



Metropolitan Tabernacle, London

# Safeguarding Handbook

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For all Tabernacle staff, officers, helpers,  
and all engaged in the children's work

September 2021

# 1 Welfare and Behaviour of Children

*And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me  
(Matthew 18.5)*

The church seeks to reach as many children and young people as possible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This mission is largely expressed through the operation of morning and afternoon Sunday Schools, Bible Classes and weeknight meetings. We also arrange outings, camps, parties and other special occasions. During Sunday services, crèche facilities are in operation for the very young.

This section includes the following:

- Behaviour Policy and Procedures

Section 2 includes:

- Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Online Safeguarding Policy

The policies and procedures that follow apply to anyone working on behalf of the Metropolitan Tabernacle church (referred to as ‘The Tabernacle’ in this handbook), including Elders and Deacons, Tabernacle employees, Sunday School/Morning School/Weeknight Meeting/College Class teachers, helpers, crèche volunteers and adults using our facilities. All people involved in children’s work are referred to as ‘staff/staff members’ throughout.

**Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.** Please read this handbook carefully and speak to your Department Leader or a Designated Safeguarding Lead if you have any questions or concerns.

## **Definition of child safeguarding:**

- protecting children from abuse and maltreatment.
- preventing harm to children’s health or development.
- ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care.
- taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes.

**Definition of a child:** Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

# Behaviour Policy and Procedures

The golden rule in our handling of children is ‘**Prevention is better than cure**’. With large numbers of children being collected and brought to our Sunday Schools and weeknight meetings, behavioural problems are likely to arise. We aim to avoid many of these problems by ensuring staff are well prepared in advance, arrive before children (whenever possible), and are watchful and ready to avert potentially difficult situations.

These rules have the following aims:

- The welfare and protection of the children at all times.
- The consistent presentation of a good example of Christian behaviour to the young.
- The prompt dealing with bad behaviour so that the atmosphere is not spoiled for other children.

## Managing challenging behaviour

While we have a number of rewards to help promote good behaviour (most notably Text Tokens in Sunday School), we also have a duty to manage negative behaviour. At the start of a new term, and before an outing or event, the children are to be reminded of the behaviour expected of them.

The following procedures should be followed:

- If a child is disruptive, they should be spoken to firmly without ill-temper and shouting. Explain that certain behaviour is unacceptable in the building and on our vehicles (e.g.: deliberate foul language, racist comments, violence to others, any form of bullying, conduct likely to cause an accident, damage to property). It may be necessary to part two fighting children, or to direct children with a firm hand to the vehicle or room where they are supposed to be. In no circumstances should any member of staff strike a child, no matter how gently, as this constitutes criminal assault.
- If the disruption is ongoing the child may:
  - have a helper assigned to sit next to and support them
  - be asked to move to a different seat
  - be asked to stand outside the room for a time

- join a different class
- be stood down from attendance for a number of weeks
- Children sent outside of a classroom will be met by the Department Leader or a helper who will endeavour to teach a tailored lesson or complete a worksheet with them in view of others. Children outside of the classroom must always be supervised.
- Only a Department Leader, in consultation with the Sunday School Coordinator, can stand down a child from attending. Wherever possible the leader should visit the home and explain the problem to the parent. (This will often throw new light on the root of the problem.) Children who constantly spoil the atmosphere and distract others *must* be stood down, otherwise lesson times will be undermined for all.
- If a teacher or helper is having difficulty with a child, they must speak to their Department Leader who can offer support.

## Physical games, outings and residential camps

The following principles and guidelines must be followed to minimise risk:

- All activities must be under the clear leadership of a responsible person appointed by the Pastor or Elders and Deacons via the Sunday School Coordinator.
- An ‘outings clearance’ form must be completed and approved by the Sunday School Coordinator before any formal arrangements are made.
- All risks must be assessed using a risk template supplied by the Sunday School Coordinator and the activity carefully planned in advance so as to minimise the risk of accident or other misadventure. Times of departure and return should be clearly stated and adhered to.
- Activities must be fully supervised with a ratio of supervising adults to young people agreed via the Sunday School Coordinator.
- In activities held outside the normal times of meetings, prior written consent of a parent/guardian must be obtained.
- On journeys in vehicles, seat belts must be worn and behaviour on the vehicles supervised to ensure that the driver is not distracted and that doors and windows are not inappropriately used.
- If the event involves any unusual or new activity the event leader must obtain prior agreement of the Pastor via the Sunday School Coordinator.

- In the case of wet weather occurring during an outdoor activity, special care must be taken to ensure that children without suitable clothing are sheltered. The responsible person will take the final decision on abandoning activities because of the weather, after consultation with other supervising adults.
- In all physical games the leaders must watch for and take action to reduce an excessive competitive spirit, which may lead to aggressive and high-risk behaviour. This applies to both adults and young people taking part in the activity.
- Sleeping arrangements on camp must be carefully considered. Staff will not sleep in the same room or tent as young people, but will be housed close to and within earshot of them.
- At least one qualified First Aider or medical professional who can administer first aid will be present on every outing.
- Accidents and incidents must be recorded in the logbook.
- Teachers who wish to invite teenagers to their homes for meals or games etc. should inform the Department Leader. The teenagers must remain in communal areas of the home at all times, and never allowed inside bedrooms. An individual teenager should not be invited to a home, rather the invitation should be for a group. No teenager should be left with an adult who is not part of the children's work.
- The public liability risks involved in the regular activities of the church, including outings and camps, are covered by our insurance company, but we must take every step to operate in a responsible manner. New or unusual events should be cleared in advance by the Sunday School Coordinator with the Tabernacle insurers.

## 2 Safeguarding Policy and Procedures for Children

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

- valuing, listening to and respecting them.
- identifying and reporting any signs of abuse or neglect.
- appointing a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy for children and young people. The children's work DSL is Mr Paul Tunstell and Deputy Mrs Bunmi Ireland.
- recording, storing and using information professionally and securely, in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) as tailored by the Data Protection Act 2018. Please see our Data Privacy Notice for further details.
- making sure that children, young people and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern.
- using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff appropriately.
- ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistle-blowing measures in place.
- ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people and staff by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance.

### Legal framework

This policy has been drawn up in accordance with relevant legislation, policy and statutory guidance that seeks to protect children in England including: The Children Act 1989; The Children Act 2004; Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (2018).

# Safeguarding Procedures

## Appointment of staff

The Pastor, in conjunction with the Sunday School Coordinator, will make all appointments of children's meetings staff, including drivers and collectors. **No unofficial appointments are allowed.**

No person with a history involving child-related offences will undertake any role associated with the children's work of the church.

All leaders and children's workers in whatever capacity will have a current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Enhanced Disclosure certificate. This will be kept up to date using the DBS 'Update Service'. A single record of all DBS checks will be securely kept.

All leaders, teachers, and other responsible appointments will be members or listed adherents of the Tabernacle who have shown themselves to be trustworthy and faithful.

Non-leading helpers may include people who are not members of the Tabernacle. These must be approved by the Pastor and will normally be members of other churches of like beliefs, or those well known to us as responsible and trustworthy Christian adults. They will always work under the supervision of Tabernacle members.

## Induction and training

All new members of staff will undergo a training session, which will include safeguarding and behaviour management.

All staff must be given a copy of this Handbook and other safeguarding documents. They will be briefed on these by their department or meeting leader. Annual refresher training will be given to all staff at briefing events.

## Staff responsibilities

- **The Designated Safeguarding Lead for children is Mr Paul Tunstell and the Deputy Mrs Bunmi Ireland.** Mrs Bunmi Ireland is also the Sunday School Coordinator and has day-to-day operational responsibility for the children's work (including safeguarding), in consultation with the Elders' and Deacons' Court.

- **Department Leaders** are responsible for recording all accidents or incidents in the logbook. There is a logbook on each site. The Leader must complete a record (or ask for a summary from the relevant member of staff) on the same day or within 24 hours. The exception is where there is a report of suspected abuse, or an allegation against a member of staff (including another Department Leader), which should be reported directly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will record this information.
- In order to protect the children and workers from potential problems, staff members should avoid being alone with a child in a place where they are not in sight of other people.
- If a member of staff finds themselves alone with a child, they must avoid all physical contact.
- Still photographs may be taken of specific children's activities for use in internal displays and promotional materials, without identifying any individuals. Whilst it is not practical to seek individual parent/guardian permission to photograph activities involving groups of children, the following precautions are taken in order to comply with the safeguarding intentions of the Data Protection Act:
  - An official photographer will be appointed for an event.
  - Tabernacle staff members must not take their own photographs.
  - Pictures are stills only and not videos.
  - Pictures are of groups only and not of individuals.
  - Pictures are stored only at the Tabernacle and without any reference to the personal identity of the children pictured.
- Car drivers must not be asked to collect just one child. If only one child is in a car at the beginning or end of a journey, they should sit in the back of the car.
- An individual child should not be left with a minibus driver at the end of a route, rather that child should accompany the collector to the penultimate home and return to the minibus with the collector.
- Collectors on minibuses must wait until all children have been taken home before departing themselves.
- All children up to year 6 must be taken home by a member of staff unless collected by the parent (or another responsible person with the



parent's consent).

- Drivers of Tabernacle vehicles or private cars used for transporting children, will be currently active drivers who are at least 25 years old (Tabernacle vehicles) and 21 years old (private vehicles), having held a full driving licence for at least 2 years and without motoring offences. A list of all private vehicles used will be kept by the Sunday School Coordinator and agreed by the elders. They must be insured with third-party passenger liability cover.
- Drivers of Tabernacle minibuses will be qualified in accordance with current legislation and listed as Approved Drivers. Drivers who passed their test since 1.1.1997 may not drive minibuses heavier than 3.5 tonnes weight. Vehicles in this category are listed on the bus key cabinet.
- Every member of staff is responsible to ensure that they manage children's behaviour in a way that is calm and controlled. Please see '*Behaviour Policy and Procedures*' for further details. Any member of staff who manifests any irresponsible behaviour or loss of self-control in connection with the children, will be immediately suspended from their child-related duties.

## Reporting procedures

### 1. Allegations against members of staff

If you have a concern about the behaviour toward children of a member of staff, you must speak to your Department Leader the same day. If you have a concern about the Department Leader, speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead directly. Be specific about what you have seen, when, and what the nature of your concern is. Remember, you do not have to prove that anything untoward has taken place in order to report your concerns.

A discussion (or referral) with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) may be required. **The Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy is responsible for making referrals to the LADO.** The staff member concerned will be required to stand down from their work with children at the Tabernacle while the allegation is investigated.

Referrals to LADO must happen where a member of staff has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or

- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she could pose a risk of harm to children.

## 2. Concerns a child may be experiencing abuse or neglect from other sources:

It is possible we will encounter children who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in their lives. You should not let other considerations, like the fear a child will be prevented from attending Sunday School, get in the way of addressing suspected abuse and neglect.

A person (adult or another child) may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm.

‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ (2018) identifies four types of abuse:

- **Physical abuse** – deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including unreasonable smacking, hitting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child. This also includes situations where a child may be self-harming.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity involving a child. This includes physical or indirect sexual contact e.g. getting children to watch sexual activities or grooming a child in preparation for future abuse.
- **Emotional abuse** – persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. This includes the child witnessing another person being abused. For example, where a child is experiencing domestic abuse at home.
- **Neglect** – pattern of failing to provide for a child’s basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter. It is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child’s health or development.

## How to respond to concerns that a child may be experiencing abuse or neglect:

1. **BE ALERT** – be able to recognise signs of abuse or neglect by using the training and literature provided. Don’t make any assumptions.
2. **QUESTION BEHAVIOURS** – a child may not feel able to tell you of any abuse or neglect they are experiencing. However, you may notice changes in their behaviour that make you worried. Speak to the child to gain further information but do not ask leading questions. If a child tells you that they are being abused, you must:

- Take their allegation seriously
  - Write down what they say, in their own words
  - Reassure them that you will take action to keep them safe
  - Not promise to keep what they say secret
3. **ASK FOR HELP** – Discuss your concerns with your Department Leader or, another Department Leader in their absence, the same day. Do not discuss your concerns with anyone else where possible. A logbook will be available at each site to record any accidents or incidents. The Department Leader must record the incident in the logbook on the same day. The Department Leader should report this to a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) on the same day. It is for the Department Leader or DSL to decide whether to speak to parents.
4. **REFER** – The Designated Safeguarding Lead must decide, in consultation with the Pastor and any relevant\* people, what to do next (including):
- Seeking advice from Children’s Social Care/NSPCC
  - Referring to Children’s Social Care/LADO

**Any decision must be made and acted on within 2 working days.** The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for recording any decisions made, along with the rationale. This includes if a decision is made not to refer to Children’s Social Care. If a decision is taken to make a referral, referrals should be made to the Local Authority in which the child lives. The Designated Safeguarding Lead may wish to inform parents of any referrals made, explaining the reasons.

DSLs should refer to the Local Authority’s Multi-Agency ‘Threshold Guide’ to help them identify which circumstances/incidents may require a referral to Children’s Social Care. (See ‘Contacts for use by the Safeguarding Leads’.)

**Please note: There is no duty to ‘investigate’ allegations prior to taking further action, as outlined above. The duty to investigate allegations of child abuse rests with Children’s Social Care.**

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\* Relevant people may include the staff member to whom the child made the disclosure. It may also include confidential conversations with suitably qualified members of the church (i.e. qualified social workers).

## References

HM Government (2015) *What to do if you're worried a child is being abused*. Crown Copyright.

HM Government (2018) *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*.

## Online Safeguarding Policy

### Purpose of the Online Safeguarding Policy:

- To ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children accessing live online meetings using video conferencing platforms e.g. Zoom.
- To provide staff members with guidance so that they adopt 'best practice' protocols when holding remote meetings involving children. This is designed to protect staff members themselves, as well as to safeguard children that attend the sessions.

Staff members are reminded that the usual safeguarding arrangements apply, even if meetings involving children take place at a distance. Please see our '*Safeguarding Procedures*' for further details.

### Guidance on the use of Zoom/Microsoft Teams/equivalent:

- Staff members and children must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else on camera in the household. Special attention should be paid to clothing that could appear sheer/see-through, especially when filming in a well-lit room.
- The devices used should be in appropriate areas e.g. not on a bed or where bedroom furniture can be seen. Where possible a neutral background or Zoom background is best.
- All live sessions should involve more than one member of staff at any one time.
- Online sessions should be group sessions only, not one-to-one.
- Teachers should set up video conferencing sessions so that children must log in with an access code and password in order to attend.
- It is the responsibility of staff members running remote meetings to ensure that the only children who participate are children whose parents have already given their written consent for them to attend Sunday

School and its associated activities. Written consent from a parent/guardian must first be obtained, if a child wishes to join in an online session.

## Phone and electronic communication

- Staff members must not directly communicate with Sunday School children under secondary school age. Rather, teachers should call or text parents/carers and ask to speak to children/young people.
- *Staff members must not accept friend requests* (e.g. on Facebook or any other social media) on their personal accounts from the children/young people contacted through the children's ministry at the Tabernacle.

### Contacts for use by Safeguarding Leads

**Southwark Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):** 020 7525 1921 (during office hours) – for children living in the London Borough of Southwark

**Southwark Children's Services Out of Hours Service:** 020 7525 5000 (weekdays after 5pm and weekends)

**Lambeth Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):** 020 7926 5555 – for children living in the London Borough of Lambeth

Southwark Local Authority Designated Officer:

Quality Assurance Unit Duty: 020 7525 3297

Quality Assurance Unit Service Manager (LADO): 020 7525 0689

### Advice on making decision is available from:

Southwark Safeguarding Children's Partnership:

[www.safeguarding.southwark.gov.uk](http://www.safeguarding.southwark.gov.uk)

Lambeth Safeguarding Children's Partnership:

[www.lambethsaferchildren.org.uk](http://www.lambethsaferchildren.org.uk)

NSPCC Helpline: 0800 800 5000

# Safeguarding Children outside the Sunday School Setting

- 1 The safeguarding principles in this booklet apply to children in all church settings – public services, lunch, church outings, etc.
- 2 If you have any concerns about a child or their behaviour, speak to the DSL on the same day.
- 3 If a child or anyone else discloses any concerning information or makes an allegation: listen, write down what they say in their own words, and report it to the DSL on the same day. **Do not ask leading questions, do not try to investigate or promise secrecy.**
- 4 Accidents and incidents are to be recorded in the onsite logbook.
- 5 Referrals to Children’s Social Care should be made by the Designated Safeguarding Lead in consultation with any relevant people.

## 3 Safeguarding in the Adult Church

**Definition of safeguarding adults:** protecting the rights of adults to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. (Adult abuse is defined in law in Sections 42-46 of The Care Act 2014.)

In the Tabernacle, all who attend adult services and gatherings including young people whether under or over 18 must also be safeguarded from any possible interference of an abusive nature such as grooming, stalking, unwanted touching or other sexual offending. They should also be safeguarded from insulting, hostile or belittling behaviour or from financial interference. Should anyone be troubled by such behaviour toward them they should speak either to the Pastor or Assistant Pastor or directly to the Congregation’s Designated Safeguarding Lead: Dr Jo Lawrence (Adult@tabsafe.org).

Any pastor or officer hearing such a complaint must, in addition to any relevant pastoral activity, report the incident within 48 hours to the Congregation’s DSL for referral where appropriate to authorities.

Church pastors/staff/workers accused of safeguarding category offences will be referred to the Congregation’s DSL and, where appropriate, referral to the authorities and will also be subject to the Elders’ and Deacons’ court who will

decide if they should be suspended pending full process of the case.

The name of the current Congregation's DSL and the DSL and Deputy for children and young people will be displayed in the Entrance Vestibule and on the church website.

### **People with past offences**

Arrangements for people with a past record of abuse of children or vulnerable adults – to exclude from activities or services or to restrict presence to public services with 'contract' of limited attendance – will be the responsibility of the Elders' and Deacons' Court.

### **'No touch' personal ministry**

Tabernacle pastors and other staff together with elders, deacons and leaders of departments will operate a 'no touch' policy in all personal ministry, counselling and visitation. With the exception of traditional greetings and polite physical assistance to elderly and infirm people, comfort and friendliness will be expressed verbally.

## **Vulnerable Adults**

**Definition of a vulnerable adult:** those aged 18 years and over who have a mental or other disability, are elderly or unable to take care of or protect themselves from significant harm or distress.

All those appointed to support vulnerable adults (eg: almoners) will have a current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Enhanced Disclosure certificate.

If anyone has concerns about the health or welfare of a vulnerable adult, or behaviour towards them corresponding to the offences in the body of this document, they must report them to a pastor or directly to the Congregation's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

### **Duty to refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service**

If any person is removed from an activity relating to children or adults because their behaviour causes harm or poses a risk of harm, the Tabernacle has a duty under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act to inform the DBS.

*This policy is subject to correction and revision. Review in 6 months.*

# Safeguarding Summary

- 1 If you have any concerns about a child or their behaviour, speak to your Department Leader on the same day.
- 2 If a child discloses any concerning information or makes an allegation: listen, write down what they say in their own words, and report it to the Department Leader or Designated Safeguarding Lead on the same day. Do not ask leading questions, do not try to investigate or promise secrecy.
- 3 Accidents and incidents are to be recorded in the onsite logbook.
- 4 Any allegations or concerns regarding abuse, including those made against staff members, will be recorded by the Designated Safeguarding Lead in a separate logbook.
- 4 Department leaders are to escalate any concerns or reports from staff members to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy on the same day.
- 5 Under no circumstances may a child be smacked or receive any form of physical punishment.
- 6 Car drivers must not be asked to collect just one child. If only one child is in a car at the beginning or end of a journey, ensure they sit in the back.
- 7 Sunday School children should not be contacted (via Text or email etc) directly.
- 8 Referrals to Children's Social Care should be made by the Designated Safeguarding Lead in consultation with any relevant people.
- 9 Concerns about children outside the Sunday School setting should be referred to the DSL for children and young people, and concerns about adults to the Congregation's DSL, the Pastor, or Assistant Pastor.

## DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEADS

Children & young people: Mr Paul Tunstell; Deputy: Mrs Bunmi Ireland  
Children@tabsafe.org

Congregation: Dr Jo Lawrence – Adult@tabsafe.org

**IF YOU BELIEVE A CHILD OR ADULT IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER,  
CONTACT THE POLICE ON 999**