

Gate Church International SCIO

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

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1. Safeguarding Panel: appointment, remit and powers

- 1.1 The Safeguarding Panel is formally recruited and appointed to act on behalf of (not instead of) the Elders/Trustees, to help to ensure that the Church's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures are implemented.
- 1.2 Each member of the Safeguarding Panel will be appointed by the Elders/Trustees for a term of three years. All appointments must be minuted in the Leadership Team* Meeting minutes. At the end of his/her term of service, the Panel member may be appointed by the Elders/ Trustees for a further term, subject to his/her agreement.

**Leadership Team comprises of Senior Pastors and Elders/ Trustees.*

When a new member of the Safeguarding Panel is appointed, he/she must:

- Read the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and the related GCI Safeguarding online documents
- Have a meeting with the Chair of the Safeguarding Panel to ensure his/her understanding of:
 - the role of the Safeguarding Panel;
 - their responsibility regarding training, management and support of workers;
 - the Safe Recruitment and PVG application process;
 - their responsibility regarding Safeguarding concerns and
 - their responsibility in relation to Managing Those Who Pose A Risk
 - the Church's Pastoral Care Policy in relation to harassment or abuse involving those not covered by the Safeguarding Policy.

(N.B. This process is managed by the Pastoral Team, Elders and Pastors, but because there can often be cross-over with Safeguarding, it is important to understand one policy in relation to the other.)

- 1.3 The Safeguarding Panel should comprise a minimum of three people who are regularly involved with Gate Church International (and who ideally have experience and/or expertise in Safeguarding issues), plus one Pastor, one Support Elder and the person who is 'Lead Signatory' with Disclosure Scotland.

- 1.4 The Safeguarding Panel is required to meet at least twice per year with a quorum of three members. It will also meet as frequently as is required and at short notice if necessary.

Routine meetings of the panel will be convened and scheduled by the Chair of the Safeguarding Panel. However, any member of the Panel can request an immediate meeting, should an emergency situation arise.

Any one of the Safeguarding Panel may take emergency action to ensure that the Church's responsibilities of Safeguarding are discharged. Wherever possible such action should be taken after consultation with the Pastor or the Elder/ Trustee who is a member of the Panel or failing that with the Chair of the Trustees/ Elders.

- 1.5 The Safeguarding Panel ensures that the appropriate authorities (Police Scotland and Social Work Department) are contacted in emergency situations. It also works to ensure that the church offers consistently safe places, safe people and safe activities in terms of recruitment, training and procedures that promote child protection and adult protection.

- 1.6 The Safeguarding Panel will keep a written/electronic record of their decisions, the reasons for those decisions, fact finding reports and notes of actions taken. Records should be stored in accordance with our *Privacy Policy and Secure Handling, Use, Storage and Retention of Disclosure Information Policy*.

The Chair of the Safeguarding Panel will be responsible for sharing all minutes, records etc. with the Chair of the Elders/ Trustees no more than one week after a meeting of the Safeguarding Panel. These will be shared with Elders/ Trustees at their next Leadership Team meeting (or earlier as appropriate).

Church Elder / Trustees Responsibilities

- 1.7 The Elders/Trustees are responsible for any decisions made on their behalf by the Safeguarding panel. The Safeguarding Panel should report regularly to the Elders/ Trustees. Safeguarding should be a standing item on the Leadership Team agenda.
- 1.8 The Elders/ Trustees should ensure that the congregation knows who their Safeguarding Panel members are and what their role is. For example, communication via posters in the main auditorium and meeting areas, the website, Vision Sunday meetings and through pastoral groups/ ministry teams.

2. Safe Places

- 2.1 Gate Church International provides environments that are safe, welcoming, and supportive. We put measures in place to protect children and vulnerable adults and to promote the wellbeing of all.
- 2.2 Where any activity in the church is recorded or broadcast live stream, we ensure measures are in place to protect children and adults. Notice is given of recordings/ live stream and when there is movement of children around the building, a holding slide is shown on screen to ensure the privacy and protection of children.
- 2.3 We require the use of contracts with high risk offenders who wish to attend church services - see Managing those who pose a risk policy
- 2.4 If the Church lets its premises to non-church groups, it should ensure that a copy of an Agreement for Use of Church Hall or Church has been signed before the let can commence.

Within the Terms and Conditions section of the Agreement for Use of Church Hall or Church, the User should be asked to confirm that they have made themselves familiar with the *Gate Church International Safeguarding Policy and Procedures*.

Should the hirer carry out any activities for children or young people (aged 0-18), they are required to have their own Protection of Vulnerable Groups policy that meets Disclosure Scotland's safeguarding standards. A copy of this policy should be made available to Gate Church International at the time of signing of the agreement.

Should an organisation not have its own safeguarding policy and procedure in place it must agree to adhere to the GCI policy document. This agreement will be recognised as part of the letting agreement. Failure to adhere to these requirements will result in a cancellation of the letting agreement.

Our terms also give us the right to cancel a hire if the Church reasonably believes that:

- (i) such hiring will lead to a breach of licensing conditions, if applicable, or other legal or statutory requirements, or
- (ii) unlawful or unsuitable activities will take place at the premises as a result of this hiring.

If child protection issues are suspected or reported to the church, the information received must be considered and passed to the Social Work Department and Police.

3. Safe People

3.1 Appointing a new Pastor or Elder / Trustee

When a new Pastor or Elder/Trustee is appointed, he/she must:

- Read the GCI Safeguarding Policy and the related GCI Safeguarding online documents
- Have a joint meeting with the Chair of the Board of Elders/ Trustees and the Safeguarding Panel in order to ensure his/her understanding of:
 - the duties of a Pastor or Elder/Trustee regarding the implementation of GCI's Safeguarding Policy and practices
 - the responsibilities of the Board of Elders/ Trustee regarding training, management and the support of workers
 - the Safe Recruitment process
 - Elders' responsibilities regarding Safeguarding concerns and to Managing Those Who Pose A Risk
 - the Church's Pastoral Care Policy in relation to harassment or abuse involving those not covered by the Safeguarding Policy.

(N.B. process policy is managed by the Pastoral Team, Elders and Pastors, but because there can often be cross-over with Safeguarding, it is important to understand one policy in relation to the other.)

3.2 It is the policy of Gate Church International that any staff or volunteer must not work with children or vulnerable adults until they have completed our safe recruitment procedure. This process includes:

- **Providing Two references** (At least one referee should have knowledge of any previous work undertaken with children and/or protected adults; for volunteers for Children's Church, one referee should be the applicant's Small Group leader or a regular attender of the applicant's Small Group) (link to reference form)
- **PVG Scheme Membership with Disclosure Scotland** Renewal of staff and volunteers PVG with Disclosure Scotland is required at role changes.
- **Safeguarding Training as required for the role**

3.3 **Recruitment of staff providing regulated work with children (0-18 years) or vulnerable adults**

In the case of employees, the Board of Elders hold ultimate responsibility for appointing applicants to a position.

This can only be done once the employee has completed PVG Scheme membership.

Blemished PVG Returns

When a PVG is returned with a blemish, the safeguarding panel will consider the blemish in line with our 'Blemished PVG Policy'.

3.4 When someone is not suitable or becomes unsuitable to work with children or adults

No matter how rigorous our 'safe recruitment' processes may be, occasionally there will be situations where a volunteer or paid employee is unsuitable to continue working with children or adults. This may be because they demonstrate behaviour that could be regarded as criminal or lacking in appropriate boundaries, is dishonest or demonstrates negative attitudes towards vulnerable groups in society.

An individual may become unsuitable because of their actions whilst working/volunteering for the Church or because of their behaviour or actions out with the organisation (even if the information is historic).

Legal duty to refer harmful behaviour to Disclosure Scotland

Gate Church International must make a referral to Disclosure Scotland if a person shows harmful behaviour and they:

- are dismissed as a result
- would or might have been dismissed but left before they could be
- are permanently moved away from work with children or protected adults

If any of these actions were taken, the organisation must make a referral to Disclosure Scotland within 3 months of making the decision.

If Gate Church International does not make a referral within 3 months, Disclosure Scotland will report the organisation to Police Scotland.

Harmful behaviour that must be referred

Examples of harmful behaviour include:

- harming a child or protected adult
- placing a child or protected adult at risk of harm
- inappropriate behaviour involving pornography
- inappropriate behaviour of a sexual nature involving a child or protected adult

- giving inappropriate medical treatment to a child or protected adult

The Safeguarding Panel has the responsibility to make the referral to Disclosure Scotland outlining details of the harmful behaviour.

3.5 'Consideration for Listing or Barring'

If an initial assessment of a referral indicates that Disclosure Scotland may need to list the person, they will carry out a full 'consideration for listing' assessment. This is to decide if the person should be listed as unsuitable to do regulated work with children, protected adults or both. The person can continue to work with vulnerable groups while Disclosure Scotland is checking their information, but if they are a PVG Scheme member their PVG Scheme Record will say that they are under consideration for listing.

It is the policy of Gate Church International that a person will not undertake regulated work while under consideration for listing.

3.6 Children and Adults Lists

Disclosure Scotland keeps a list of people unsuitable to do regulated work with children and a list of people unsuitable to do regulated work with protected adults. The lists are separate, although people can be on both lists.

- 3.7 If Disclosure Scotland adds someone to one or both of these lists, it is known as being 'listed'.

It is the policy of Gate Church International that if someone is listed on either one of these lists, they are barred from working with the vulnerable groups within our church.

- 3.8 If someone is listed they are not eligible for PVG Scheme membership for that type of work. If they were already a PVG member before they were listed, Disclosure Scotland will end their membership for that type of regulated work.

- 3.9 It is an offence for someone who is listed to do regulated work with the protected groups they are listed for and it is an offence for an organisation to employ a listed person to do that kind of regulated work.

Safeguarding Training

- 3.10 Staff and volunteers receive training on safeguarding procedures at their induction, together with a booklet of information which is signed by volunteers and staff.

More in-depth training is given within the first year of their recruitment, and further updates are provided annually.

- 3.11 Training undertaken by Volunteers and Staff, by the Safeguarding Panel, will be recorded in the Church Training Register, which is stored securely by the Church Office. Training undertaken by Elders/ Trustees and Pastors should also be recorded in the Leadership Team Meeting Minutes.
- 3.12 It is a requirement of the church's insurers that all who work with children and young people (0-18) and with Protected Adults receive training annually. The Church Training Register must be shared with the Safeguarding Panel regularly; it must be a standing item on the Panel's Agenda, so the panel can check that safeguarding training for all volunteers and employees is up-to-date. If shortfalls are detected, the Panel must ensure that speedy action is taken to remedy them.

4. Safe Activities

- 4.1 All activities involving children, young people and vulnerable adults should be viewed through the lens of any potential safeguarding risk. Within safeguarding our greatest concern is to mitigate the risk of anyone being subject to any form of abuse.
- 4.2 The starting point for any safeguarding risk assessment is to ensure that there has been full compliance with the mandatory requirements when recruiting supervising adults (see Section 3 Safe People).
- 4.3 Those responsible for leading and assisting these activities participate in specific training and sign an agreement to procedures in the relevant Handbook – links to Children’s Church handbook and Tribe handbook
- 4.4 Safeguarding risk assessments of activities and locations should be routine in on-going activities and when preparing for new ones.
- 4.5 Supervision ratios for children and adults should be in line with national guidance – see Recommended adult to child ratios for working with children | NSPCC Learning Particular supervision for children who have additional support needs should be taken into account and support from the parent/ carer should be sought as appropriate.
- 4.6 Written consent from a parent/ career is obtained for a child or young person to participate in the activity link to consent form
- 4.7 We promote the safe use of Information Technology by church staff and volunteers. In the use of any social media account of Gate Church International including Tribe, care must be taken in regard to these key points
 - Photographs of children and young people must only be displayed with the consent of parents and the young person (aged 12-18) – link to consent form
 - Adhering to the Guidance on running online meetings and communicating with young people through social media platforms see **Guidance for Online Activities**

5. Responding to allegations and concerns of abuse

Mandatory Reporting

- 5.1 Gate Church International is committed to the mandatory reporting of all allegations of recent or historic abuse made against Church employees or volunteers to the statutory authorities for investigation.

We follow established protocols for liaising with statutory authorities.

- 5.2 All allegations must be reported immediately to the Safeguarding Panel for referral to the authorities. However, in an emergency situation in which a child or vulnerable adult appears to be at **immediate** risk of harm, any responsible adult to whom an allegation is disclosed should contact the statutory authorities without delay.

First Response to an allegation

- 5.3 When an allegation against Church personnel is reported, the person to whom it is disclosed must:
- Listen carefully to the detail of the allegation
 - record the key information accurately
 - not attempt to investigate the allegation
 - refer the allegation to the Safeguarding Panel

The alleged victim and the complainant (if the complainant is speaking on behalf of someone else) must:

- be treated with respect and compassion
- be assured that the allegation will be dealt with appropriately
- be briefed on the process as it unfolds (where possible)
- be supported throughout

5.4 Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations

While it is important to differentiate between allegations and concerns, both must be referred to the Safeguarding Panel.

If concerns are shared sufficiently early, then it is possible that behaviours or attitudes can be addressed without significant harm developing.

The Safeguarding Panel may advise that particular concerns need to be reported to statutory services who will consider whether to explore these. Once those concerns

are explored further, there might well be evidence of harm. In that case, a concern may lead to an allegation.

Non Church related allegations

- 5.5 If an allegation of abuse is disclosed to a member of Gate Church International that does not involve a member of the church we will encourage the person to report their concerns to the local Police and Social Work.

6. Supporting Survivors of Abuse and their families

Providing care and support for those who have experienced abuse:

- 6.1 We provide a compassionate response to all who disclose any experience of having been abused and we offer them pastoral care, support, and reparation.
- 6.2 We will signpost to agencies which can help directly with abuse in Dundee such as Women's Aid counselling service.
- 6.3 We offer small group support for all. An appropriate small group leader can care and support the person who has experienced abuse. The leader will listen to their feelings and try to support in any way they can ensure confidentiality in line with safeguarding procedures.
- 6.4 The church aims to protect the person in the wider environment and will listen to any support requested for the individual to feel safeguarded.

7. Allegations made against a Pastor, Trustees, Employee and Volunteers

- 7.1 Allegations of abuse may be made against paid or volunteers currently working with children or protected adults.

Allegations can come from any source - from children or young people, from adults, from parents, other members of staff, members of the general public, or from external professionals e.g. police, NHS services, social work.

- 7.2 Some allegations may be historical, against individuals no longer working with children or protected adults.
- 7.3 The Safeguarding Panel must be notified as soon as possible after an allegation of abuse of concern is received. A timely response is crucial to preserve evidence if a crime is suspected.
- 7.4 Serious concerns about the immediate safety and wellbeing of any child or vulnerable adult should always be reported to the police and/or social work department in the first instance.
- 7.5 When an allegation of abuse is received, the accused person will be suspended from their role while any investigation is underway.

Supporting the accused

- 7.6 When an allegation is received, the accused person must:
- be informed, when appropriate, that an allegation against him/her has been referred to the statutory authorities
 - be informed, where appropriate, of the allegation itself
 - be advised of his/her right to union or legal support
 - be briefed on the process as it unfolds (where possible)
 - be supported throughout.
- 7.7 When an allegation is deemed to require no criminal investigation or proven to be unfounded by the police, Gate Church International will hold its own internal investigation to decide if the acquitted person should be free to resume his/her duties within the life of the Church.

- 7.8 The trustees will write to the acquitted person informing him/her of the trustees' decision and any conditions they may wish to place on him/her.

In such circumstances, however, the acquitted person will be kept informed of the situation and his/her rights will be fully respected.

- 7.9 Trustees can seek advice on necessary steps from the Church's solicitors. This step should be taken at the earliest opportunity to ensure that risk is reduced and/or managed and that the employee or volunteer is appropriately supported throughout the process.

8. Supporting those accused of abuse and their families

- 8.1 When there has been an allegation of abuse received concerning a pastor, worker or volunteer made, we offer pastoral care, support and fair treatment to the respondent.
- 8.2 A member of the pastoral team will monitor the worker/volunteer's welfare until the situation has been concluded.
- 8.3 We will consider involving our external advisor to ensure the response is appropriate, proportionate and impartial.

9. Reporting to Police, Social Work and OSCR

9.1 It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Panel to report allegations or concerns of abuse to the Police or Social Work

9.2 When a member of the Panel verbally reports an allegation or concern of abuse to Police Scotland or Social Work Department, the information required will be likely to include:

- Name and date of birth and address (if known) of child or adult at risk, and of the person who causes concern.
- Name and date of birth and address (if known) of the accused person.
- Is the parent or carer aware of the referral and what are their views and wishes? (Unless the disclosure is about the parent/carer)
- Details of witnessed, suspected or reported harm or risk of harm:
 - What happened before, during and after the harmful event? (Use the person's own words if known)
 - When did the event happen? (Include times and full dates)
 - Where did it happen?
 - Who was allegedly involved and what did they say or do?
 - Names of witnesses.
- If known, give details of any previous concerns about witnessed, suspected or reported harm or risk of harm.

9.3 The Safeguarding Panel should follow up a verbal referral to police/social work with confirmation in writing provided that this can be done in a secure manner.

Reporting to the Church Elders / Trustees

9.4 Following any report to the Police / Social Work, the Safeguarding Panel will inform the Elders/ Trustees (via the Chair of Elders/ Trustees) that an allegation has been made and reported to the authorities.

The Safeguarding Panel will inform the Elders/ Trustees that the person should be suspended from any duties (voluntary or paid) that brings him/her in contact with children or young people (aged 0-18) or Protected Adults.

Every care must be taken at this stage to emphasise the precautionary nature of such suspension/other measures, until the outcome of any investigation by Police Scotland or Social Work Department is known.

Raising a concern to OSCR

- 9.5 OSCR's role as regulator includes supporting charities in complying with the **Charities and Trustees Investment (Scotland) Act 2005**, as well as investigating and taking action where there is evidence of misconduct.

Members of the public, volunteers or charity employees can raise a concern if they believe the charity may be putting the people it helps at clear risk of harm for example by not having appropriate safeguarding procedures.

Please find information below about OSCR's role in investigating a concern and a link to the online form to report the concern

<https://www.oscr.org.uk/concern-form>

- 9.6 **Other reporting responsibilities**

Scottish Government

The church also has a requirement to report to Scottish ministers, due to the terms and conditions in some grant contracts from the Scottish Government.

Insurance

The Church also has a requirement to report to our insurer in some instances. Both the Safeguarding Panel and the Elders/ Trustees must consult with the **Senior Admin Officer** to ensure that the right courses of action are taken.

Disclosure Scotland

The Lead Signatory holds personal legal responsibility (in addition to the organisation's legal responsibility) to report under PVG Legislation when the notifiable event occurs.

10. Quality Assurance

- 10.1 We require pastors, elders/ trustees, employees and volunteers to participate in ongoing training and to develop the requisite knowledge, attitudes and skills relevant to their respective roles.

We encourage and facilitate the sharing of best safeguarding practice throughout the Church.

- 10.2 The Safeguarding Panel should engage in continuous improvement through regular audits (preferably annually) of:

- compliance with National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland in 2021 and Dundee Inter-agency Child Protection Procedures 2023
- handling complaints
- active ministries receiving PVG clearance
- Monitor progress of changes made to safeguarding practices and policies

- 10.3 The Safeguarding Panel will develop action plans to:

- Identify training needs
- Improve practices shortfalls

10.4 **Audits**

All Audit results will be shared with the elders/trustees. Audit results will be subject to external review.