

# River Church

## **Safeguarding Policy**

**(Children, Young People and Adults at Risk of Harm)**

**January 2023**

This policy is based on a model published by *thirtyone:eight*

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## Section 1

### 1.1 Details of the place of worship / organisation

Name of Place of Worship / Organisation: River Church Banff

Address: Castle Street, Banff, Aberdeenshire AB45 1DH

Tel No: 01261 815790

General Email address: admin@riverchurchbanff.co.uk

Senior Leader Name: Robert McArthur

Senior Leader Contact Email: robert@riverchurchbanff.co.uk

Safeguarding Coordinator Name: Sally-Ann Clark

Safeguarding Coordinator Contact Email: sally-ann@riverchurchbanff.co.uk

Membership of Denomination/Organisation: Antioch Movement

Members of

Charity Number: SC004545

Company Number: SC390765

Regulators:

Insurance Company: Ansvar Insurance

**The following is a brief description of our place of worship/organisation and the type of work/activities we undertake with children and adults who have care and support needs:**

River Church Banff is located in the centre of Banff and is comprised of two separate buildings, both of which may be used for activities for children and adults who have care and support needs. The type of work / activities which we undertake will vary to reflect our response to needs identifies within both the church and the wider community. This is a list of activities which we might undertake:

- Sunday School (Children's Church)
- Residential, e.g. overnight trips away, church sleep overs

- After School Club,
- Youth Club/Fellowship
- Holiday Clubs
- Mission trips (both on the premises and elsewhere)
- Transporting children
- Children with additional support needs
- Videos and photos of children
- Peer-led Life Groups
- Counselling services
- Mum & Toddler's Group/Parenting Group
- Music Groups (Worship Teams)
- Community Projects (e.g. Foodbank)
- Community Events (e.g. Fun Days)
- Any activity that has adults with care and support needs in attendance
- Helping victims of abuse.
- Working with offenders

### **1.2 Our commitment:**

Good governance helps an organisation prevent abuse and means it can respond quickly and with integrity when concerns arise. Central to this, is the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is appointed to have independent authority and legal responsibility for an organisation or charity and have a critical role in decision making and compliance as well as setting the values, standards and behaviours of the organisation, a responsibility shared by the Church Oversight. The standards and behaviours may be referred to as the culture of the organisation or “the way we do things around here”. Culture can be shaped in both negative and positive ways.

*The culture of a charity goes beyond mere compliance with legal and regulatory demands. Charity governance is most effective when it provides assurances not just*

*that legal requirements are met, but that the behaviour of people working for the charity, and those who come into contact with it, is proper and ethical. Culture, alongside good governance, can be pivotal to whether a charity achieves its stated object* (ICSA The Governance Institute, 2017)

To this end, the Church Leadership is committed to on-going safeguarding training for all children/youth workers (and other relevant persons) and will regularly review the operational guidelines attached. The Church Leadership also undertakes to follow the principles found within the *National Guidance for Child Protection 2021*, issued by the Scottish Government, and it is, therefore, unacceptable for those in a position of trust to engage in any behaviour which might allow an inappropriate relationship, e.g. sexual, bullying or spiritual abuse, to develop for as long as the relationship of trust continues. Furthermore, legislation set out in the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005 will be strictly adhered to. The Church Leadership will ensure all workers will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with the principles set out in the Government guidelines, National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021, the Scottish CRO/PECS Codes of Practice and Thirtyone:eight Guidance. The same principles will be applied to those appointed to work with adults with care and support needs. The Church Leadership will assist and co-operate fully with any police investigation or enquiries into any allegation of abuse involving staff, volunteers, children, young people or adults with care and support needs involved with River Church. The Church Leadership is committed to offering pastoral care, working with statutory agencies as appropriate, and supporting those attending River Church who have been affected by abuse. The Church Leadership will support staff and volunteers during the process of any child protection investigation or inquiry, as appropriate in each circumstance. The Church Leadership will apply due process and consideration when appointing children's or youth workers.

*Religious leaders, practitioners and volunteers within faith organisations have a unifying priority in relation to the protection of children. They may provide regulated care as well as a wide range of voluntary support services. Faith organisations including churches provide carefully planned activities for children, supporting*

*families under stress and caring for those hurt by abuse in the past, as well as ministering to and managing those who have caused harm. 2.176 Within these varied roles, all reasonable steps must be taken to provide a safe environment that promotes and supports the wellbeing of children and young people. This includes careful selection and appointment of those who work with children. It also means ensuring practitioners and volunteers are confident about how to respond promptly, in line with agreed protocols, when concerns arise about risk of harm to a child from abuse or neglect. Child protection co-ordinators and safeguarding advisers should be available for consultation within faith organisations. They will work with social workers and police officers as and when required. Practitioners and volunteers with church and faith organisations must report concerns about harm to a child to their line manager or safeguarding/child protection co-ordinator. The safety of the child or adult at risk is the priority*

*Faith organisations should have designated child protection leads who have a role in passing on concerns about children to police or social work, and in developing and maintaining organisational policies and procedures. These individuals should undertake regular training and be aware of the local Child Protection Committee and procedures. Faith organisations have a role in promoting awareness of information, resources and helplines in relation to child protection and, for example, forced marriage and honour-based abuse. (National Guidance for Child Protection, 2021).*

River Church is fully committed to protect and safeguard the young people and adults in its care. The Leadership recognises the need to create an environment in which children, young people and adults with care and support needs are safe from harm and in which any suspicion of abuse or mistreatment is promptly and appropriately responded to. It is the corporate responsibility of all staff, volunteers and persons in a position of trust to prevent the neglect, physical, mental, spiritual or sexual abuse of God's people. We acknowledge that children, young people and adults can be the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and neglect. We accept the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant of Human Rights which states that everyone is entitled to *all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status*. We also concur with the Convention on the Rights of the Child which

states that children should be able to develop their full potential, free from hunger and want, neglect and abuse. They have a right to be protected from *all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person who has care of the child*. As a Leadership we have therefore adopted the procedures set out in this safeguarding policy in accordance with statutory guidance. We are committed to build constructive links with statutory and voluntary agencies involved in safeguarding.

The Leadership undertakes to:

- value, listen to and respect children, young people and adults with care and support needs as well as promote their welfare and protection.
- endorse and follow all national and local safeguarding legislation and procedures, in addition to the international conventions outlined above.
- apply due process and consideration when appointing children's or youth workers. All children's and youth workers will be disclosed under the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme, through Disclosure Scotland
- provide on-going safeguarding training for all its workers and will regularly review the operational guidelines attached.
- ensure that the premises meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and all other relevant legislation, and that it is welcoming and inclusive.
- adopt a procedure for dealing with concerns about possible abuse
- support the Safeguarding Coordinator(s) in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children and adults with care and support needs.
- agree not to allow the document to be copied by other organisations.
- encourage and support parents/carers, by applying the principles of GIRFEC through a Christian viewpoint
- supporting those affected by abuse in River Church
- maintain good links with the statutory childcare authorities and other relevant organisations
- maintain a safe church environment for all

### 1.3 Positions of Trust

All adults working with children, young people and adults with care and support needs are in a position of trust. All those in positions of trust need to understand the power this can give them over those they care for and the responsibility they have because of this relationship. It is vital that all workers ensure they do not, even unknowingly, use their position of power and authority inappropriately. They should always maintain professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which could be misinterpreted.

The following Safeguarding Policy and Statement aims, to not only meet the requirements of ensuring a safe environment for those accessing activities in our organisation but to also build an open culture where:

- those who lead do so by example,
- are committed to the safeguarding of all
- those who work or volunteer are safely recruited and trained for their roles
- there are accountability structures with codes of conduct
- the values of the organisation are embedded in its day to day actions and behaviours of its people
- there is open communication

The policy and any attached practice guidelines are based on the ten **Safe and Secure** safeguarding standards published by *thirtyone:eight*.

## Section 2

### 2.1 Prevention

#### 2.1.1 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.

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

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

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

Also, for adults the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights with particular reference to Article 5 which states:

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

Detailed definitions, and signs and indicators of abuse, as well as how to respond to a disclosure of abuse, are included here in our policy.

### **2.1.2 Safer recruitment**

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

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

### **2.1.3 Safeguarding training**

The Leadership is committed to on-going safeguarding training and development opportunities for all workers, developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help protect everyone. All our workers will receive induction training and undertake recognised safeguarding training on a regular basis.

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

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

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

## **Section 3**

### **3.1 Practice Guidelines**

As an organisation/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 accusation.

Within River Church all information/data relating to any safeguarding matter, will be treated as confidential. By 'confidential', we mean that information will only be shared, when necessary, for those to whom it is relevant and appropriate to be informed, e.g. Pastor, Safeguarding Officer and external organisations such as the Police and Social Services.

As well as a general code of conduct for workers we also have specific good practice guidelines for every activity we are involved in and these are attached or in the appendices.

If you are working in any of the following areas in the Church you must be familiar with River Church's policy on Safeguarding (and any other activity which would include children, young people and adults with care and support needs) :

- Sunday School (Children's Church)
- Residential, e.g. overnight trips away, church sleep overs
- After School Club,
- Youth Club/Fellowship
- Holiday Clubs
- Mission trips (both on the premises and elsewhere)
- Transporting children
- Children with special needs
- Videos and photos of children
- Peer-led Life Groups

- Counselling services
- Mum & Toddler's Group/Parenting Group
- Music Groups (Worship Teams)
- Community Projects (e.g. Cinema, Foodbank)
- Community Events (e.g. Fun Days)
- Any activity that has vulnerable adults in attendance
- Helping victims of abuse.
- Working with offenders.

### **3.2 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 with regard 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.

We believe good communication is essential in promoting safeguarding, both to those we wish to protect, to everyone involved in working with children and adults and to all those with whom we work in partnership. This safeguarding policy is just one means of promoting safeguarding. The Church Leadership will assist and co-operate fully with any police investigation or enquiries into any allegation of abuse involving staff, volunteers, children, young people or adults with care and support needs involved with River Church.

## **Section 4**

### **4.1 Responding to allegations of abuse**

Under no circumstances should a volunteer or worker carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. Follow procedures as below:

- Documenting a concern

The worker or volunteer should make a report of the concern in the following way:

- The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse should report concerns as soon as possible to:

**Name: (hereafter the “Safeguarding Co-ordinator”) Sally-Ann Clark**

**Tel: 01261 815790**

**Email: [sally-ann@riverchurchbanff.co.uk](mailto:sally-ann@riverchurchbanff.co.uk)**

The above is nominated by the Leadership 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.

- 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:

**Name: (hereafter the “Deputy”) Robert McArthur**

**Tel: 01261 815790**

**Email: [robert@riverchurchbanff.co.uk](mailto:robert@riverchurchbanff.co.uk)**

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.**

**Tel: 0303 003 1111.**

Alternatively contact Social Work or the Police.

- The Safeguarding Co-ordinator should contact the appropriate agency after consultation with the deputy safeguarding officer, or they may first ring the

thirtyone:eight helpline for advice. They should then contact the relevant Social Work department in the area the child or adult lives.

**Name of local Health and Social Care Partnership: Aberdeenshire**

**Children and Families Social Work**

**Tel: 01467 537111**

**Out of hours Tel: 03456 08 12 06**

**Website Address: [www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk)**

**Adult Social Work**

**Tel: 01467 533100**

**Out of hours Tel: 03456 08 12 06**

**Website Address: [www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk)**

**Police Scotland Tel: 101**

- The Safeguarding Co-ordinator may need to inform others depending on the circumstances and/or nature of the concern
  - Chair or trustee responsible for safeguarding who may need to liaise with the insurance company or the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator to report a serious incident.
  - report to Disclosure Scotland if the allegation concerns a volunteer working with a child or vulnerable adult
- Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. A written record of the concerns should be made in accordance with these procedures and kept in a secure place.
- Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, the absence of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or Deputy should not delay referral to Social Work, the Police or taking advice from thirtyone:eight.
- The Leadership will support the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy in their role and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.

- It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make a direct referral to the safeguarding agencies or seek advice from thirtyone:eight, although the Leadership hopes that members of the place of worship/organisation will use this procedure. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy has not responded appropriately, or, where they have a disagreement with the Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) as to the appropriateness of a referral, they are free to contact an outside agency directly. We hope by making this statement that the Leadership demonstrates its commitment to effective safeguarding and the protection of all those who are vulnerable.

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

#### **4.2 Detailed procedures where there is a concern about a child:**

##### **4.2.1 Allegations of physical injury, neglect or emotional abuse.**

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

- Contact Children and Families Social Work (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 and Families Social Work.
- 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 and Families Social Work directly 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 and Families Social Work.

#### **4.2.2 Allegations of sexual abuse**

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Safeguarding Coordinator/Deputy will:

- contact the Children and Families Social Work Duty Social Worker or Police Child Protection Team directly. They will NOT speak to the parent/carer or anyone else.
- seek and follow the advice given by thirtyone:eight if for any reason they are unsure whether or not to contact Children and Families Social Work/Police. Thirtyone:eight will confirm its advice in writing for future reference.

#### **4.3 Detailed procedures where there is a concern that an adult is in need of protection:**

##### **4.3.1 Suspicions or allegations of abuse or harm including; physical, sexual, organisational, financial, discriminatory, neglect, self-neglect, forced marriage, modern slavery, domestic abuse.**

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

- contact the Adult Support and Protection Team which has legal responsibility to investigate allegations of abuse. Alternatively, thirtyone:eight can be contacted for advice.
- if the adult is in immediate danger or has sustained a serious injury, contact the Emergency Services, informing them of any suspicions.

If there is a concern regarding spiritual abuse, Safeguarding Co-ordinator will:

- identify support services for the victim i.e. counselling or other pastoral support
- contact thirtyone:eight and in discussion with them will consider appropriate action with regards to the scale of the concern.

#### **4.4 Allegations of abuse against a person who works with children/young people**

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 Health and Social Care Partnership procedures, will:

- refer the matter to Children and Families Social Work who will investigate the concerns and pass on information to Disclosure Scotland in relation to the worker.
- make a referral to Disclosure Scotland for consideration of the person being placed on the barred list for working with children or adults with additional care and support needs. A referral must be made within three months of the organisation's disciplinary actions or the organisation will find themselves criminally liable.

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

The safeguarding co-ordinator will:

- liaise with Adult Social Work to discuss concerns and where appropriate with Disclosure Scotland in regards the suspension of the worker
- make a referral to the Disclosure Scotland. A referral must be made within three months of any disciplinary measures.

The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 and the Code of Practice July 2022 places the duty upon Adult Social Work 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 Social Work to decide not the church.

## **Section 5**

### **5.1 Pastoral Care**

#### **5.1.1 Supporting those affected by abuse**

The Leadership is committed to offering pastoral care and support, working with the statutory authorities as appropriate, to all those who have been affected by abuse who have contact with or are part of the place of worship/organisation.

#### **5.1.2 Working with offenders and those who may pose a risk**

When someone attending the place of worship/organisation is known to have abused children, is under investigation, 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, but in its safeguarding commitment to the protection of children and adults with care and support needs, set boundaries for that person, which they will be expected to keep. These boundaries will be based on an appropriate risk assessment and through consultation with appropriate parties. The Safeguarding Officer and the Senior Pastor will, in the first instance, conduct a risk assessment to establish if River Church is a suitable place for that person. This will be carried out in cooperation with the Police, Scottish Parole Board, the persons Supervising Officer (social worker) and Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements. If the risk assessment shows that this person is either too inappropriate (because of the risk they still pose) or we are unable to provide adequate levels of pastoral care and supervision, we will provide reasonable assistance in helping that person find a more suitable church, e.g. a church that may have an older fellowship and no children.

If the risk assessment shows that River Church can provide appropriate support and structures, a contract will be drawn up which the person will be expected to sign and adhere to. The contract will be designed not only with the protection of young people in mind, but also so that it creates an accountability framework and lessens the possibility that the person is placed in a situation that may lead them to be falsely accused of abuse, or find themselves in a position of vulnerability. Examples of boundaries in the contract may include:


- attending designated meetings only
- sitting apart from children
- staying away from areas where the children meet
- attending a life group where there are no children in the house
- declining hospitality where there are children in attendance
- never being alone or working with children
- named person(s) to provide pastoral support and accountability

The contract will be strictly enforced; any breaking of the contract will result in the person being asked to leave River Church. River Church will also contact the Police, Parole Board for Scotland, Supervising Officer and MAPPA if the contract is broken.

Any information given to the Senior Pastor and Safeguarding Officer by Police, Parole Board for Scotland, MAPPA or from the person themselves will be treated in confidentiality. However, where there is a need to pass on information, we will do so on a need-to-know basis, e.g. other leaders in church, leader of childrens work, the person providing pastoral support. The Senior Pastor and Safeguarding Officer have the right to regular contact with the persons Supervising Officer.

### **Adoption of the policy**

This policy was agreed by the leadership and will be reviewed annually.

Signed by:   
Sally Ann Clark

Position: Safeguarding Officer

Signed by:   
Robert McArthur

Position: Senior Pastor

Date Signed: 14th February, 2023

## **Appendices:**

### **Appendix 1: Definitions of abuse**

#### **Definitions of Child Abuse**

River Church accepts the working definitions of abuse detailed within The Scottish Office Guidance *National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021*: “Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. Abuse or neglect may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be maltreated at home; within a family or peer network; in care placements; institutions or community settings; and in the online and digital environment. Those responsible may be previously unknown or familiar, or in positions of trust. They may be family members. Children may be harmed pre-birth, for instance by domestic abuse of a mother or through parental alcohol and drug use.”<sup>1</sup>

The Guidelines set out the following categories of child abuse:

#### **“Physical abuse**

*Physical abuse is the causing of physical harm to a child or young person. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child they are looking after.*

There may be some variation in family, community or cultural attitudes to parenting, for example, in relation to reasonable discipline. Cultural sensitivity must not deflect practitioners from a focus on a child's essential needs for care and protection from harm, or a focus on the need of a family for support to reduce stress and associated risk.

#### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is persistent emotional ill treatment that has severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. 'Persistent' means there is a continuous or intermittent pattern which has caused, or is likely to cause, significant harm. Emotional abuse is present to some extent in all types of ill treatment of a child, but it can also occur independently of other forms of abuse. It may involve:

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<sup>1</sup> National guidance for child protection in Scotland 2021 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

- conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person
- exploitation or corruption of a child, or imposition of demands inappropriate for their age or stage of development
- repeated silencing, ridiculing or intimidation
- demands that so exceed a child's capability that they may be harmful
- extreme overprotection, such that a child is harmed by prevention of learning, exploration and social development
- seeing or hearing the abuse of another (in accordance with the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018)

### **Sexual abuse**

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is an act that involves a child under 16 years of age in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person, whether or not it is claimed that the child either consented or assented. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

For those who may be victims of sexual offences aged 16-17, child protection procedures should be considered. These procedures must be applied when there is concern about the sexual exploitation or trafficking of a child.

The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or in the production of indecent images, in watching sexual activities, using sexual language towards a child, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a person under 18 into sexual activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the

sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact. It can also occur through the use of technology. Children who are trafficked across borders or within the UK may be at particular risk of sexual abuse.

### **Criminal exploitation**

Criminal exploitation refers to the action of an individual or group using an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, or for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator. Violence or the threat of violence may feature. The victim may have been criminally exploited, even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation may involve physical contact and may also occur through the use of technology. It may involve gangs and organised criminal networks. Sale of illegal drugs may be a feature. Children and vulnerable adults may be exploited to move and store drugs and money. Coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons may be involved.

### **Child trafficking**

Child trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt, exchange or transfer of control of a child under the age of 18 years for the purposes of exploitation. Transfer or movement can be within an area and does not have to be across borders. Examples of and reasons for trafficking can include sexual, criminal and financial exploitation, forced labour, removal of organs, illegal adoption, and forced or illegal marriage.

### **Neglect**

Neglect consists in persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. There can also be single instances of neglectful behaviour that cause significant harm. Neglect can arise in the context of systemic stresses such as poverty, and is an indicator of both support and protection needs.

'Persistent' means there is a pattern which may be continuous or intermittent which has caused, or is likely to cause significant harm. However, single instances of

neglectful behaviour by a person in a position of responsibility can be significantly harmful. Early signs of neglect indicate the need for support to prevent harm.

The GIRFEC SHANARRI indicators set out the essential wellbeing needs. Neglect of any or all of these can impact on healthy development. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); to seek consistent access to appropriate medical care or treatment; to ensure the child receives education; or to respond to a child's essential emotional needs.

*Faltering growth* refers to an inability to reach normal weight and growth or development milestones in the absence of medically discernible physical and genetic reasons. This condition requires further assessment and may be associated with chronic neglect.

Malnutrition, lack of nurturing and lack of stimulation can lead to serious long-term effects such as greater susceptibility to serious childhood illnesses and reduction in potential stature. For very young children the impact could quickly become life-threatening. Chronic physical and emotional neglect may also have a significant impact on teenagers.

### **Female genital mutilation**

This extreme form of physical, sexual and emotional assault upon girls and women involves partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. Such procedures are usually conducted on children and are a criminal offence in Scotland. FGM can be fatal and is associated with long-term physical and emotional harm.

### **Forced marriage**

A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the full and free consent of both parties and where duress is a factor. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual, and emotional abuse. Forced marriage is both a child protection and adult protection matter. Child protection processes will be considered up to the age of 18. Forced marriage may be a risk alongside other forms of so called

'honour-based' abuse (HBA). HBA includes practices used to control behaviour within families, communities, or other social groups, to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or 'honour'.<sup>2</sup>

Other areas of abusive situations are:

### **Bullying**

Bullying is a form of abuse, where deliberately hurtful behaviour is repeated over a period of time, and where the victim may find difficulty in defending him/herself. Under no circumstances should staff or volunteers ignore such behaviour; in most instances anti-bullying procedures should be able to address the issues without resort to formal child protection procedures.

However, sustained bullying can be profoundly damaging to the victim, and has been known to result in attempted, and actual, suicide. Where a person's bullying behaviour is persistent and does not respond to the church's normal anti-bullying strategies, the child protection procedures can be invoked. In these circumstances the principles and procedures in these guidelines should be followed.

### **The Internet/Grooming**

The downloading or creation of indecent images is a sexual offence. There are dangers for children being allowed to access chat rooms as they may be targeted by adults who are posing as young people. Child protection concerns arise when the young person arranges to meet the person they have been chatting to on the internet, as that person may have been grooming the young person which can lead to children being sexually abused. Under the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005 it is an illegal offence to attempt to groom a child for sexual activities through the internet.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021/pages/3/>

**Factitious or Induced Illness Syndrome (FIIS) and Factitious or Induced Illness Syndrome by a Parent or Carer (previously known as Munchausen’s Syndrome or Munchausen’s Syndrome by Proxy).**

An adult suffering from FIIS characteristically presents themselves at hospitals with symptoms of physical disease and may have undergone many medical or surgical procedures. They appear to seek the security and support of the medical environment and are driven by masochistic urges and ambivalence to the source of their support.

In FIIS by a Parent or Carer, the adult uses the child to obtain medical attention by creating medical symptoms in the child, often induced by dangerous procedures; these can include for example, asphyxiation or poisoning, or ensuring that a serious of invasive tests and/or operations are carried on the child.

**These areas of abuse also apply to adults with care and support needs, however “harm includes all hurtful conduct towards adults with care and support needs, particularly:**

conduct causing physical harm - including that of a sexual nature

conduct causing psychological harm - such as causing fear, alarm or distress

unlawful conduct which appropriates or adversely affects property, rights or interests - such as theft, fraud, embezzlement or extortion

conduct causing self-harm

Any adult at risk can experience harm, or be at risk of harm, in their own home, care homes, day services or hospitals.”<sup>3</sup>

Another type of abuse that can be found within a church setting is **Spiritual Abuse**.

**Spiritual Abuse**<sup>4</sup> is a form of emotional and psychological abuse. It is characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. Spiritual abuse can have a deeply damaging impact on those who experience it. However, holding a theological position is not in itself inherently spiritually abusive, but misuse of scripture, applied theology and doctrine is often a component of spiritually abusive behaviour.

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<sup>3</sup> **Adult protection and support - Aberdeenshire Council**

<sup>4</sup> Oakley, L & Humphreys, J; 2018 Understanding Spiritual Abuse within Christian Communities

## **Appendix 2: Signs and Symptoms of Abuse**

It is extremely important to clarify that these signs do not necessarily indicate that a child has been abused. They may help leaders, carers, parents, and persons in positions of trust recognise that something could be wrong. Therefore River Church always advises following the systems and procedures outlined in our Safeguarding policy. These should **ALWAYS** be adhered to if you suspect any form of abuse.

**Note:** A child may be subjected to a combination of different kinds of abuse. It is also possible that a child may show no outward signs and hide what is happening from everyone

As stated in our policy, you should always contact the Safeguarding Officer if a child/young person/adult with care and support needs shows a number of these symptoms, or any of them to a marked degree.

### **Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Abuse**

- Being overly affectionate or knowledgeable in a sexual way which is inappropriate to the child's/young person's age
- Medical problems such as chronic itching, bleeding or pain in the genital area or when walking or sitting
- Sexually transmitted diseases or infections
- Physical injuries and bruising, particularly to the thighs, buttocks, upper arms or neck
- Pregnancy in a woman who is unable to consent to sex
- Other extreme reactions, such as depression, self-harm, suicide attempts, running away, overdoses, eating disorders
- Personality changes such as becoming insecure or clinging
- Reverting to younger behaviour patterns such as thumb sucking or bringing out discarded cuddly toys
- Sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating
- Being isolated or withdrawn, inability to concentrate, sleep disturbance
- Lack of trust or fear of someone they know well, such as not wanting to be

alone with a particular person, e.g. parent, sibling, leader, child minder

- Urinary incontinence, day or night/nightmares
- Become worried about clothing being removed
- Suddenly drawing sexually explicit pictures
- Trying to be 'ultra-good' or perfect; overreacting to criticism
- Use of age inappropriate sexual language or significant changes in sexual behaviour or attitude
- Inappropriate self-touch

### **Signs and Symptoms of Physical Abuse**

- Unexplained and recurrent injuries or burns, Bald patches
- Doubtful excuses or refusal to explain injuries
- Visible injuries or bruising
- Unexplained cuts, marks or scars
- Injuries that don't match the explanation given
- Getting injured often
- Unexplained falls
- Wearing clothes to cover injuries, even in hot weather
- Refusal to undress for activities that may require a change of clothes
- Potential to run away often
- Fear of physical contact - shrinking back if touched, and fear of medical help or examination
- Subdued or changed behaviour
- Changes in weight, being excessively under or overweight or malnourished
- Failing to get medical treatment or changing doctors often
- Self-destructive tendencies, and more than expected aggression toward others
- Admitting that they are punished, but the punishment is excessive (such as a child being beaten every night to 'make him study')
- Fear of suspected abuser being contacted

## **Signs and Symptoms of Emotional Abuse**

- Physical, mental and emotional development delays
- Sudden speech disorders
- Continual un-appreciation of themselves ('I'm stupid, ugly, worthless, etc')
- Overreaction to mistakes
- Extreme fear of any new situation
- Inappropriate response to pain e.g. 'I deserve this'
- Neurotic behaviour e.g. rocking, hair twisting, self-harm
- Extremes of activity to inactivity or aggression

## **Signs and Symptoms of Neglect Abuse**

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain
- Untreated medical problems
- No social relationships
- Compulsive hunting, stealing, need to find certain objects e.g. food, clothing etc

## **Signs and Symptoms of Spiritual Abuse**

- Over attendance for fear of being punished
- Too many fears about the punishments of God, and the fear that God is judging them for sin in their life
- Misinterpretations of scripture in an overly concerning way
- Questioning the leaders is discouraged
- Judging others and excessive gossip
- Hostility towards those of different faiths and others who are not believers
- The thoughts that only people who go to a certain church are believers
- Sexuality is seen as dirty, bad, and/or sinful

- To much of a push towards perfection and them focusing on the penalty for sin, and not enough focus on Grace of God
- A consistent refusal of medical services because God will heal
- Mental health issues are considered sinful or non-existent and matters such as depression/anxiety considered a sin
- The assumption that you're not spiritual enough if something bad happens to you
- Consistent messages that they aren't spiritual enough
- Their "suffering" (whatever it may be) is a result of some sin in their life
- Their physical illness is punishment for some sin

### **Appendix 3: What to do if a safeguarding incident arises**

Contact the Safeguarding Officer (or the Senior Officer if unavailable) as soon as possible, **i.e. on the same day.**

- Any adult receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse must make an accurate record on the same day. Use the form, 'Safeguarding Incident Report Form'
- Note down what was said in the child's own words or in the words of the person who observed the alleged abuse, putting the event in context, and giving the date, time and location.
- Do not ask any leading questions, or persistently ask questions as this can be very distressing for the child. If it is necessary to clarify what the child is saying, open-ended questions may be asked to obtain basic information, e.g. "what happened?", "where did it happen?", "when did it happen?", "who did it?"
- All records must be dated and signed by the person taking the report and will include the action taken.
- These notes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and stored, away from any other records.
- These notes, written straight away, will help you to get a better perspective on the issue and may also act as evidence. Do not write your own opinion as part of these notes as this can invalidate their usefulness in any investigation.
- Be as careful and accurate as possible. This will prevent you or anybody else adding or subtracting anything from it.
- **Questioning and testing of evidence is not a matter for staff and volunteers, as this is the responsibility of the police and social work agencies. Such an approach could prejudice later investigations.**

The role of staff and volunteers is to **observe, record and report:**

- **Observe** carefully the child's behaviour and demeanour.
- **Record** in detail what they have seen and heard, and when they did so. Signs of physical injury should be described in detail or sketched. Any comment by the child concerned, or by an adult who might be the abuser, about how the

injury occurred should be recorded, preferably quoting words actually used, as soon as possible after the comment has been made.

- **Report** their suspicions as quickly as possible to the Safeguarding Officer.
- With respect to the child, staff and volunteers should:
  - **Listen** sympathetically and with care
  - **Reassure** the child that he/she is not to blame.
  - Not show **disbelief**.
  - Not give a guarantee of **confidentiality**.
  - Take the allegation **seriously**.
  - Affirm the child's **feelings** as expressed, without telling the child how he/she should feel.
  - Avoid being **judgmental** about the information given by the child.
  - **Refer** to the Safeguarding Officer in accordance with church guidelines.

## Practical Action for all Safeguarding Incidents

**Abuse is observed or alleged**

Contact Safeguarding Officer (Sally-Ann Clark) or if Safeguarding Officer is unavailable contact the Senior Pastor (Robert McArthur) on the **SAME DAY**.

Record the allegation on **Safeguarding Incident Report Form** and give this to the Safeguarding Officer.

Use the child's own words and if questions are necessary, use the 'what', 'where', 'when' and 'who' format.

**Do not** contact the parent/ carer unless asked to do so by the Safeguarding Officer or Senior Pastor (who will have sought the advice of the Police/ Social Work

Safeguarding Officer to collate all relevant information and to contact thirtyone:eight if advice is required.

Safeguarding Officer to contact Police or Social Work (and also inform thirtyone:eight of incident if not already contacted)

Co-operation with appropriate bodies, e.g. Police and Social Work

Ongoing support given to victim, families, staff and volunteers

If GIRFEC is appropriate response, River Church to support the person/ family and /or refer to specialist agency for support

## **Appendix 4: Transportation**

**For some activities River Church runs we may need to provide transport to and from a venue, either for a one-off event or as part of our regular activities.**

This transport may be provided by a volunteer or a paid worker, however on occasion it may be necessary to for another church member or parent/caregiver to do this. If the transportation arrangement is frequent and regular, drivers will need to be safely recruited following national government guidelines and our safeguarding policy and have a relevant criminal record check. If the driver has not had a criminal record check, there should be at least two adults in the vehicle. All mini bus drivers are over 21 years of age and have held a full driving licence for at least 2 years. If the vehicle is a bus or mini bus, the ratio of workers to children should be adhered to as appropriate. If no ratio required, there should be at least two adults, in addition to the driver travelling in the bus/minibus. While there is no law forbidding young or inexperienced drivers from transporting people, River Church has chosen to use legislation relating to minibuses as a guide and require any driver to be aged 21 or over and have held a full driving licence for at least two years and meet the requirements for the vehicle they are driving e.g. minimum age restrictions and additional training for larger vehicles such as minibuses. Correct permits should be obtained where needed and any transport being providing must covered by insurance and permits transporting others in this context. Log books, travel records, and passenger lists should be completed for each journey where relevant.

Transport will be provided in vehicles that are roadworthy i.e. MOT and appropriate insurance. Children under the age of 12 or under 135 cm must use a car seat which has been appropriately fixed. Those over 12 or over 135 cm must wear seatbelts at all times. Children must not sit in the front seat of a minibus.

A risk assessment should be completed especially if the journey is a one-off or as part of an organised trip or activity that happens away from your main site.

All drivers must meet the conditions for driving children and young people to an event on behalf of River Church and sign a declaration to that effect. These conditions are:

- I am 21 or over and have held a full driving licence for at least **two** years.
- I am aware that consent for the trip must be obtained from the parents/carers who should be made aware of the transportation arrangements. River Church will obtain this consent **prior** to me transporting children and young people.
- I have gone through the church staff/volunteer recruitment process, even if this is all I do.
- The vehicle I am using for transportation must be roadworthy.
- I have seatbelts fitted in the car and properly fixed car seats and booster seats if required.
- I must produce a **valid driving licence, MOT certificate** (where applicable) and **proof of adequate insurance**. (NB: It is important that you are covered by your insurance to transport other people in the car in your capacity as church worker/volunteer.) All documents must be the original.

**Transporting children:**

- Parental agreement should be obtained prior to any journey
- Pick-up and drop-off times should be arranged in advance

## **Appendix 5: Ratios**

**To supervise and run activities safely you need to have a sufficient number of workers.**

Your organisation should have written rules about the number of workers and leaders needed to run an activity safely and if these are not met then the activity should not go ahead.

You should have at least **TWO** adult workers for each activity or group that you run. If one needs to respond to an issue, then the other can remain with the group. This also offers support to the worker in case an accusation is made.

All workers should be recruited following your safer recruitment policy and have received a sufficient level of safeguarding training.

More workers may be needed depending on the group size. There are legal requirements to follow for certain activities involving children aged 8 and under.

### **Ratios:**

- Children aged 0-2 years - 1 adult to 3 children
- Children aged 2-3 years - 1 adult to 4 children
- Children aged 3-8 years - 1 adult to 8 children

Following a risk assessment of the activity you may need to reassess the number of workers that are needed.

### **Things to consider**

You should have clear processes and expectations in place for workers to communicate if they are able to work, and for communicating with those who attend your activity or their Parents/Carers in the event that your activity has to be cancelled or you have to restrict numbers.

It is a good practice to ask people to pre-register for the activities you run so that you can plan ahead for the number of workers you will need to run the activity safely.

## **Appendix 6: Code of Conduct**

### **River Church Behaviour Code for Working with Children, Young People and Adults at Risk of Harm**

#### **Purpose**

This behaviour code outlines the conduct expected of all workers (staff and volunteers). The code of conduct aims to help protect adults at risk of harm, children and young people from abuse and inappropriate behaviour from those in positions of trust, and to reduce the risk of unfounded allegations of abuse being made.

#### **The role of workers (staff and volunteers)**

When working with children and young people or adults at risk of harm, you are acting in a position of trust for River Church. You will be seen as a role model and must act appropriately.

#### **Good practice**

- Treat everyone with dignity, respect and fairness, and have proper regard for individuals' interests, rights, safety and welfare
- Work in a responsible, transparent and accountable way
- Be prepared to challenge unacceptable behaviour or to be challenged
- Listen carefully to those you are supporting
- Avoid any behaviour that could be perceived as bullying, emotional abuse, harassment, physical abuse, spiritual abuse or sexual abuse (including inappropriate physical contact such as rough play and inappropriate language or gestures)
- Seek advice from someone with greater experience when necessary
- Work in an open environment – avoid private or unobserved situations
- Follow policies, procedures and guidelines and report all disclosures, concerns, allegations, and suspicions to the safeguarding co-ordinator
- Don't make inappropriate promises particularly in relation to confidentiality
- Do explain to the individual what you intend to do and don't delay taking action

## **Unacceptable behaviour**

- Not reporting concerns or delaying reporting concerns
- Taking unnecessary risks
- Any behaviour that is or may be perceived as threatening or abusive in any way
- Passing on your personal and/or social media contact details and any other contact information.
- Developing inappropriate relationships
- Smoking and consuming alcohol or illegal substances
- Favouritism/exclusion – all people should be equally supported and encouraged

## **Breaching the Code of Conduct**

If you have behaved inappropriately you will be subject to disciplinary procedures (particularly in the case of paid staff where the line manager will consult the safeguarding coordinator as appropriate). Depending on the seriousness of the situation, you may be asked to leave River Church. We may also make a referral to statutory agencies such as the police and/or the local authority children's or adult's social work departments or Disclosure Scotland. If you become aware of a breach of this code, you should escalate your concerns to the safeguarding coordinator or line manager (in the case of a paid staff member).

## **Declaration**

I agree to abide by the expectations outlined in this document and confirm that I have read the relevant policies that assist my work with vulnerable groups.

**Name:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

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# River Church

## Safeguarding Policy

January 2023

### Short Notice Board Version

(Full policy is filed in the church office and on website)

E-mail: [admin@riverchurchbanff.co.uk](mailto:admin@riverchurchbanff.co.uk)

#### Mission Statement

The Church Leadership recognises the importance of its ministry to children, young people and adults at risk of harm and its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of all people entrusted to the church's care. It also acknowledges that children and young people can be the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. **In all matters relating to decisions regarding children and young persons who may or may not have been abused, the child, young person or adult at risk of harm's welfare will be the paramount consideration.**

River Church has developed child protection procedures, policy and practice guidelines that follow The Scottish Office Guidance, "National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021" in relation to responding to incidents or disclosures of abuse, or suspicion of abuse. Therefore, if you have any concerns regarding actual or potential child abuse within the church please contact our Safeguarding Officer immediately. The role of the Safeguarding Officer is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass the information onto the Social Work Department.

## River Church's Safeguarding Officer is;

**Sally-Ann Clark Email: [sally-ann@riverchurchbanff.co.uk](mailto:sally-ann@riverchurchbanff.co.uk)**

However, in the absence of the Safeguarding Officer or if the suspicions in any way involve the Safeguarding Officer, then the report should be made to:

**Robert McArthur (Senior Pastor) Email: [robert@riverchurchbanff.co.uk](mailto:robert@riverchurchbanff.co.uk)**

### Alternatively:

- **Call 999 if there is immediate harm**

### Otherwise:

- **for concerns regarding a child or young person contact Aberdeenshire Council – Monday to Friday during office hours contact 01467 537111; evenings and weekends call the out of hours service on 03456 08 12 06. or contact Police Scotland on 101**
- **for concerns regarding a vulnerable adult contact Aberdeenshire Council**
- **Monday to Friday during office hours contact 01467 533100 or email: [adultprotectionnetwork@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:adultprotectionnetwork@aberdeenshire.gov.uk); evenings and weekends call the out of hours service on 03456 08 12 06. or contact Police Scotland on 101**

Signed:  Date: 14/02/23

Name: Sally-Ann Clark

Position: Safeguarding Officer

Signed:  Date: 14/02/23

Name: Robert McArthur

Position: Senior Pastor

## **Appendix 8: Supplementary Online Safety Policy for River Church including an Acceptable Use Policy.**

**When responding to concerns of abuse please refer to our *thirtyone:eight's* 'Online Safety Flowchart' which can be downloaded from their website.**

**Thirtyone:eight Online Safety definition:**

***Online safety* is the collective term for safeguarding involving the use of electronic devices and applications to communicate and access the Internet; often referred to as Information and Communications Technology. An online safety policy should be adopted and adapted to reflect all communications between River Church's workers and children (those under 18 years of age).**

### **Policy guidelines for Church Workers/Volunteers**

- Generally, maintain good and open relationships with parents and carers regarding communication with them and their children.
- Use an appropriate tone: friendly, but not over-familiar or personal.
- Be warm and friendly, but do not suggest or offer a special relationship.
- Be clear and explicit about information that you need to share; don't abbreviate or short-cut your communications.
- Be circumspect in your communications with children to avoid any possible misinterpretation of your motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming.
- Do not share any personal information with children, or request or respond to any personal information from a child other than that which might be appropriate as part of your role.
- Only give personal contact details to children that are within the public domain of River Church, including your mobile telephone number.
- If children want you to have their mobile phone numbers, e-mail addresses or similar, and communicate with them this way, make sure that their parents know and have agreed.
- Only make contact with children for reasons related to the work of the River Church and maintain a log of all electronic contact with individuals or groups including messaging and texting.
- Where possible only use equipment provided by River Church to communicate with children.
- Respect a child's right to confidentiality unless abuse/harm is suspected or disclosed.

- Ensure River Church domain name/logo appears with every Internet post made by a church computer user. Any user may thus be viewed as a representative of River Church while conducting business on the Internet.
- Email should only be used to communicate specific information. (e.g. times and dates of events). It should not be used as a relationship building tool.
- Email History should be kept and dated.
- When using email/internet for communication with children, it is advised that it should take place between the hours of 9am-5pm. Where working with children outside normal office hours workers should seek advice from their leader but there should be no email communication after 9pm.
- Use of skype and any other web camera or visual communication via the internet should only be used with leader's permission..
- Workers should refrain from using such methods on a one to one basis as they cannot be recorded. (It can be used for conference calls and is considered appropriate if a project or group uses a web camera/Skype in a group environment for project purposes, and has clear aims and objectives for its use).

### **Social Media Policy**

- All social media interaction between workers, paid or voluntary, and children under 18 shall be preferred within monitored/administrated groups.
- Text and any other media posted shall be subject to the acceptable use policy
- All interaction on social media groups shall be recorded if required to be presented to leaders for advice for safeguarding purposes
- Any private messages shall be recorded if required to be presented to leaders for advice for safeguarding purposes
- Any safeguarding concerns/allegations arising from social media shall be referred onto the safeguarding co-ordinator.
- All users of River Church social media groups must be above the minimum age limit
- Workers should ensure their privacy setting ensure the highest levels of security in order to restrict children being able to see any more than what is relevant to communication within the group
- All social media groups should provide links to statutory authorities such as CEOP, to enable children to report online abuse.

### **Consent for photographic images and videos online**

- Photographs that include children will be selected carefully and will endeavour to prevent children from being easily identified.
- Children's full names will not be used on the website in association with their photographs.

- Permission will be sought before any images are taken or displayed and images will only be used for the specific purpose for which permission was sought for and how the image will be stored if not destroyed. If the intention is to use an image on the internet this must be clearly stated and further permission must be acquired if an image is to be used in a way not originally stated.
- Use of images will reflect diversity of age, ethnicity and gender of the activity.
- Live streaming of events must be clearly advertised in advance and where children are involved permission should be sought in line with the photographic guidelines.

**Acceptable Use Policy (This can be included with consent/registration forms for children and young people with a request for acknowledgement by both parent and child)**

- Where access to the internet is provided on our organisation devices or devices owned by an individual via WiFi, we will exercise our right to monitor usage which includes access to websites, interception and deletion of inappropriate or criminal material or unlawfully copied text, video, images or sound.
- WiFi Access will be via a secure password that will be changed quarterly.
- Social media groups must be used in compliance with River Church's policy on social media.

**Children and Workers should not:**

- Search for or download pornographic, racist or hate motivated content.
- Illegally copy or play copyrighted content where permission has not been given.
- Send, request or display offensive messages or pictures.
- Harass, insult or bully others.
- Access the internet using another person's login details.
- Access, download, send or receive any data (including images), which River Church considers offensive in any way, including sexually explicit, discriminatory, defamatory or libellous material.

**Sanctions for violating the acceptable use policy in the opinion of River Church may result in:**

- A temporary or permanent ban on internet use.
- Additional disciplinary action in line with existing practice on inappropriate language or behaviour.
- Where applicable, police or local authorities may be involved.

## Parent Carer Agreement

As the parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ I declare that I have read and understood the Online Safety acceptable use policy for River Church and that my child will be held accountable for their own actions. I understand that it is my responsibility to set standards for my child when selecting, sharing and exploring online information and media.

## Child/YP Agreement

I understand the importance of safety online and the church guidelines on acceptable use.

I will share any concerns, where I or another person may be at risk of harm with the safeguarding coordinator or a trusted adult.

Child Name (Please print)	Child Signature	Date
Parent/Guardian (Please print)	Parent/Guardian Signature	Date