

## **Plymouth Vineyard Safeguarding Children Policy**

This policy applies to all staff, trustees, team leaders, volunteers or anyone working on behalf of Plymouth Vineyard Church. The purpose of this policy is:

- To protect children and young people who receive services from Plymouth Vineyard.
- To provide staff and volunteers with overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and child protection.

Plymouth Vineyard Church (PVC) believes that a child should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and to keep them safe. We are committed to practise in a way that protects them.

A note on age: The Children Act (1989) defines a child as someone who is less than 18 years of age. PVC policies and procedures use this definition of 'child'.

### **Other policies this document is related to**

As well as the appendices listed below, this policy also relates to

- Camera Phone Policy
- Complaints and Dignity Policy
- Health & safety policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Policy

### **1. General principles**

The Children Act 2004 and the Department for Education (DfE) guidance document: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 (paragraph 2), defines safeguarding and promoting children and young people's welfare as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health or development
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

The above statutory guidance defines child protection as part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. Child protection is the activity undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm. A child is considered to be abused or at risk of abuse when the basic needs of the child are not being met, through avoidable acts of either commission or omission. This includes neglect and physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Abuse can involve children of all ages from all cultures, religions and social classes.

**1.1** Plymouth Vineyard ("the church") is a registered charity, and the trustees are responsible for ensuring that those benefiting from the charity are not harmed in any way through contact with their charity. They must accordingly take all reasonable steps within their power to ensure that this does not happen.

#### **The Charity Commission states that;**

*"Children are an especially vulnerable group and the Charity Commission is particularly concerned to stress the importance of proper safeguards within charities for the protection of children. This applies both to charities working in the UK and other countries where children may face different or additional risks of abuse or*

*exploitation. These safeguards should include a child protection policy and procedures for dealing with issues of concern."*

**1.2** The health, safety and well-being of all children both in church families and visiting the church are of paramount importance to the church. Children have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture or disability. They have a right to be safe in the church. This also applies to any other activity, both on and off site, run by the church.

**1.3** The church respects children. The atmosphere within the church is one that encourages all children to grow into mature people who can make decisions and who know and love Jesus for themselves.

**We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:**

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- Appointing a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and trustee overseeing safeguarding.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers.
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring that all necessary checks are made.
- Recording and storing information professionally and securely, and sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers.
- Using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately.
- Ensuring that we have effective complaints measures in place.
- Ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance.

## **2. Procedures**

### **2.1 Key Personnel**

**Alex Cooper** is the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)

Plymouth Vineyard Church Trustees **Dawn Tucker and Tracey White** are currently responsible for overseeing safeguarding children/adults and effective implementation of policy.

**Graham Mann-Smith** currently assists with the administration of DBS ID checks.

All relevant contact details appear on the final page of this policy.

When a person volunteers in a role where a DBS is required the coordinator for that ministry should inform the DSO or recruiter/admin who will ask the applicant to complete a self-declaration form and send them an invite to complete the online application forms.

We are advised by the Churches' Thirtyone:eight (<https://thirtyoneeight.org/>)

### **2.2 Identifying abuse and acting on it**

If a child offers information about abuse to a children's team volunteer, it may sometimes be done obliquely rather than directly. An abused child is likely to be under severe emotional stress, and the children's pastor may be the only adult whom the child is prepared to trust. When information is offered in confidence, the children's team volunteer will need to display tact and sensitivity in responding to the disclosure. The children's team volunteer will need to reassure the child, and retain his or her trust, while explaining the need for action, which will necessarily involve other adults being informed. We want a system whereby, if a child discloses abuse, the child should not have to repeat the information to different people.

A children's team volunteer who receives a report from a child alleging abuse must not ask leading questions or proffer alternative explanations for the child's concerns. The child's report should be listened to carefully, and recorded accurately, in the language used by the child, at the earliest opportunity following its receipt.

**2.3** If any children's team volunteer suspects that a child in his/her care may be a victim of abuse, they immediately inform the DSO about their concerns. Abuse can be of a sexual, emotional or physical nature. It can also be the result of neglect.

**2.4** If a child alleges abuse, the church would usually make a referral without communicating with parents first. In some circumstances we would inform parents first.

**2.5** When a child makes a disclosure of sexual abuse the adult will avoid questioning the child or promising confidentiality while giving reassurance. Additional guidelines for recording information are given in Appendix 4.

**2.6** If you're worried about a child or young person or think they're being abused and aren't able to contact the DSO, call Plymouth Gateway Service **01752 668000 (select option 1-Children's Services)** [or 01752 346984 out of hours] or email [gateway@plymouth.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:gateway@plymouth.gcsx.gov.uk) Or the ThirtyOne:Eight helpline 0303 003 11 11.

**2.7** We regard all information relating to individual child protection issues as confidential, and we treat this accordingly. We only pass information on to appropriate persons. We inform the child at all stages who is involved, and what information we have given them.

**2.8** We require all children's team volunteers to undergo enhanced criminal records checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) so that the church can make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people working alongside vulnerable groups such as children.

### **Support from Vineyard Churches UK & Ireland (VCUKI)**

The VCUKI National Safeguarding Team (NST) are on hand to support with any safeguarding queries or concerns. The NST must be informed of any serious safeguarding incidents. The DSO should refer to page 18 of 'safeguarding – a guide for churches' to understand when PVC will need to contact the NST.

National Safeguarding Team (NST) contact details:

Tel: 01482 462 690

Email: [finance.legal@vcuki.org.uk](mailto:finance.legal@vcuki.org.uk) / [safeguarding@vcuki.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@vcuki.org.uk)

**Procedure A:** *where the suspected abuse does not involve an allegation about a children's team volunteer.*

Whenever a children's team volunteer has reason to suspect that a child has suffered abuse, or is at risk of suffering abuse, Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) must be informed. *It may also help them to talk it through with their team leader if they are unsure.*

The DSO should contact Plymouth Children's Social Care ("CSC") and make a clear statement of

- the known facts
- any suspicions or allegations
- whether or not there has been any contact with the child's family

If the DSO feels unsure about what a child has said, or whether what has been said may potentially raise child protection issues, further advice may be sought informally from CSC. This may not constitute a child protection referral, but may help to clarify the concerns. The best advice is to contact CSC unless the referrer is absolutely sure that the issue is not about child protection.

An accurate record of all that has happened must be made, stating the facts of any injury, times, explanations and action taken (see appendix 2). Children's team volunteers should note carefully what they have observed, and when they observed it. Signs of physical injury should be described in detail, and sketched using a copy of the body map (see appendix 3). Any comment by the child concerned, or by an adult who might be the abuser, about how an injury occurred should be recorded; preferably quoting the words actually used as soon as possible after the comment has been made.

The DSO must confirm in writing to CSC the actions that have been taken.

The DSO should work with CSC in relation to discussions with parents because CSC, in accepting the referral, become responsible for determining what action is to be taken in relation to the child, including advising parents. CSC will advise the DSO what they are saying to parents and when, so that the church is able to respond to parents appropriately.

**Procedure B** *where a children's team volunteer is alleged to be involved in the suspected abuse.*

#### **Key procedural steps**

On receiving an allegation of child abuse, the DSO\* should:

Make an accurate record of the details initially provided, (including dates, times, location(s), incident(s) and people allegedly involved – see appx 2).

Enlist the support and advice of the overseeing trustee, who may in turn will seek advice from the Senior Pastor.

If the allegation is considered likely to involve child abuse, notify the appropriate CSC officer of the details and confirm them subsequently in writing, (copying them to the lead pastor).

In liaison with CSC determine whether the allegation:

- a. Is to be dealt with as a child protection investigation (if so, act under the guidance of CSC/the Police), in which case the child protection procedure will have priority over other procedures
- b. Is a disciplinary issue that can be dealt with within the church in liaison with the lead pastor.
- c. Is unfounded.

\*'Overseeing Trustee' should replace the reference to 'DSO' above where the alleged abuser is the DSO.

#### **Additional notes**

When a child is in need of urgent medical attention and there is suspicion of abuse, the DSO should take the child to the Accident and Emergency Department at the nearest hospital, having of course notified CSC.

A child protection investigation involving one of the children's team volunteer or church attendees will take priority over any internal investigation. Where the matter is to be dealt with as a child protection investigation, the Lead pastor, DSO and Overseeing Trustee will normally be involved in and contribute to the strategy meeting(s) to plan the conduct of the investigation. The welfare of the accused member of staff or children's team volunteer will be taken into consideration at any such meeting, so as to balance the interests of the investigation with the need to minimise stress to the person, who may be wrongly accused of serious offences.

Where an internal enquiry is to be held in abeyance, advice should be obtained from the church's Core Leadership Team and the Lead Pastor on how to proceed in the event that suspension of the member(s) of staff is appropriate. Where suspension is considered to be appropriate, it should be in accordance with the church's disciplinary procedure.

In some cases, it may be necessary for the police to interview the children's team volunteer before he or she is approached by the Lead Pastor or the DSO. In cases involving the police it is expected that:

- Police officers should be given every assistance with their enquiries
- Confidentiality about such enquiries should be maintained in the interests of the children's pastors
- The Lead Pastor should obtain advice from VCUKI to determine what interim action, if any, may be appropriate.

If, following initial consideration, it is determined that the allegation is without foundation, the SDO should:

- consider, where appropriate, and in consultation with the CSC officer whether the child (or children) might have been abused by someone else;
- inform the children's pastor of the allegation and the fact that no further action is to be taken;
- inform the parents of the child (or children) of the allegation and of the outcome.

The DSO or Lead Pastor should further consider:

- whether counselling or informal professional advice to the children's pastor is appropriate and, if so, in what form, and whether counselling and support is appropriate for the child or children who made the allegations and their parents.

All decisions and actions must be recorded at all stages of the procedure.

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## Appendices

Monitoring and Review page

Appendix 1: Making a referral

Appendix 2: Incident Record

Appendix 3: Body Map

Appendix 4: Additional Guidelines for recording and reporting abuse

Appendix 5: Recognition of child abuse

Appendix 6: Guidelines for the avoidance of unnecessary contact and unfounded allegations

Appendix 7: When and How to Share Information

Appendix 8: The Golden Rules for Information Sharing

*See also: additional thirtyone:eight resources <https://thirtyoneeight.org/get-help/resources/>*

### **Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)**

Name: Alex Cooper

Email: [alex.cooper@plymouthvineyard.org.uk](mailto:alex.cooper@plymouthvineyard.org.uk)

Phone: 07578668859

### **Overseeing Trustees**

Name: Dawn Tucker

Email: [dawnwendytucker@gmail.com](mailto:dawnwendytucker@gmail.com)

Phone: 07341811844

Name: Tracey White

Email: [lions-roar1@hotmail.com](mailto:lions-roar1@hotmail.com)

Phone: 07823322279

**Monitoring and review**

This policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis. All trustees and leaders will read this document and all children's pastors will also be expected to read this policy.

Date of policy: Feb 2024

Date of review: Feb 2025

**SDO Signed:** Alex Cooper

**Date:** 03/03/2024

**Lead pastor Signed:** Arthur Goode

**Date:** 03/03/2024

**Overseeing Trustee**

**Signed:** Dawn Tucker

**Date:** 03/03/2024

