.
- Supporting all in the Church that may be affected by abuse.
- Adopting and following the ‘Safe and Secure’ safeguarding standards developed by Thirtyone:eight.

**We recognise:**

- Children’s Social Services (or equivalent) has lead responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse where there are concerns about a child. Adult Social Care (or equivalent) has lead responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse where there are concerns about a vulnerable adult.
- Where an allegation suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed then the police will be contacted as a matter of urgency.
- Where working outside of the UK, concerns will be reported to the appropriate agencies in the country in which we operate, and their procedures followed, and in addition we will report concerns to our agency’s headquarters.
- Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.
- We will review this statement and our policy and procedures regularly.

If you have any concerns for a child or vulnerable adult then speak to one of the following who have been approved as safeguarding co-ordinators for the Church:

Janet Lightfoot- Child Safeguarding Coordinator

Jonathan Gambier-Deputy Child Safeguarding Coordinator

A copy of this policy and procedures is available from the Church Office and has been lodged with Thirtyone:eight.

Signed on behalf of Oakhall Church Leadership Team

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX 2: WHAT IS MEANT BY ABUSE**

### **Abuse and Neglect:**

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. A child may suffer more than one category of abuse below:

### **Physical abuse:**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as fictitious illness by proxy or Munchausen syndrome by proxy.

### **Emotional Abuse:**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child, causing severe and persistent adverse effects upon its emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

### **Sexual Abuse:**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at sexual activities, or in the production of pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

### **Neglect:**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and / or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's emotional needs.

### **Organised Abuse:**

Organised or multiple abuse may be defined as abuse involving one or more abuser and a number of related or non-related abused children and young people. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation, or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for abuse. Organised and multiple abuse occur both as part of a network of abuse across a family or community, and within institutions such as residential homes or schools.

## APPENDIX 3: GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR PREVENTION OF ABUSE

1. **The Church** should ensure that:
  - A worker is not alone with a child where their activity cannot be seen. Leave a door open, or ensure that two groups are working in the same room.
  - When counselling a young person, try to make sure that another adult knows the interview is taking place, and with whom. If possible, another adult should be in the building, and the young person should know they are there.
  - Ensure that access to the building is safe and well-lit.
  - Care should be taken in contacting young people via electronic media. Consent of their parents/guardians should be sought. Clear and unambiguous language should be used that is not open to misunderstanding. Communication should be transparent, in the public domain, to the group and not individuals, to ensure no favouritism. There should be an agreed curfew where no communication takes place. A record should be kept of significant conversations. Personal accounts for e-mail, messaging and social media accounts should not be used.
2. **The worker** should:
  - Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity befitting their age, taking care in use of language, tone of voice and body posture.
  - Not engage in any of the following:
    - invading the privacy of children when they are showering or using the toilet;
    - rough, physical or sexually provocative games;
    - making sexually suggestive comments, even in jest;
    - inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form;
    - scapegoating, ridiculing, or rejection of a child or young person.
  - Learn to control and discipline children without using physical punishment.
  - Make sure another adult is present if, for example, a young child has soiled their underclothes and needs to be thoroughly washed.
  - Not let youngsters involve you in excessive attention- seeking that is overtly sexual or physical.
  - Not invite a child or young person to your home alone. Instead invite a group, or ensure that someone else is in the house. Make sure that parents know where the child is.
  - Not give lifts to children or young people on their own, other than for short journeys. If they are alone, ask them to sit in the rear of the car.
  - Not share sleeping accommodation with children or young people if you take a group away.
3. **You and your colleagues:** if you see another member of staff acting in ways which might be misconstrued, speak to them or to your supervisor about your concerns. Encourage an atmosphere of mutual support and care which allows workers to be comfortable enough to discuss inappropriate attitudes or behaviour.