

Thundersley Congregational Church



Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

The Policy



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The TCC Policy

1.0 Purpose

1.1 An effective church policy is one which provides clear direction to leaders, workers and others about expected behaviour, including setting boundaries, when dealing with children, youth and vulnerable adults. An effective policy also makes explicit the church's commitment to the development of good practice and sound procedures. This ensures that children, youth and vulnerable adults concerns and referrals may be handed sensitively, efficiently and in ways which support the needs of the child, youth or vulnerable adult.

1.2 We will create a positive and loving church atmosphere and attitude toward ministering to the needs of vulnerable adults, children and young people. This includes a threefold commitment:

- a) Prayer and pastoral support for both the ministers and those whose needs are ministered to.
- b) Protection for vulnerable adults, children, young people and staff will be achieved as far as possible through basic training in protection responsibilities and thereafter following agreed procedures. This will be followed up by support from organisational leaders for each of their volunteers and further support where appropriate from the church leadership team.
- c) Pastoral care to vulnerable adults, children and young people who may have been abused.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 TCC takes its responsibilities to protect and safeguard all who come into contact with staff and volunteers seriously. This includes the responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults in its care. "The welfare of the child is paramount" (Children Act 1989).

2.2 There are three main elements to our Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults protection policy;

- a) Prevention through the creation of a positive church atmosphere and the teaching, and pastoral support offered to children, youth and vulnerable adults.
- b) Protection by following agreed procedures, ensuring leaders and workers are mentored and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to safeguarding concerns of the children, youth and vulnerable adults.

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(c) Support to children, youth and vulnerable adults people who may have been abused.

2.3 This policy applies to all the children, youth and vulnerable adults, leaders, workers, volunteers and visitors to Thundersley Congregational Church.

2.4 This church recognises it is an agent of referral and not of investigation.

3.0 Church Commitment

3.1 The leaders at Thundersley Congregational Church recognise that for our children, youth and vulnerable adults, confidence, supportive friends and clear lines of communication with a trusted adult helps to prevent abuse.

3.2 We expect our ministries to vulnerable adults, children and young people to:

a) Establish that Jesus is our role for ministry to others.

b) Establish appropriate training for all who minister in the name of the church.

c) Establish and maintain a ministry environment where people feel safe, secure, encouraged to talk and confident that they will be listened to.

d) Establish clear boundaries and to expect that they will be adhered to by all staff and volunteers.

e) Establish effective relationships with relatives and others who may carry the responsibility of care for the individuals (such as parents/guardians, nursing staff or other care providers)

f) Ensure that children, youth and vulnerable adults know that there are adults within the church who they can approach if they are worried or are in difficulty.

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4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1** All leaders, workers, volunteers and visitors with or on behalf of children, youth and vulnerable adults have a responsibility to safeguard them. There are, however, key people within the church who have specific responsibilities under safeguarding children, youth and vulnerable adults procedures. The names of those carrying out these responsibilities for the current year are listed on the contacts page of this document.
- 4.2** It is the role of the designated Safeguarding Board to ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed within the church, and to make appropriate referrals to Essex Social Care Services in accordance with church procedures.
- 4.3** If either of the designated coordinators is unavailable the relevant deputy will act in their absence. (See contacts on page 24 for coordinators).
- 4.4** It is the role of the Senior and associate Ministers to advise all leaders, workers and Volunteers to ensure that they are aware of the church's internal procedures, to advise leaders, workers and volunteers and to offer support to those requiring it.
- 4.5** The Elders are responsible for ensuring that the church safe recruitment processes are always followed. As part of the church's recruitment process an enhanced vetting process will be sought on those individuals that have substantial and unsupervised access to children, youth and vulnerable adults.
- 4.6** The role of the Senior Minister is to ensure that the church has an effective policy, that the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS), Department of Health (DH) and Department of Education (DCSF) guidelines are complied with, and to support the church in this aspect.
- 4.7** The designated Safeguarding Children Co-ordinator, with the designated Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Coordinator (Senior Minister), provide an annual report for the Church (members) detailing any changes to the policy and procedures; training undertaken by all leaders, workers and volunteers and other relevant issues.
- 4.8** Representatives from the CCPAS are available to offer advice, support and training to the designated Safeguarding Children Co-ordinator.

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5.0 Procedures

5.1 All action is taken in line with the following guidance;

- a) Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) Guidelines (The Best of Caring), a copy of which is available in the church office.
- b) The Working Together to safeguard children guidelines following under the Children Act 1989 (updated in 2004) issued in March 2015 and revised in February 2020.
- c) "What To Do If You're Worried A Child Is Being Abused" (published by Department of Health, Department for Education Services, Department of Culture Media and Sports, Home Office, Office of Deputy Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellors Department).

5.2 Leaders, workers and volunteers are kept informed about the safeguarding children, youth and vulnerable adults responsibilities and procedures through induction, briefings and awareness training. Other individuals in the church will never be unsupervised; they will be working alongside the leaders, workers and volunteers.

5.3 Any leader, worker, volunteer or visitor to the church who receives a disclosure of abuse, an allegation or suspects that abuse may have occurred **must** report it immediately to their Primary Support (organisation leader). If the Primary Support or the person who receives the disclosure of abuse feels that further action is necessary they must report it immediately to the designated Safeguarding Children Coordinator or in their absence, the Deputy designated Safeguarding Children Coordinator, or the designated Vulnerable Adults Coordinator or in their absence, the Deputy designated Vulnerable Adults Coordinator as appropriate. In the event of no one being contactable then the person (and/or their Primary Support) who receives the disclosure can refer the suspicion directly to Essex Social Care Services, if the matter is considered urgent.

5.4 In liaison with the Senior Minister the designated Coordinator or their Deputy will immediately refer cases of suspected abuse or allegations to the relevant investigating agency (i.e. Essex Social Care Services) by telephone.

5.5 The telephone referral to Essex Social Care Services will be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. Essential information will include the child, youth or vulnerable adult's name, address, date of birth, family composition, the reason for the referral, whether the child's parents are aware of the referral (where appropriate), the name of person who initially received the disclosure plus any advice given. The written confirmation must be signed and dated by the referrer.

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5.6 We will always undertake to share our intention to refer a child to Essex Social Care Services with the parents or carers unless to do so could place the child at greater risk of harm or impede a criminal investigation. On these occasions advice will be taken from Essex Social Care Services or Essex Police.

5.7 A statement on the church notice board will inform parents and carers about our church's duties and responsibilities under the safeguarding children procedures. Parents/guardians can obtain a copy of the church's safeguarding children policy on request.

6.0 Training and Support

6.1 In order to effectively carry out their safeguarding responsibilities, all individuals who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults will undertake appropriate awareness training, which will be up to date by annual refresher sessions.

6.2 The Elders will ensure that the Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinators and Deputies, also undertake training in inter-agency working that is provided by the CCPAS, or other appropriate agencies and refresher training at yearly intervals to keep knowledge and skills up to date.

6.3 Temporary workers and volunteers who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults in the church will be made aware of their responsibilities and of the church's arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable groups.

6.4 Support will be available for leaders, workers and volunteers from the Designated Coordinators in the first instance and from members of the children/young people leadership team where there are concerns about queries regarding the safeguarding of children.

6.5 All leaders, workers and volunteers have access to advice and guidance on the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct. These matters form part of the induction interviews and are referred to in the children/young people's handbook.

7.0 Confidentiality

7.1 Confidentiality, particularly in the context of safeguarding is an issue which needs to be fully understood by all those working with children, youth and vulnerable adults. The only purpose of confidentiality is to benefit the child. A leader, worker or volunteer must never guarantee confidentiality to a child, youth or vulnerable adult nor should they agree with them to keep a secret. Where there is a safety concern this must be reported to the designated Safeguarding Coordinator and may well require further investigation by the appropriate authorities.

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7.2 Whilst every effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is preserved, this will be governed by what may be an overriding need to protect a person who has been or is at risk of abuse. All those working with vulnerable adults must be clear that it is not possible to keep information about suspected or actual abuse confidential. The needs of the vulnerable person and the potential risk to others requires you to share information about abuse to the Senior Minister or appropriate Elder.

7.3 It should be noted that at TCC our policy is to never offer a promise of confidentiality in any circumstances as you may need to seek advice on something that you are told or become aware of. All counsellors must have appropriate supervision.

7.4 Leaders, workers and volunteers will be informed of relevant information in respect of individual cases regarding safeguarding children, youth and vulnerable adults on a “need to know basis” only. Any information shared with a member of the church in this way must be held confidentially to themselves.

8.0 Records and Monitoring

8.1 Well-kept records are essential to good safeguarding practice. Our church is clear about the need to record any concern held about a children, youth or vulnerable adult within our church, the status of such records and when these records should be passed over to other agencies.

8.2 Any leader, worker or volunteer receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, must make an accurate record as soon as possible noting what was said or seen, putting the event in context, and giving the date, and location. All records will be dated and signed and will include the action taken.

8.3 These file notes are kept in a confidential file, which is separate to other files, and stored in a secure place (in the church safe). In the same way notes must be kept of any person who is being monitored for safeguarding reasons.

8.4 If a child/young person transfers from the church, these files will be copied for the new establishment and forwarded to the child/young person’s new church marked confidential and for the attention of the receiving church’s designated Safeguarding Children Co-ordinator. However this will only be possible if the Safeguarding Children Co-ordinator receives notification of the child/young person’s new church. In the case of vulnerable adults, advice on passing on information will be sought from the appropriate agencies (such as Social Services).

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9.0 Attendance at Safeguarding Children Conferences

9.1 The designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator will, if required, attend a conference called in respect of a child, youth or vulnerable adult. They may be accompanied by other church members if this is of benefit to the child, youth or vulnerable adult.

9.2 The designated Safeguarding Co-ordinators will be available to offer leaders, workers and volunteers attending a safeguarding conference the necessary support and guidance.

10.0 Supporting Children, Youth and Vulnerable adults at Risk

10.1 Our church recognises that children, youth and vulnerable adults who are abused or who witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth or view the world as a positive place.

10.2 This church may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children, youth and vulnerable adults at risk. Nevertheless, whilst at church their behaviour may still be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn.

10.3 This church will endeavour to support children, youth and vulnerable adults through:

- ◆ The church ethos, which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment, giving all children/young people and adults a sense of being respected and valued.
- ◆ All leaders, workers and volunteers agree a consistent approach which will endeavour to ensure that children, youth and vulnerable adults know that some behaviour is unacceptable but she/he is valued.
- ◆ The church will offer pastoral help from experienced children, youth and vulnerable adults' workers to any children, youth or vulnerable adults requiring such help. These individuals will be aware of the church's safeguarding policy.
- ◆ Regular liaison with other professionals and agencies that support the children, youth, vulnerable adults and their families.
- ◆ A commitment to develop productive, supportive relationships with parents, whenever it is in the child, youth and vulnerable adult's best interest to do so.
- ◆ The development and support of a responsive and knowledgeable leadership, trained to respond appropriately in safeguarding children, youth and vulnerable adults situations.

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- ◆ Recognition that statistically children with behavioural difficulties and disabilities are most vulnerable to abuse so leaders, workers or volunteers who work in any capacity with children or young people with profound and multiple disabilities, sensory impairment and/or emotional and behavioural problems, will need to be particularly sensitive to signs of abuse.
- ◆ Recognition that in a home environment where there is domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse, children/young people may also be vulnerable and in need of support or protection

11.0 Safeguarding Church and Staff.

11.1 It is essential that the high standards of concern and responsibility adopted with regard to alleged abuse by parents or carers are similarly displayed when members of the church are accused of abuse.

11.2 Only authorised agencies may investigate allegations of abuse (Social Care Services, the Police or in some areas, the NSPCC). Whilst it is permissible to ask the children, youth or vulnerable adult simple, non-leading questions to ascertain the facts of the allegation, formal interviews and the taking of statements is not.

11.3 The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff is set out within the appropriate handbook which is held by the coordinator.

11.4 Where an allegation of abuse has been made the designated Safeguarding Children Co-ordinator should in the first instance contact the CCPAS. The Senior Minister should be kept informed. Through discussion and consultation, a decision will be made as to whether to make a referral to Essex Social Care Services. Where the allegation is against the Safeguarding Children Co-ordinator, the Senior Minister will take this action.

11.5 If for any reason it is decided that a referral to Essex Social Care Services is not appropriate, it will be necessary to address matters in accordance with the church's disciplinary procedures in liaison with the Senior Minister.

11.6 Where services or activities are provided separately by another body using the church's premises, the Senior Minister and Elders will seek assurance that the body concerned has appropriate policies and procedures in place in regard to safeguarding children, youth and vulnerable adults and child protection.

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12.0 Whistle blowing

12.1 We recognise that children, youth and vulnerable adults cannot be expected to raise concerns for themselves in an environment where leadership and members fail to do so. Therefore, we recognise that 'whistle blowing' is to be regarded as good practice.

12.2 All leaders, workers and volunteers should be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the attitude or actions of colleagues. If necessary they should speak to the Senior Minister or the Safeguarding Children Co-ordinator or CCPAS.

13.0 Social Media

13.1 The Church recognises that using the Internet (and other forms of technology) is an important part of the lives of the children and young people we work with. We understand that for many children and young people, using the Internet is a regular part of their lives and has a significant impact on their social development. In accordance with The Church's Safeguarding Policy, we recognise that we must take all possible steps to protect young people from significant harm or risk whilst using the Internet or any other form of technology. We also recognise the importance of establishing and updating procedures to ensure workers are protected whilst they work with children and young people.

13.2 It is not appropriate to have private non-work/group related contact in the form of electronic communication with the children and young people with whom we work. We recognise that there will be times when it is necessary and important to use electronic communication. However, we recognise the need for an appropriate response and always encourage face-to-face contact as opposed to a contact or reply via online methods of communication. Only use electronic communication for reasons relating to work with children and young people, not for general socialising. Your line manager or youth group leader should be aware when you are using electronic communication. This must be set up as part of a group communication and not by an individual.

13.3 Parental consent for using electronic forms of communication is essential and should be included on annual consent forms or by letter with a return slip agreeing to the use of this form of communication. It should be outlined what means you will be using for communication and what information you will be communicating. It is important to explain this policy and practice to parents and carers and seek to ensure they are aware and are happy in the use of electronic communication and what type of electronic communication is being used (e.g. email).

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cont:

Only church post holders holding a valid Disclosure and Barring Check may have their contact details included in the web-site or contact young people directly by electronic means. It is recommended that meeting times are only given on a church web-site for children's groups where all children are met by parents or carers and there is no unrestricted entry to the building. (i.e. there is a locked door with bell or someone attending the entrance). It is recommended that all contact with under 18's or other vulnerable persons through e-mail, message boards, etc is available for inspection in some other way as agreed by the church. It is recommended that phone calls and texts between leaders and young people are kept brief and functional. For example, 'what time is club tonight?' 'It's at 7, see you there'.

- 13.4** 'Internet' communication specifically refers to the use of social networking sites such as Bebo, Facebook, Twitter and other websites of a similar nature. 'Email' communication specifically refers to the use of emails, including written text and/or pictures sent from personal or work accounts. Email should only be used to communicate specific information (times and dates of events, for example). It should not be used as a relationship building tool. Only use a 'shared' email account where all church/group leaders can access any emails, regardless of whether it is private or public. This would allow communication amongst leaders and young people to remain safe. Only group emails should be used. Workers should encourage appropriate 'face to face' contact where possible. Conversation (repeated sending of emails between two individuals) via email is discouraged. Workers should make their line manager or team leader aware when they are using email to contact young people. Email histories should be kept and dated. email should only be used to convey information and not used as a relationship tool. However, if a young person discloses information or anything of a concerning matter arises via email, do not respond to the email. Make attempts to contact the young person via other methods of communication and where possible, arrange to meet face to face if necessary. Ensuring that this is in line with other safeguarding procedures, not alone etc.
- 13.5** All language should be appropriate and where possible 'standard responses' should be used (e.g. if you have sent an email out containing event details and receive a reply asking for further details, create a standard response with additional details so that all young people receive the same information). Take great care over the language used to reduce the risk of misinterpretation. When sending emails, do not use informal language such as shorthand or 'text language' as this can often be misunderstood and lead to further complications.
- 13.6** When using email/the Internet for communication with young people (within the guide lines above), it is advised that it should take place between the hours of 9am-5pm. If a project takes place in the evening (after 5pm) and it is necessary to send an email or use the Internet, seek advice from your line manager/group leader but there should be no email communication after 9pm.

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13.7 You should not add children or young people on your personal social networking page who are part of the children's and youth ministry at your church or group and who are under the age of 18. You can set up a Facebook group for your project or group and invite them to be members (that is if they are over the required minimum age limit – which is 13 for Facebook). Only use an agreed social networking account for contact with children and young people with whom you are working. This should normally be an account set up specifically for this purpose on behalf of a group rather than an individual (use project accounts, never personal accounts).

Do not use their personal social networking or instant messaging accounts for contact with children and young people. Seek to ensure that your personal profiles on any social networking sites are set to the highest form of security to avoid young people accessing personal information or seeing any pictures of a personal nature.

13.8 The rationale for texting and calling is the same as social networking and email contact. Be very careful in what language you use. It is not encouraged for workers to give out their personal mobile number to young people. However it is recognised that this may be needed at times. Texting late in the evening has the potential to be viewed as inappropriate. Therefore no texting after 9pm should take place. Discourage text conversation or phone conversation where it is not about communicating information. When you have received a phone call/text or made a phone call/text to a young person that is not giving out information you must make a record of the conversation and report it to your line manager or group leader. As much as possible do not give children or young people your personal number.

Group code of conduct.

- Be respectful of other people's privacy.
- Never give away personal information.
- If you wouldn't say it, don't send it.
- Be polite.
- Maintain a history, so anything you send/say can be traced.

Encourage the children and young people to discuss what acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is. Put this code of conduct on the wall as a visual reminder.

Most children and young people use mobile phones and the Internet appropriately; however when technology is abused there may be legal consequences

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What to do if a child tells you that are being cyberbullied

- DON'T PANIC! Your initial reaction is vital. Listen, learn, involve and resolve.
- Assure them that they have done the right thing by telling you.
- Decide a plan of action with the young person.
- Go through any messages that they have received and kept.
- Ask them not to open any further online or text messages from these addresses and phone numbers, but to allow you to open them instead.
- Get them to change their mobile phone number.
- Get them to change their online profile.
- Involve other agencies.
- ♦ Support the young person.

What do I do if I discover that a child is cyberbullying?

- Remain calm.
- Ask them what's been happening and find out what's behind their behaviour.
- Don't label the young person a 'bully'.
- When you've established the catalyst or reasons behind the cyberbullying behaviour, explain why this behaviour is wrong.
- Explain the consequences of bullying.
- Agree a way forward.

14.0 Policy

14.1 All workers are responsible for reading any church policies produced regarding safeguarding and communication matters and are expected to adhere to the guidelines in the Church's current policies.

14.2 The Elders and members of the church will review the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adult Policy annually.