

# Valley Church

## Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Guidelines

**Date Reviewed: August 2022**

**Next review: August 2023**

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## **Section 1: Policy & Statement**

### **1.A. SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

##### **Church Details:**

Name: Valley Free Methodist Church (hereafter, "The Church")  
Address: Valley Church, Fourfields, Bamber Bridge, Preston, PR5 6GS  
Tel No: 01772 696717  
Denomination: Free Methodist  
Safeguarding Officer: Cole Andrew  
- 01772 696717 (and select the safeguarding option);  
Deputy Safeguarding Officers: Dave Scholes - 01772 696717 (and select the safeguarding option);  
Jo Nicol - 01772 696717 (and select the safeguarding option).

Safeguarding Liaisons: These individuals will be based at each service. Please contact the relevant service pastors to confirm the appropriate Safeguarding Liaison.

##### **Review:**

Last Policy Review Date: August 2022  
Reviewed by: Cole Andrew and Carla Greaves  
Approved by Senior Pastors  
and Board of Trustees: 14/09/2022

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Leadership recognises the importance of its ministry to children and young people and its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people entrusted to the church's care.

As part of its mission, the Church is committed to:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting children and young people as well as promoting their welfare and protection.
- Safe recruitment, supervision and training for all the children/youth workers within the church.
- Adopting a procedure for dealing with concerns about possible abuse.
- Encouraging and supporting parents/carers.
- Supporting those affected by abuse in the church.
- Maintaining good links with the statutory childcare authorities and other organisations and sharing any concerns with those authorities and organisations.

## **DEFINITIONS**

For the purposes of this document, the terms 'child', 'children', 'young people' and 'youth' will be used to refer to the following age groups:

- 'Child', 'Children': from 1 to 11 years old
- 'Young people', 'Youth': from 11 to 18 years old (including only those who have begun secondary school)
- Concern: A Safeguarding Concern occurs where you witness visually or orally information that may be a contributory factor that may cause potential harm to a child or young person. In most cases this will be information that is brought to our attention from outside of Church events.
- Incidents: A Safeguarding Incident occurs where you witness visually or orally an event that happens while the child or young person is under the Church's duty of care. In most cases this will be information that is witnessed or brought to our attention during the course of a Church organised event.
- Whistleblowing: We commit to the culture of 'whistleblowing.' This is where you witness visually or orally information about Church staff, visitors or volunteers that lead you to be concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person. In most cases this will be information that is witnessed or brought to our attention during the course of a Church organised event. If you witness a concerning event outside the life of the Church, you still have a duty of care to report the concern by seeking advice from the Duty Social Care system at the Local Council Offices (usually accessible via the Council's mainline number, then ask for 'a consultation with the Duty Social Care Team'). It is our statutory duty to safeguard children and young people above and beyond our relationships with other adults within the community.

## **CHURCH POLICY**

The Leadership recognises the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children and young people. It also acknowledges that children and young people can be the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, as well as neglect. We believe that a child or a young person should not experience abuse of any kind. The Leadership has therefore adopted the procedures set out in this document (hereafter "the policy") which applies to all staff and volunteers of Valley Church. We also recognise the need to build constructive links with statutory and voluntary safeguarding agencies. The policy and attached practice guidelines are based on a model published by THIRTYONE:EIGHT.

The Leadership is committed to annual safeguarding training for all children/youth workers and will regularly review the operational guidelines attached.

The Leadership also undertakes to follow the principles found within the Abuse Of Trust guidance issued by the Home Office and it is therefore unacceptable for those in a position of trust to engage any behaviour which might allow a sexual relationship to develop for as long as the relationship of trust continues.

We are committed to practice in a way that protects children and young people.

## **1.B. SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT**

### **CHURCH SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT**

- We are committed to supporting parents and families in safeguarding their children and young people.
- As leaders of the church we are committed to the nurturing, protection and safeguarding of children and young people
- We recognise that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility
- We are committed to following the agreed procedures and following statutory, denominational and specialist guidelines
- We seek to support all in the Church affected by abuse
- In decision making, reporting and sharing information, the Church is committed to ensuring a culture of safeguarding children from harm
- We are committed to reviewing our policy, guidelines and good practice annually

***If you have any concerns for a child/young person, or in relation to any safeguarding matter then please log them via the Safeguarding Reporting System 'My Concern'. Unless the matter is deemed to be urgent then please speak to one of the approved Safeguarding Officers or in their absence a member of the Strategy Team or Trustees immediately.***

## **Section 2: Safeguarding Guidelines for Children and Young People's Workers**

### **2.A. APPOINTING NEW EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS**

At least one person involved in the recruitment process of new employees and key team volunteers should have completed Safer Recruitment training.

Any people wishing to work with children and young people must have a commitment to them. They must have relevant experience to undertake the role or, if not, be willing and able to undertake suitable training within the first 12 months. They must have an understanding and respect of the background and culture of the children and young people with whom they will be working. They need to have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of the role they are about to fulfil.

#### **Prior to appointment**

If an individual wishes to apply for a role in a kids'/youth team then he/she will be able to sit as an observer for 2 sessions only prior to completing the next steps in the application process. As an observer, the individual must not participate in any activities.

An individual wishing to apply for a role in the kids'/youth teams must:

- 1) Complete a Volunteer Application Form (or in the alternative, a risk assessment may be carried out if there is a change of role within church).
- 2) Complete the Confidentiality Agreement Form

- 3) Complete an application form for a relevant Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. (Please note that the Enhanced DBS check must be completed by volunteers aged 16 and over who wish to join a children's/youth team. This includes leaders, members and helpers).
- 4) Provide 2 references. At least one of the references must normally be an external reference. (Please refer to the Reference Policy for further details and exceptions).
- 5) Read the Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines and sign a form to say they have read this, understood and agree to abide by the Policy and Guidelines.
- 6) Complete a New Worker Induction Form.

Ministry Leader(s) must ensure references are passed to an approved representative of the Safeguarding Officer in order to screen the references and follow up with the referee(s).

- If there are any concerns about an individual, a Senior or Executive Pastor and a Safeguarding Officer will consult and make a recommendation to the Leadership Team about the suitability of the individual and a record will be made in that person's file of any actions, advice, reasons or justifications which they regard as appropriate. They may make recommendations as to the nature of the role or specify training requirements.
- If an individual is deemed to be unsuitable due to any general and/or safeguarding concerns then the record of this decision will be logged via MyConcern on that individual's record for future reference.

Once the individual has been approved to work with children and young people and we have received a satisfactory DBS check and an induction will take place with the new appointee, which will include safeguarding training. T-shirts / Official Passes may only be worn at this stage.

Whilst references are being processed, an individual may begin to work with children and young people, but they will be under supervision at all times and will not be left alone with any children or young people.

**NOTE: No one under the age of 18 can be appointed as a Team Leader or above within the Kids' and Youth Teams.**

## **2.B. DBS CHECKS**

DBS checks are only valid at the time it was carried out therefore annual DBS checks will be carried out annually for those who are part of the update service and every 3 years for those who are not signed up to the update service. This is to ensure that our organisation has the most accurate information on any employees/volunteers.

## **2.C. PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS OR INCIDENTS**

### **i. Safeguarding Disclosure Procedure**

If a child or young person shares information with you that leads you to believe they may have been abused, make sure you do the following:

- Listen sensitively.
- Write everything down - exactly what the child says, do not try to interpret, use quotes as much as possible.

- Do not promise confidentiality.
- Log the concern via MyConcern and/or speak to the Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.

If the allegation involves the Safeguarding Officer, contact one of the Deputy Officers. If the allegation involves the Safeguarding Officer and one of the Deputy Officers then speak to the Deputy Officer who is not involved in the allegations. If the allegations involve all Officers then speak to a Leader in church i.e. Senior/Executive/Service Pastor who will then go on to contact THIRTYONE:EIGHT and LADO (or Social Services if THIRTYONE:EIGHT and LADO are not available).

• Safeguarding Officer:	Cole Andrew	Number above
• Deputy Safeguarding Officer:	Dave Scholes	Number above
• Deputy Safeguarding Officer and Pastoral Department Head	Jo Nicol	Number above
• THIRTYONE:EIGHT ( <a href="http://www.thirtyoneeight.org">www.thirtyoneeight.org</a> ):		0303 003 11 11
• Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)		01772 536 694

## **ii. Receiving a Safeguarding Disclosure**

When a child or young person wants to talk about abuse, it is important to listen carefully to what the child or young person says without prompting or using leading questions or judging the content of what is said. You should make a careful written record of what has been observed as follows:

- Write down exactly what the child or young person has said and when s/he said it, what was said in reply and what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. a description of the activity). Do not try to interpret what the child or young person has said.
- Make notes as soon as possible using the online platform (MyConcern) (preferably within one hour of the child/young person talking to you) including a description of any injury, its size, and a drawing of its location and shape on the child's body. Include dates and times of these events and the disclosure.
- Transfer all notes and confirm any action taken via MyConcern. Handwritten notes can be scanned and uploaded to MyConcern but please ensure that you also complete all the boxes on MyConcern. Any handwritten notes must be shredded/put into Confidential waste once scanned and logged onto the system.
- Under no circumstances must you take home any information/documentation relating to the safeguarding concern home with you. If you are unable to pass the information to the Safeguarding Officer/Deputy Officer/Ministry Leader then please place the documentation in a sealed envelope which is to be marked confidential and for the attention of the Safeguarding Officer and placed in the locked black box (currently near the Senior Pastors' office at the South Preston location). Please ensure that you let the Safeguarding Officer know that the documents have been left for them in the black box.

## **GENERAL POINTS**

- Never promise the child or young person confidentiality. If they are at risk, you must inform a Safeguarding Officer.
- Above everything else listen, listen, listen.
- Show acceptance of what the child or young person says (however unlikely the story may sound).
- Keep calm.
- Tell the child or young person you will need to let someone else know - don't promise confidentiality.
- Even when a child or young person has broken a rule, they are not to blame for the abuse.
- Be aware that the child or young person may have been threatened or bribed not to tell.
- Listen. Never push for information. If the child or young person decides not to tell you after all, then accept that and let them know that you are always ready to listen.

## **HELPFUL RESPONSES**

- 'That must have been really hard'
- 'I am glad you have told me'
- 'It's not your fault'
- 'I will help you'

## **UNHELPFUL RESPONSES**

- 'Why didn't you tell anyone sooner?'
- 'I can't believe it! I'm so shocked! Don't tell anyone else'
- 'Are you sure this is true? Why? How? When? Who? Where?'
- Never make false promises.

## **CONCLUDING**

- Reassure the child that they were right to tell you and show acceptance.
- Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.
- Add it to MyConcern and then SGO will be notified.
- Consider your own feelings and seek pastoral support if needed. If you feel you may benefit from counselling, speak to the Safeguarding Officer about this.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

It is essential not to promise the child or young person that you will keep anything they say confidential, especially if it is regarding their safety. However, once you have spoken to the Safeguarding Officer and/or logged the concern via MyConcern, it is equally essential that you respect the privacy and dignity of the child and do not discuss the matter with anyone else.



### **iii. Definitions of Abuse**

Child abuse has many forms. There are four identified categories of abuse described in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

#### **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or young person. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child or young person.

#### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child or young person such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child or young person's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children or a young person that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may also include not giving the child or young person opportunities to express their view and deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children or young people. These may include interactions that are beyond the child or young person's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child or young person participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children or young people frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children or young people. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child or young person, though it may occur alone.

#### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child or young person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (e.g. rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children or young people in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children or young people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child or young person in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children or young people.

#### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child or young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child or young person's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child or young person from physical and emotional harm or danger;

- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child or young person's basic emotional needs.

There are other complex concerns around safeguarding children and young people that we should be aware of and these are outlined in a helpful way in the document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education.' <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>. These issues include the prevent agenda around potential radicalization, body mutilation and hazing, amongst others.

#### **iv. Possible Signs of Abuse**

The following signs may or may not be indicators that abuse has taken place, but the possibility should be considered.

##### Possible signs of physical abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them.
- Injuries that occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc .
- Injuries that have not received medical attention.
- Neglect - under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care, etc.
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming.
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains.
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc which do not have an accidental explanation\*
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse\*

##### Possible signs of sexual abuse

- Any allegations made by a child or young person concerning sexual abuse
- Child or young person with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child or young person who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults  
Inappropriate bed sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders - anorexia, bulimia

### **Possible signs of emotional abuse**

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child or young person withdraws or becomes clinging.
- Also depression/aggression, extreme anxiety
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

### **Self harm**

These signs may indicate the possibility that a child or young person is self-harming. Self harm is any behaviour where the intent is to deliberately cause harm to one's own body. Examples of self harming include: cutting, scratching, scraping or picking skin, swallowing inedible objects, self-poisoning (such as taking an overdose of prescription/non-prescription drugs or swallowing hazardous materials or substances), burning/scalding, hair-pulling, banging or hitting the head or other parts of the body or scouring or scrubbing.

### **Race & culture**

While it is crucial to have a knowledge of and sensitivity to racial, cultural and religious aspects which should be taken into account, it is important to remember that all children and or young people have basic human rights. Differences in child-rearing do not justify child abuse.

### **v. Allegations of Abuse**

### **RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE**

Under no circumstances should an employee/volunteer carry out their own investigation into the allegation or suspicion of abuse. The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse will do the following:

- Concerns must be reported via MyConcern or to the Safeguarding Officer/Deputy Safeguarding Officers as soon as possible. The Safeguarding Officers are nominated by the Leadership to act on their behalf in dealing with the allegation or suspicion of neglect, abuse, including referring the matter on to the statutory authorities.
- The Leadership will support the Safeguarding Officer/Deputy Officers in their role, and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.
- It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make a direct referral to the safeguarding agencies or seek advice from THIRTYONE:EIGHT, although the Leadership hopes that members of the church will use this procedure. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Safeguarding Officer/Deputy Officer have not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Officers as to the appropriateness of a referral they are free to contact an outside

agency directly. We hope by making this statement that the Leadership demonstrates the commitment of the church to effective safeguarding.

The role of the Safeguarding Officer/Deputy Officers is, after taking advice from THIRTYONE:EIGHT, to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information on to the Social Services Department. It is not the Safeguarding Officers' responsibility to investigate the matter.

### **ALLEGATIONS OF PHYSICAL INJURY OR NEGLECT**

The Safeguarding Officer is also required by conditions of the Church insurance policy to inform the insurance company as necessary.

If a child or young person has a physical injury or symptom of neglect, the Safeguarding Officer/Deputy Officers, in conjunction with the Leadership, will:

- Contact THIRTYONE:EIGHT for advice (or Social Services if THIRTYONE:EIGHT are not available) in cases of deliberate injury, if concerned about a child or young person's safety or if a child or young person is afraid to return home.
- Not tell the parents or carers unless advised to do so having contacted Social Services.
- Seek medical help if needed urgently, informing the doctors of any suspicions.
- For lesser concerns, (e.g. poor parenting), encourage parent/carer to seek help, but not if this places the child at risk of injury.
- Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, offer to accompany them. In cases of real concern, if they still fail to act, contact THIRTYONE:EIGHT for advice (or Social Services if THIRTYONE:EIGHT are not available).
- Seek and follow advice given by THIRTYONE:EIGHT (who will confirm their advice in writing). This will likely involve contacting Social Services or the Police.

### **ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE**

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Safeguarding Officer/Deputy Officer, in conjunction with the Leadership, will:

- Seek and follow advice given by THIRTYONE:EIGHT (who will confirm their advice in writing). The Safeguarding Officer/Deputy Officers must not wait for the written confirmation before following the advice given by THIRTYONE:EIGHT. This advice will likely involve contacting Social Services or the Police. THIRTYONE:EIGHT will confirm its advice in writing for future reference.

### **ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST A PERSON WHO WORKS WITH CHILDREN**

If an accusation is made against a worker (whether a volunteer or paid member of staff) whilst following the procedure outlined above the Safeguarding Officer in accordance with

Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (CSAP) procedures will need to make a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

### Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) service provides management and oversight of individual cases of allegations of abuse made against those who work with children or young people.

The LADO must be contacted by the designated Safeguarding Officers once they have received any allegation or concern about any person who works with children or young people who may have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, 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 they may pose a risk of harm to children
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

These procedures may also be used where concerns arise about:

- The person's behaviour with regard to his/her own children
- The behaviour in the private or community life of a partner, member of the family or other household member
- A person's behaviour in their personal life, which may impact upon the safety of children to whom they owe a duty of care.

The report must be made to LADO within 1 working day of the Safeguarding Officer being made aware of the allegation.

The LADO Threshold Document provides guidance on the types of incidents that can be reported and the possible action that may be taken.

<https://national-lado-network.co.uk/lado-threshold-document/>

The up to date 'Procedure for Managing for Allegations Flowchart' can be found via the following website:

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/media/927744/lado-flyer-may-2021.pdf>

Up to date contact details for Lancashire's LADO can be found via the following website:

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/practitioners/supporting-children-and-families/safeguarding-children/local-authority-designated-officer/>

### DBS Referral

If an individual (whether a volunteer or paid member of staff) is removed from working with children or young people (or would have, had the person not left first) because the person

poses a risk of harm to children or young people, a referral must be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). It is an offence to fail to make a referral without good reason. The duty to refer applies even when a report has been made to another body such as a local authority safeguarding team. The legal duty to refer applies irrespective of whether another body has made a referral to the DBS in relation to the same person.

## **APPOINTMENT, SUPPORT, SUPERVISION & TRAINING**

The Leadership will ensure that all those who work with children and young people will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with the principles set out in government guidelines "Safe from Harm" (HMSO 1993), the Disclosure and Barring Service / Scottish Criminal Records Office (Disclosure Scotland) / PECS Codes of Practice, THIRTYONE:EIGHT guidance and Church practice guidelines. The same principles will be applied to those appointed to work with vulnerable adults. Any new volunteers and employees will be provided with Safeguarding training.

Volunteers and employees will be given formal Safeguarding training every year. This will include training of the Safeguarding Reporting System, MyConcern. Training is mandatory for all who work with children and young people.

The Safeguarding Officer will receive training every year and is responsible for sharing new information/procedures with volunteers and workers.

## **SUPPORT TO THOSE AFFECTED BY ABUSE**

The Leadership is committed to offering pastoral care, working with statutory agencies as appropriate, and support to those attending the church that have been affected by abuse.

### **vi. Working With Offenders**

When someone attending the church is known to have abused children/young people and/or is known to have been involved in any offences against children/young people and/or has been imprisoned as a result of any offences against children/young people and/or is known to be on the Sex Offenders' Register then the Leadership will supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but in its commitment to the protection of children, set boundaries for that person which they will be expected to keep. These individuals will be required to sign a Contract of Engagement regarding church life / activities within church. Irrespective of spent time, these individuals will not be permitted to work with children or young people at any of our locations.

## **2.C. BEST PRACTICE FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **SUPERVISION OF GROUP CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE ACTIVITIES**

The Leadership can provide details of the supervision for each specific activity where young people/children are not under the supervision of their parents (this excludes the main church

gathering in the auditorium). Any casual visitors to the children or young people's groups are logged and not left unattended with the groups.

## **i. Ratios**

When working with groups of children or young people, it is important that the level of supervision is appropriate to their age group and their needs, which may be very specific.

In general, younger children need to be more closely supervised and will require a higher adult to child ratio. The following are the adult to child ratios we recommend, which are based partly on Ofsted guidelines:

Age 0 - 2:	1 adult to 3 children
Age 2 - 3:	1 adult to 4 children
Age 4 - 8:	1 adult to 6 children
Age 9 - 12:	1 adult to 8 children
Age 13 - 18:	1 adult to 10 children.

If the group is mixed gender, the supervising team should also include both male and female workers wherever possible.

When deciding on the number of adults required, it is important to bear in mind that these ratios are guidelines only: in certain situations it will be necessary to have a higher number of adults than our recommendations suggest. If, for instance, the children or young people have specific support needs, or a risk assessment identifies behaviour as a potential issue for the group or event, the number of supervising adults will need to be higher.

It may not always be possible to adhere to these recommended ratios. However, every effort should be made to achieve the best level of supervision of children at all times.

Under THIRTYONE:EIGHT guidance, anyone who is between 16 year olds and under 18 who are assisting within a group of children or young people should **not** be included in the adult ratio numbers above. No person under 18 should be left with the sole responsibility of caring for or supervising other children/young people.

## **ii. Guidelines for Discipline**

Discipline is the education of a person's character. It includes nurturing, training, instruction, teaching and encouragement. It brings security, produces character, prepares for life and is an expression of God's love for an individual. (Hebrews 12:5-12 & Proverbs 22:6)

- Ask God for wisdom, discernment and understanding for the children or young people in your care.
- Work on each individual child or young person's positives, do not compare a child or a young person with another, but encourage and affirm them, giving them responsibility for simple tasks.
- Build healthy relationships with children or young people and be a good role model by setting an example. You can't expect children or young people to observe the ground rules if you break them yourself.
- Take care to give quieter and well behaved children attention and resist allowing demanding children to take all your time and energy.

- If children or young people are bored they often misbehave, so review your programme regularly.
- NEVER smack or hit a child or young person. Don't shout. Change voice tone if necessary.
- Discipline out of love, NEVER in anger. (Call on support from other leaders if you feel so angry you may deal with the situation unwisely.)
- Lay down ground rules e.g. no swearing, racism or calling each other names, respect for property, and make sure the children or young people understand what action will be taken if not kept.
- Every child or young person is unique and will respond in different ways to different forms of discipline. It follows therefore that each child or young person should be dealt with on an individual basis.
- Some children or young people may become disruptive in a group setting. Give them a chance, warn them and only separate as a last resort.
- Have a disruptive child or young person sit right in front of you or sit them next to another leader.
- Be proactive and encourage leaders to be proactive rather than waiting to be told to deal with a situation.
- Take a disruptive child or young person to one side and engage with them, challenging them to change, while encouraging their strengths.
- Remedial action can be taken against a constantly disruptive child or young person. Inform the child or young person that if the behaviour continues their responsible adult will be contacted and they may be asked to leave the session.

### **iii. Bullying**

Valley Church desires and expects all its workers who are involved with children and young people to provide an open and caring environment where leaders/volunteers/employees and children and young people respect themselves and others. In this regard we will not accept bullying or anti-social behaviour of any kind whether leader to leader, child to child, leader to child or child to leader.

Victimisation whether physical, verbal or emotional is regarded as bullying. Bullying can be in relation to race, religion, culture, disabilities or special needs, or gender. Bullying can also occur via the internet or mobile phone (commonly known as 'cyberbullying').

We expect all teams to take issues of bullying seriously and have in place the systems and practice to reflect this in the following ways:

- By developing a positive experience of community where opportunities to bully are reduced.
- By embedding good practice and positive behaviour so that likelihood of bullying is reduced.
- By having an identified system of reporting and dealing with allegations of bullying.



Clear lines of communication regarding reporting bullying and the systems of warning, sanctions and consequences should be made known to leaders and children and enforced throughout.

Leadership recognises it is not always easy to immediately identify such problems. In this respect we encourage openness such that our children's workers, young people or parents should contact the Ministry Leader (in the first instance) at the earliest opportunity. Any allegations must be treated with sympathy, sensitivity and fairness.

All allegations of bullying should be reported to the Ministry Leader who will take the allegation seriously and investigate it thoroughly. If for any reason the Ministry Leader is implicated the leadership team will investigate and report back. Any outcomes must be communicated appropriately to the team, children or parents concerned.

Any allegations of 'leader to child' bullying must be reported to the Safeguarding Officer, records and files relating to incidents and investigations should be kept by them. A process of escalation is in place if required. The Leadership reserves the right to bar individuals from volunteering on any future teams and to refer the matter on to the Police, Local Authority or DBS for further investigation if deemed necessary.

#### **iv. Praying with Children and Young People**

It's an honour to be invited to pray with and for children and young people. However, we encourage you to heed the following guidelines to ensure that children and young people do not feel intimidated or distressed when you pray for them.

- Those praying should never pray with, or be on their own with, a child or young person in an unsupervised situation.
- Words and actions may be open to misinterpretation, and therefore great care should be taken to avoid situations in which actions could be misunderstood.
- Children are easily frightened and are very susceptible to suggestion. They may also be upset by shouting and may easily believe that they are bad, wicked or corrupt. A child should NEVER be shouted at or be told that they are demonised, possessed or oppressed by the devil, evil spirits and such like.
- The laying on of hands is biblical. However, this must be done only with the permission of the child or young person, only with a light touch on the arm or shoulder or top of the head of the child or young person.
- Leaders should pray with a person of the same sex where possible.
- If a young person asks you to pray with them the suggestions below may be useful:

Ask what the person is seeking from the Lord.

Listen to the recipient and to the Holy Spirit.

Invite the Holy Spirit to come, to lead, to guide and encourage.

Remember the place of repentance – forgiving and being forgiven.

Remember there is a place for expressing feelings.

Wait – it is God's work, not yours.

You can ask the person questions: e.g. 'What do you feel God is doing?'

If you feel it is right, speak to the condition in Jesus' name.

If you have a prophetic word or picture, pray into it –or offer the word in such a way that it gives the person the freedom to weigh it. Never insist that it is a word from God: remember that you could be wrong.

Do not be shocked by anyone's disclosure – be loving and remember even in prayer ministry you cannot promise confidentiality. Apply the guidelines for disclosure.

Offer any words or thoughts sensitively.

Don't be afraid of silence. Just being there is often all that's required.

## **v. Touch Policy**

- Touch or physical contact must be related to a child or young person's development age and needs and not the leaders. Touch must therefore be age appropriate and be generally initiated by the child rather than the leader.
- Touch or physical contact between adults and children can be quite healthy and acceptable in public places, but discouraged in circumstances where an adult and child are on their own.
- Leaders must monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They must be free to help each other by challenging anything which could be misunderstood or misconstrued.
- Keep everything in public, a hug in public is acceptable but this is not acceptable behind closed doors.
- Avoid any physical activity that is, or may be thought to be, sexually stimulating to the child or adult.
- Children have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in exceptional circumstances, for example personal safety or to prevent serious harm.
- When giving first aid, encourage the child to do what they can manage themselves, but consider the child's best interests and give appropriate help where necessary.
- If a child initiates unusual levels of physical contact, you are expected to clearly deflect this so that contact then becomes appropriate.
- Concerns about abuse must always be reported via MyConcern and/or any of the designated Safeguarding Officers.

## **vi. General contact outside of church**

General contact between volunteers/employees and young people and children can be an important aspect of building mentoring relationships but must be done within healthy and wise parameters. No children under the age of 14 should be communicated with via social media or any form of private message apart from very rare exceptions that will need to be risk assessed by the safeguarding lead, and for which parental consent beyond the norm must be gained for those purposes.

When communicating outside of church activities with young people 14 and older (for example, sending text messages, making phone calls, commenting or messaging on social media), the more openness and accountability that is exercised, the safer it will be. Volunteers and employees should keep message records (i.e. never use disappearing messages), and it should be considered whether there is a genuine ministry-related purpose

to the communication. Is your relationship with the young person such that the sending of a text of encouragement (for example) makes sense? Do you have a leadership relationship with the young person that justifies the communication for the purpose of relationship building? Are their parents aware and would you be happy for anyone to see the communication? These principles will help keep everyone safe whilst permitting the important day to day work of building relationships and trust with the young people we are trying to serve.

## **vii. Emails and Texting**

The purpose of emails and texting is for information purposes only.

The following are approved communications:

- Emails/text messages sent via ChurchSuite;
- Emails sent via official team accounts.

Any communication directly with children/young people must be in line with the section vi. above.

The Leadership fully recognises that emails and texts are a vital way to communicate and that any use needs to be regulated:

- If young people want to pass on their mobile phone numbers, e-mail addresses or similar then consent should be obtained from parents/guardians especially if the young person is aged between 11-15. If you are unable to obtain consent then a discussion needs to take place with a Team Leader/Department Head/Pastor to consider whether the young person is mature enough to decide whether they want to share their personal information. Please refer to the Safeguarding Officer who can review records for any issues/concerns.
- Leaders/volunteers/employees should not give out their telephone number to children/young people with whom they have no prior / established relationship with.
- Keep communications short. If you need a discussion, fix a time to do so face to face during or following the group.
- Use an appropriate tone; friendly, and not over-familiar or personal, and appropriate language (nothing that could be misinterpreted, don't use lol, which could be interpreted as lots of love or laugh out loud. Avoid using x or 'luv' at the end etc).
- Whilst communications should be warm and friendly, they should not suggest or offer a special relationship.
- Don't delete the email. If the message has nothing that needs following up and you wish to delete it, make sure you copy and paste it into a word document and save it in the Valley Church Google Team Drive or save it into the official email accounts' archive folder.
- Any email communication should be via the official Valley Church team email addresses. Leaders/volunteers should not give out their own emails unless necessary.
- Leaders must not communicate with young people under the age of 16 via Whatsapp. Please note that at the time of approval of this policy, Whatsapp's minimum age for use of their service is 16 years old.

### **viii. Social Networking**

The Leadership have agreed that it is acceptable to have young people as friends on social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter only if youth leaders operate within these guidelines:

- On official accounts, children and young people can be added. This is subject to their age. The official accounts will be monitored.
- Do not add a young person as a friend on social networking sites. If they wish to connect with you, they must extend the invitation.
- Do not accept the invitation of any young person you know to be under the age set by the appropriate media. The minimum age set by Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter is 13.
- Conversations must be public.
- If young people wish to share more personal prayer requests, ask that they email the team's official account.
- Do not keep contact details (address, phone number, email) on your profile.
- You are a role model to young people so consider how you use social networking - are the video links you share offensive in content? Do you have pictures posted which could be misinterpreted (e.g. in a pub, in a pose that makes you seem drunk)? If this is how you wish to use social networking DO NOT accept the invitations of young people to add you as a friend.
- Young people's parents or carers will need to acknowledge our safeguarding policy. This will involve communicating the following statement, 'We have strict guidelines for interacting with young people through electronic medium. Within these guidelines, I am happy for my child to be contacted by workers who have pastoral responsibility for my child. This can include e-mail, social networking'.

### **ix. Official Mentoring**

If you are in a mentoring relationship with a child or young person, any personal contact must be established as a pattern and this must be agreed by the parents. It is advisable that meetings take place in a public setting which ensures privacy. This provides safety for both volunteer/employee and child/young person as they will not be alone. Any mentoring relationship must be formalised with the Ministry Leader. All mentoring will be same sex.

Written records and logs of any meetings must be added to ChuchSuite.

### **x. Lifts**

Kids and Youth team leaders, team members and helpers are not responsible for picking up/collecting children or young people to services/events/meetings etc. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to do so.

In an emergency situation where you are unable to get hold of the parents/guardians then please contact the appropriate Ministry Leader(s) or Safeguarding Officer who will advise of the next steps. This should be logged via MyConcern.

## **xi. Photographs/Video Images**

Photos and filming of children and young people will only be taken and used with parental permission.

The potential risks of taking photographs and filming include the following:

- children and young people may be identifiable when a photograph is shared with personal information.
- direct and indirect risks to children and young people when photographs are shared on websites and in publications with personal information.
- inappropriate photographs or recorded images of children.
- inappropriate use, adaptation or copying of images.

It is essential to be very careful if photographs, videos and webcams are used of clearly identifiable people. There are several issues to be aware:

- Permission must be obtained via written consent from the child or young person's parent/guardian before any photographs are taken or footage recorded.
- If the child or young person is 16 or over, then written consent should be obtained from them before any photographs are taken or footage recorded.
- The parent/guardian or child/young person who is 16 or over must be notified at the time of consent what the images will be used for.
- Photographs or videos are to be deleted if they are taken of a child or young person whose parent/guardian has requested their photo not be used or to be deleted/removed. This also applies in a situation where a child/young person has asked for their photograph or a video of themselves not to be used or to be deleted/removed.
- If images are being taken at an event attended by large crowds (such as at a church event) this is regarded as a public area and permission may not necessarily be required. UK law allows you to take photographs in a public place however if someone could have a reasonable expectation of privacy then you would need to obtain their consent.
- When using photographs of children and young people, it is preferable to use group pictures.
- Children and young people under the age of 18 should not be identified publicly by surname or other personal details. These details include e-mail or postal addresses, telephone or fax numbers. Please refer to Valley Church's Data Protection Policy.
- Photographs should only be taken by people authorised to take photographs – this policy must be read in conjunction with the Valley Church Photography Policy.

## **xii. Casual visitors**

Casual visitors, i.e. those who have not been authorised by the Church as leaders, team members or helpers, should not have access to children without the presence of an adult who is deemed to be responsible for the group. Any visitors to the group will be accounted for by the Ministry Leader and logged on the attendance database.

### **xiii. Off-site trips**

An off-site visit is any visit which involves leaving the normal meeting place and will require off-site approval.

The Ministry Leader must:

- Assess the risk of any activity.
- Introduce measures to reduce those risks.
- Inform all those involved in those activities of the measures they have taken.

Those who are responsible for visits must:

- Take reasonable care of their own safety and other people's safety.
- Carry out activities in accordance with a safe and reasonable manner as any reasonably prudent parent/carer would in the same circumstances.

All visits must be preceded by a risk assessment. The risk assessment must include the following considerations:

- a. What are the hazards?
- b. Who might be affected by them?
- c. What safety measures need to be in place to reduce risks to an acceptable level?
- d. Can the group leader put the safety measures in place?
- e. What are the emergency procedures?

The risk assessment must be approved by the Safeguarding Officer, preferably at least 4 weeks prior to the event so that any changes can be advised and the agreed strategies communicated to the team before the event begins. If there is an overnight stay involved then the risk assessment should be completed and approved by the Safeguarding Officer at least 3-6 months before stay.

Risk assessments are then to be communicated to those involved (i.e. leaders/members/helpers involved). Risk assessments are to be made available to attendees/parents/guardians upon request.

On a day to day basis, leaders/members/helpers/employees are not responsible for picking up/collecting children/young people, however, see below where transportation is required for off site activities such as Youth on Tour.

### **Risk Assessments**

The following must be taken into consideration. This is not an exhaustive list.

- The type of visit/activity and the level at which it is being undertaken.
- The location, routes, mode of transport.
- The competence, experience, qualifications of the staff involved.

- The ratios of staff to children. This must include an assessment of those who have an Enhanced DBS Check and can have unsupervised access and those who do not and must not have unsupervised access. In the case of a residential visit no adult must be present who does not have an Enhanced DBS Check.
- The group members age, competence, fitness and temperament for the activity.
- Any special medical needs of participants.
- Conditions, weather etc.
- The quality, suitability of equipment.
- Qualifications, insurance etc. of any organisation or group who will be involved in the activity. It is not good enough to assume that because a group offers to carry out an activity it is qualified or insured to do so.
- Emergency procedures.
- Who will provide First Aid if it is needed.
- Means of coping if a child or young person becomes unwell.
- Ways of monitoring risks throughout the activity.

The information provided to the Safeguarding Officer must also include:

- Information provided for parents/carers (a parental consent form is required for each visit).
- Transport arrangements and details of the contact person, not involved in the visit, who will hold lists of those being transported.
- Supervision ratios (young people under 18 do not count and must be included in the numbers to be supervised). There is a need to assess the male/female makeup of the group. High risk activities e.g. swimming need higher ratios.
- Some activities are designed to allow participants to be independent. Where remote supervision is part of the visit it is essential to ensure that parents have agreed to it. E.g. A trip to a Theme Park may well involve young people being allowed to wander in the park - this does not reduce the responsibility of the group leader.

The Risk Assessment must be read and signed by all those involved in leading and supervising the visit. It is the responsibility of the Ministry Leader to ensure this task is completed. The risk assessments should be added to the Valley Church Google Team Drive.

### **Transport**

Where it is necessary to transport children and young people to offsite activities, there should preferably be 2 full team members/helpers in the car. Transport arrangements, including the names of drivers, must be included on the Parental Consent Form. Seat belts must be worn at all times and it is the driver's responsibility to ensure that each passenger is provided with a seat belt. If it is not possible for another adult to travel in the car, the group must ensure that they are able to communicate with each other and that they are not too distant from each other so that assistance is close at hand if necessary. Each driver is responsible for the insurance of his/her vehicle and must agree for its use for a group activity.

When a mini-bus is used it is important to ensure that seat belts are fitted and in use. At all times another adult must travel in the vehicle with the driver. The use of mini-buses is only allowed where drivers are Midas (Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme) qualified (or another equivalent professional qualification such as HGV) and have a full clean driving licence.

In all instances a person not travelling must have a list of names of those in each vehicle in case of an emergency and be the emergency contact point.

All of the above details must be formalised with the relevant Ministry Leader and logged.

#### **xiv. Missing Child Policy**

Remember that time is of the essence and to continue to protect all the other children and young people.

If a child goes missing from within the building or on an offsite trip, it is important to ensure a correct procedure is followed. It is important to register all children as they enter the building so that a full registration is available. Adults volunteering must register their children every time they enter the building (ie. in the morning and in the evening).

If a child/young person appears to be missing, the following procedure must be followed:

1. Identify a lead co-ordinator and that person stays on site and they coordinate everyone. The lead co-ordinator should be the most senior person within the team and/or on site.
2. Inform the parents/guardians of the child or young person.
3. Collect all the children/young people together. Allocate people (preferably another children's/youth worker, or another leader) to stay with the children/young people ensuring that they are safe and calm. (If it is possible, the children/young people should remain unaware that a problem has occurred. This will prevent them beginning to panic and get upset, particularly if it is a sibling of theirs that is missing.)
4. Complete a register of all children/young people that are present.
5. Allocate other adults to carry out a thorough sweep of the inside and outside of the building including the rooms that can only be accessed from outside.
6. If the child/young person is still not located, the Police must be called on 999 within 10 minutes, where possible.
7. Continue to sweep the inside and outside of the buildings to ensure that a child/young person is not just hiding and also to verify that all possible places have been checked thoroughly.
8. Continue to look further beyond the perimeter of the car park and landscaped area into the immediate local area i.e. Fourfields, Station Road etc.
9. Once the child/young person has been safely located ensure they are safe and comforted appropriately. (This will take into account their age and understanding.)
10. Carry out a thorough investigation into the events allowing a child/young person to go missing and the procedure being followed correctly. (This will highlight any shortcomings and subsequent factors leading to a child/young person going



missing and/or changes that need making to the procedure allowing us to keep children within the building safe).

It may be appropriate to have a named person who would coordinate this procedure and ensure it is followed correctly along, with other named people that could be allocated the tasks of:

1. Looking after the children/young people
2. Taking the register
3. Checking the inside of the building
4. Checking the outside of the building
5. Ringing the Police

The above procedure is dependent on the child/young person's age/vulnerabilities.

## **2.D. REPORTS**

Pastoral care reports must be completed by Youth Teams after each service/event/connect group etc. as appropriate. These reports will be reviewed weekly by the Pastoral Team.

## **2.E. OTHER POLICIES**

The Safeguarding Policy must be read in conjunction with Valley Church's Data Policy and associated policies as well as Valley Church's First Aid Policy.

All accidents and incidents requiring first aid or the administration of medication must be recorded on an Accident Report Form.

## Section 3: Forms for Children and Young People's Workers

The following forms can be found in this section:

1. Safeguarding Concern Form
2. Additional Body Map - Large
3. Safeguarding Incident/Accident/Near Miss Form
4. Investigation and Action Plan Meeting
5. New Worker Induction Form
6. Kids' Consent Form
7. Youth Consent Form

### Forms 1-4 forms should only be used if you are unable to access MyConcern.

- *Please request a copy from the Safeguarding Officers or access the Common Storage drive.*
- *Do not delay submitting the relevant information.*
- *As soon as the system is available again or you have access to MyConcern then you must upload notes and forms completed to MyConcern and complete the appropriate information on MyConcern.*