



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Scope

This policy provides the definitions of abuse and safeguarding guidelines for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. It includes information on how to respond to and report allegations of abuse as well as information on Prevent Duty. Contact details for our Safeguarding Officers are included as are those of Child and Adult Services.

Ground Level as a relational network has no formal safeguarding responsibilities regarding its member churches, it does however seek to encourage best practice in safeguarding across the network. Each Network Church holds individual responsibility for its own safeguarding policies and procedures including the development and instigation of policy, appointment of safeguarding officers/leads, the recruitment of staff and volunteers and responding to allegations and reports of abuse.

Where a senior member of staff, director or trustee of a member church has allegations made against them either the accused party or the one reporting the allegations may decide to escalate this matter to Ground Level for support. In this case this policy would be instigated.

Where a member Church requires further support with a particular issue they will be encouraged to approach our external advisor - thirynone:eight

Ground Level also upholds high levels of safeguarding at its own events, as these events differ in scale and format and often a separate more detailed policy or annexed procedure is developed, in the absence of such a policy or procedure this main policy would be instigated.

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1 Responsibilities regarding Safeguarding

1.1 Why have a Safeguarding policy?

'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018' states:

'Children may be vulnerable to neglect and abuse or exploitation from within their family and from individuals they come across in their day-to-day lives. These threats can take a variety of different forms, including: sexual, physical and emotional abuse; neglect; exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups; trafficking; online abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation. Whatever the form of abuse or neglect, practitioners should put the needs of children first when determining what action to take.' (Paragraph 12)

'Voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) and private sector organisations and agencies play an important role in safeguarding children through the services they deliver. Some of these will work with particular communities, with different races and faith communities and deliver in health, adult social care, housing, prisons and probation services. They may as part of their work provide a wide range of activities for children and have an important role in safeguarding children and supporting families and communities.'(Paragraph 57)

'Like other organisations and agencies who work with children, they should have appropriate arrangements in place to safeguard and protect children from harm.' (Paragraph 58)

1.2 Leadership Safeguarding Statement

The Ground Level Board of Directors has overall responsibility for safeguarding governance and ensuring appropriate safeguarding arrangements, safer recruitment, training, reporting mechanisms, accountability structures and organisational culture are established and maintained throughout the organisation. The following statement was agreed by the executive on 28th September 2022:

Ground Level is committed to the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults and ensuring their well-being. Specifically:

- We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect of children and young people and to report any such abuse that we discover or suspect.
- We believe every child and young person should be valued, safe and happy. We want to make sure that children and young people we have contact with know this and are empowered to tell us if they are suffering harm.

- All children and young people have the right to be treated with respect, to be listened to and to be protected from all forms of abuse.
- We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual, psychological, financial and discriminatory abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults and to report any such abuse that we discover or suspect.
- We recognise the personal dignity and rights of vulnerable adults and will ensure all our policies and procedures reflect this.
- We undertake to exercise proper care in the appointment and selection of all those who will work with children and vulnerable adults.

We are committed to:

- Following the requirements for UK legislation in relation to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults and good practice recommendations.
- Respecting the rights of children as described in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Implementing the requirements of legislation in regard to people with disabilities.
- Ensuring that workers adhere to the agreed procedures of our safeguarding policy.
- Keeping up to date with national and local developments relating to safeguarding.
- Following any organisational guidelines in relation to safeguarding children, young people and adults in need of protection.
- Supporting the safeguarding lead(s) in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children/vulnerable adults.
- Ensuring that everyone agrees to abide by these recommendations and the guidelines established by Ground Level.
- Supporting parents and families
- Nurturing, protecting and safeguarding of children and young people
- Supporting, resourcing, training, monitoring and providing supervision to all those who undertake this work.
- Supporting all in Ground Level affected by abuse.

We recognise:

- Children's Social Services (or equivalent) has the responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse where there are concerns about a child/young person. Adult Social Care (or equivalent) has the responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse where there are concerns about a vulnerable adult.
- Where an allegation suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed then the police should be contacted as a matter of urgency.
- When working outside of the UK, concerns will be reported to the appropriate agencies in the country in which we operate, and their procedures followed, and in addition we will report concerns to our agency's headquarters.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

We will review this statement and our policy and procedures annually. This statement and policy applies at any event or where work is undertaken in the name of Ground Level within the scope of this policy.

Safeguarding Legislation References - Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, Care Act 2014, Equality Act 2010, Domestic Abuse Act 2021
Online Safety Act 2023 (where relevant)

2 Definitions

2.1 Statutory Definitions of Abuse (Children)

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

(Working Together, 2018)

Child protection legislation throughout the UK is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Each nation within the UK has incorporated the convention within its legislation and guidance.

There are four key categories of abuse and neglect as detailed below, however, it is important to be aware of the many wider Safeguarding concerns that may be affecting children and young people (as highlighted within Working Together 2018) such as: Exploitation (sexual and Criminal), Extremism and so-called Honour based violence.

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

Emotional Abuse: The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, 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. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child 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 frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

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 is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, 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 in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect: The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child'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: a) provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment) b) protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger c) ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers) d) ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Wider Safeguarding concerns:

Extremism: Extremism goes beyond terrorism and includes people who target the vulnerable – including the young – by seeking to sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society. Extremism is defined in the Counter Extremism Strategy 2015 as the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist.

Child Criminal Exploitation: As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy, published by the Home Office, where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Child Sexual Exploitation: is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (*Child Sexual Exploitation, DfE 2017*)

Honour Based Violence: It is an umbrella term to encompass various offences covered by existing legislation. HBV can be described as a collection of practices, which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and/or community by breaking their honour code.

Domestic Abuse: Witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse, and teenagers can suffer domestic abuse in their relationships.

Sexual Exploitation: Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. Children or young people may be tricked into believing they are in a loving, consensual relationship. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol. They may also be groomed and exploited online. Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Bullying and Cyberbullying: Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else – such as name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone. It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It is usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally. Bullying that happens online, using social networks, games and mobile phones, is often called cyberbullying. A child can feel like there is no escape because it can happen wherever they are, at any time of day or night.

Online Abuse: With the ever-growing use of the internet, mobile telephones and online gaming (e.g. Xbox/ PlayStation), there has been a corresponding rise in the use of the internet and other electronic communication to target, groom and abuse children. Adults may target chat rooms, social networking sites, messaging services, mobile phones, online gaming sites and the internet generally. Children are particularly vulnerable to abuse by adults who pretend to be children of comparable ages when online and who try to obtain images or engineer meetings.

Electronic Images: The downloading, keeping or distributing of indecent images of children are all classified as sexual offences. Such offences are sometimes referred to as non-contact sexual offences. However, it must be remembered that children will have been abused in the making of the images. The texting of sexual messages and photographs can be particularly problematic and abusive amongst children and young people.

2.2 Statutory Definitions of Abuse (Vulnerable Adults)

The following definition of abuse is laid down in 'No Secrets: Guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse (Department of Health 2000):

'Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. In giving substance to that statement, however, consideration needs to be given to a number of factors:

Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented, or could not consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it'.

- Physical abuse
- Domestic violence or abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological or emotional abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Modern slavery
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational or institutional abuse
- Neglect or acts of omission
- Self-neglect

Physical Abuse

This is the infliction of pain or physical injury, which is either caused deliberately, or through lack of care.

Sexual Abuse

This is the involvement in sexual activities to which the person has not consented or does not truly comprehend and so cannot give informed consent, or where the other party is in a position of trust, power or authority and uses this to override or overcome lack of consent.

Psychological or Emotional Abuse

These are acts or behaviour, which cause mental distress or anguish or negate the wishes of the vulnerable adult. It is also behaviour that has a harmful effect on the vulnerable adult's emotional health and development or any other form of mental cruelty.

Financial or Material Abuse

This is the inappropriate use, misappropriation, embezzlement or theft of money, property or possessions.

Neglect or Act of Omission

This is the repeated deprivation of assistance that the vulnerable adult needs for important activities of daily living, including the failure to intervene in behaviour which is dangerous to the vulnerable adult or to others. A vulnerable person may be suffering from neglect when their general well-being or development is impaired.

Discriminatory Abuse

This is the inappropriate treatment of a vulnerable adult because of their age, gender, race, religion, cultural background, sexuality, disability etc. Discriminatory abuse exists when values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies opportunity to some groups or individuals. Discriminatory abuse links to all other forms of abuse.

Institutional Abuse

This is the mistreatment or abuse of a vulnerable adult by a regime or individuals within an institution (e.g. hospital or care home) or in the community. It can be through repeated acts of poor or inadequate care and neglect or poor professional practice.

3 Recognising and Responding appropriately to an allegation or Suspicion of Abuse

3.1 Signs of Possible Abuse (children & young people)

The following signs could be indicators that abuse has taken place but should be considered in the context of the child's whole life.

Things you may notice if you're worried that a child is being abused, watch out for any unusual behaviour:

- withdrawn
- suddenly behaves differently
- anxious
- clingy
- depressed
- aggressive
- problems sleeping
- eating disorders
- wets the bed
- soils clothes
- takes risks
- misses school
- changes in eating habits
- obsessive behaviour
- nightmares
- drugs
- alcohol
- self-harm
- thoughts about suicide

Physical

Injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them

Injuries that occur in places not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc

Injuries that have not received medical attention

Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming

Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains

Bruises on babies, bites, burns, fractures etc which do not have an accidental explanation*

Cuts/scratches/substance abuse*

Bumps and bruises don't necessarily mean a child is being physically abused – all children have accidents, trips and falls.

There isn't one sign or symptom to look out for that will say a child is definitely being physically abused. But if a child often has injuries, there seems to be a pattern, or the explanation doesn't match the injury then this should be investigated.

Sexual

Children who are sexually abused may:

Stay away from certain people

- they might avoid being alone with people, such as family members or friends
- they could seem frightened of a person or reluctant to socialise with them.

Show sexual behaviour that's inappropriate for their age

- a child might become sexually active at a young age
- they might be promiscuous
- they could use sexual language or know information that you wouldn't expect them to.

Have physical symptoms

- anal or vaginal soreness
- an unusual discharge
- sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- pregnancy.

Emotional

There often aren't any obvious physical symptoms of emotional abuse or neglect but you may spot signs in a child's actions or emotions.

Changes in emotions are a normal part of growing up, so it can be really difficult to tell if a child is being emotionally abused.

Babies and pre-school children who are being emotionally abused or neglected may:

- be overly-affectionate towards strangers or people they haven't known for very long
- lack confidence or become wary or anxious
- not appear to have a close relationship with their parents, e.g. when being taken to or collected from nursery etc.
- be aggressive or nasty towards other children and animals.

Older children may:

- use language, act in a way or know about things that you wouldn't expect them to know for their age
- struggle to control strong emotions or have extreme outbursts
- seem isolated from their parents
- lack social skills or have few, if any, friends.

Neglect

Neglect can have serious and long-lasting effects. It can be anything from leaving a child home alone to the very worst cases where a child dies from malnutrition or being denied the care they need. In some cases it can cause permanent disabilities.

Neglect can be really difficult to identify, making it hard for professionals to take early action to protect a child.

Having one of the signs or symptoms below doesn't necessarily mean that a child is being neglected. But if you notice multiple, or persistent, signs then it could indicate there's a serious problem.

Children who are neglected may have:

- Poor appearance and hygiene
- Health and development problems
- Housing and family issues

3.2 Signs of Possible Abuse (vulnerable adults)

Physical

A history of unexplained falls, fractures, bruises, burns, minor injuries
Signs of under or over use of medication and/or medical problems unattended.

Sexual

Pregnancy in a woman who is unable to consent to sexual intercourse
Unexplained change in behaviour or sexually implicit/explicit behaviour
Torn, stained or bloody underwear and/or unusual difficulty in walking or sitting
Infections or sexually transmitted diseases
Full or partial disclosure or hints of sexual abuse
Self-harming

Psychological

Alteration in psychological state e.g. withdrawn, agitated, anxious, tearful
Intimidated or subdued in the presence of the carer
Fearful, flinching or frightened of making choices or expressing wishes
Unexplained paranoia
Financial or Material disparity between assets and living conditions
Unexplained withdrawals from accounts or disappearance of financial documents
Sudden inability to pay bills
Carers or professionals fail to account for expenses incurred on a person's behalf
Recent changes of deeds or title to property

Neglect or Omission

Malnutrition, weight loss and /or persistent hunger
Poor physical condition, poor hygiene, varicose ulcers, pressure sores
Being left in wet clothing or bedding and/or clothing in a poor condition
Failure to access appropriate health, educational services or social care
No callers or visitors

Discriminatory

Inappropriate remarks, comments or lack of respect
Poor quality or avoidance of care

Institutional

Lack of flexibility or choice over meals, bedtimes, visitors, phone calls etc
Inadequate medical care and misuse of medication
Inappropriate use of restraint
Sensory deprivation e.g. denial of use of spectacles or hearing aids
Missing documents and/or absence of individual care plans
Public discussion of private matter
Lack of opportunity for social, educational or recreational activity

3.3 Guidance for Handling Disclosures

How To Respond To A Child/Young Person/Vulnerable Adult Wanting To Talk About Abuse

GENERAL POINTS

- Listen and don't interrupt
- Show acceptance of what the child says
- Keep calm
- Look at the child/vulnerable adult directly
- Be honest
- Tell the child/vulnerable adult you will need to let someone else know – don't promise confidentiality
- Be aware that the child/vulnerable adult may have been threatened or bribed not to tell
- Never push for information. If the child/vulnerable adult decides not to tell you after all, then accept that and let them know that you are always ready to listen.
- Inform the child/adult of the **Safeguarding Advisory Team** (hereafter the "SAT") and how they can help, should they not want to discuss the concern at that time.

HELPFUL THINGS YOU MAY SAY OR SHOW

- I believe you (or showing acceptance of what the child says)
- Thank you for telling me
- It's not your fault
- I will help you

DON'T SAY

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it!
- Are you sure this is true?
- Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- Never make false promises
- Never make statements such as "I am shocked, don't tell anyone else"

CONCLUDING

- Again reassure the child/young person/vulnerable adult that they were right to tell you and show acceptance
- Let the child/young person/vulnerable adult know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens (you might have to consider referring to Children's/Adult's Services or the Police to prevent a child/young person/vulnerable adult returning home if you consider them to be seriously at risk of further abuse)
- **Discuss with the Safeguarding Lead** and complete a **Sensitive Info Report**
- The Safeguarding lead will inform the SAT or contact an agency such as Thirtyone-eight for advice or go directly to Children's/Adult's Services/Police/NSPCC.
- Consider your own feelings and seek pastoral support if needed

3.4 Disclosure Reporting Procedure

The Procedure

- 1 Make notes using the ***Sensitive Info Report template*** (safeguarding is paramount and therefore this must be completed immediately) writing down exactly what the child/young person/vulnerable adult said, write what you said in reply to them, when he/she said it and what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. description of activity). Record dates and times of these events and when you made the record. Keep all hand-written notes securely, even if these have been typed subsequently.
- 2 If you believe the person is in immediate danger contact Children's Services or Adult Social Care:
 - Children's Service - 01522 782111 (or relevant local numbers)
 - Adult Social Care - 01522 782155 (or relevant local numbers)
 - Out of hours (for both) - 01522 782333 (or relevant local numbers)

These will always be answered, even if you have to wait for several minutes. Dialling 999 is an option if unsuccessful with any of the above options and you are certain of immediate danger

- 3 Report your discussion as soon as possible to the **Safeguarding Lead (Currently Joy Wooffindin) via safeguarding@groundlevel.org.uk** As required they will then contact **a member of the Safeguarding Advisory Team**.

The Safeguarding Advisory Team is made up of:

Joy Wooffindin (Safeguarding Lead)

Claire Bell

Mark Hopkins

Ground Level will issue an initial response confirming the receipt of your disclosure and what will happen next. When writing your email if you deem a report to be of a serious nature you should start the subject line 'URGENT' normal emails will be responded to in 72 hours and urgent emails in 24. If you are unable to put details in writing you should email to request a callback.

If the suspicions in any way involve a Member of the SAT then the report should be made to the **Operations Manager (Currently Jason Gibson via jason@groundlevel.org.uk)** who with support from '**Thirtyone-eight**' will determine the appropriate course of action. If the suspicions in any way implicate both the above-named person and the SAT, then the report should be made in the first instance directly to '**Thirtyone-eight**, PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ. Telephone 0303 003 1111. Alternatively contact Children's Services on **01522 782111** (if out of office hours 01522 782333)

For Adult's Services contact Adult's Services **01522 782155** (if out of office hours 01522 782333).

Or the Police.

- 4 You should not discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone other than those nominated in the above point.

3.5 Responding to suspected abuse or a disclosure

- 1 Following the receipt of the information the Safeguarding Lead will as required contact **a member of the Safeguarding Advisory Team** (hereafter the "SAT") who are nominated by Ground Level to act on their behalf in referring allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities.
- 2 Concerns will be treated confidentially and will only be discussed on a need to know basis..
- 3 It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make direct referrals to the Safeguarding agencies or seek advice from Thirtyone-eight, although we hope that everyone will use this procedure. If, however, you feel that the safeguarding leader or SAT has not responded appropriately to your concerns, then it is open to you to contact the relevant organisation directly. We hope by making this statement that we demonstrate the commitment of the organisation to effective Safeguarding.

3.6 Responding to an allegation of abuse or neglect

The SAT will:

- 1 Gather information from the volunteer/member of staff and where appropriate, discuss the concern/disclosure with the child/young person/adult directly, in a confidential setting. The SAT will assess whether parents/carers will be contacted at this stage. If assessed, based on the information gathered, discussing the concern/disclosure with the parent/carer may put the child at further risk of harm, they will not be informed prior to a referral being made.
- 2 As appropriate, contact to be made with Children's/Adult's Services/Police (or Thirtyone-eight) for advice in cases of alleged deliberate harm, abuse, neglect and where concerned about the welfare of a child/Adult. The Operations Manager should be notified that children's/Adult's services have been notified.
- 3 Where emergency medical attention is necessary it will be sought immediately. The SAT will inform the health professional of any suspicions of abuse.
- 4 If appropriate the parent/carer will be encouraged to seek help from the Children's Services or wider support agencies via the Early Help Process. The SAT will share relevant contact details to ensure support can be accessed.
- 5 Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, if appropriate, a member of the SAT will offer to go with them. If they still fail to act, the SAT should, in cases of real concern, contact Children's/Adult's Services for advice.
- 6 Any volunteer or member of staff receiving a request for comment or interview from the media about any aspect of concerns or allegations, is requested to refer all such enquiries to the Operations Manager.

Supporting Those Affected by Abuse

Ground Level is committed to providing appropriate wellbeing and pastoral support to anyone affected by abuse and will work alongside statutory agencies where appropriate.

4 Staff & Volunteers

4.1 Appointment of staff and volunteers

Ground Level is committed to promoting 'safer recruitment' of staff and volunteers, each individual role and capacity is risk assessed for its access to working with children and vulnerable adults and appropriate measures are put in place to uphold our commitment to safeguarding. This includes ensuring in accordance with Government Guidance that:

- There is a written job description / person specification for the post
- Those applying have completed an application form and a self declaration form
- Those shortlisted have been interviewed (or approved by a Team Leader for infrequent posts)
- Safeguarding has been discussed at interview (or approved by a Team Leader for infrequent posts)
- Written references have been obtained, and followed up where appropriate
- A disclosure and barring check has been completed - where required (we will comply with Code of Practice requirements concerning the fair treatment of applicants and the handling of information)
- Qualifications where relevant have been verified
- A suitable training programme is provided for the successful applicant
- The applicant has completed a probationary period
- The applicant has been given a copy of the organisation's safeguarding policy and knows how to report concerns.
- Any workers from outside the UK will be subject to background checks and references from their home country.

4.2 Accusations of abuse against staff and volunteers

Ground Level will take any accusation of abuse made against a staff member or volunteer seriously. Following an accusation the SAT will decide on an appropriate course of action in liaison with other agencies as appropriate. In most cases the member of staff/volunteer should be suspended from service while this enquiry is completed.

All staff and volunteers should report an allegation made against them to their supervisor.

4.3 Accusations of abuse against member church senior members of staff, directors or trustees

Where an accusation is made to Ground Level regarding a Senior Staff Member, Director, Trustee or other person deemed to be of significant influence within a member church Ground Level will support the organisation to conduct an enquiry into the accusation. In this instance the SAT will decide on an appropriate course of action in liaison with other agencies as appropriate. In most cases it will be advised that the accused party should be suspended from service while this enquiry is completed.

5 Guidance for safe delivery of activities

5.1 General Guidelines

- Where possible, ensure that a worker is not alone with a child/young person/vulnerable adult, but be realistic in acknowledging circumstances when this might be necessary or helpful.
- Where confidentiality is important (e.g. counselling) and a young person is being seen on their own, then ensure that others know the interview is taking place and that someone else is around in the venue.
- No person under 18 years of age should be left solely in charge of any children of any age. Nor should a child/vulnerable adult attending a group be left alone at any time.
- A register of child/vulnerable adult attending the venue or activity should be kept, and a register of volunteers. This should include times of arrival and departure if any individual is not attending the whole session.
- Keep a log of each activity. Workers should record unusual events with each leader recording what they witnessed. This can be very helpful if leaders have to deal with a difficult child/vulnerable adult who may subsequently make accusations of assault. A child/vulnerable adult who constantly makes throwaway sexual comments about children/adult workers may later make an allegation of actual abuse. Records of previous examples of this behaviour will enable any allegation to be seen in context. Of course, if the number of children/vulnerable adults all make similar comments about one worker, this should warn the leadership that they have a problem with that person. Logbooks can protect both children/vulnerable adults and workers.
- It is suggested that workers also record in the logbook incidents such as fights and what action was taken by the leaders. As the information in the logbook is likely to be very sensitive, the log book should be kept separate from the accident book which is used to record any accidents or injuries. Because accusations of abuse may be made many years later, records should be kept for as long as possible. Insurance companies advise that records should be kept indefinitely. Certainly, the experience of thirtyone-eight is that allegations can be made very many years after an event.

5.2 Boundaries

- The level of personal care, e.g. toileting, must be appropriate and related to the age of the child/young person/vulnerable adult whilst also accepting that some child/young person/vulnerable adults have special needs. This may only be conducted with parental consent.
- Guidance on touch – See **Safe Touch Guidelines (5.5)**
- Workers should treat every child/young person/vulnerable adult with dignity and respect in attitude, language used and actions.
- Respect the privacy of the child/young person/vulnerable adult, avoid questionable activity, e.g. rough/sexually provocative games and comments
- Make sure that the only people allowed into a child/young person/vulnerable adult activity (e.g. crèche, nursery, children's group, youth group) are the workers assigned to that group. You should not allow other adults to have free access.

5.3 Safety

The areas which need to be considered include the following:

- Specific issues relating to the use of premises/equipment e.g. buildings well-lit and maintained, and potentially dangerous activities properly supervised
- Internal and external to the building, fixtures, fittings and equipment should meet adequate safety standards
- Outside play areas should be appropriately fenced with gates to prevent small children from straying from the premises and should meet safety requirements
- Ensure there are adequate toilets and hand-basins and that when food is being prepared, hygiene requirements and universal precautions are observed. It is recommended that at least one worker should hold a Food and Hygiene certificate

- Need for experienced first-aider and adequate first aid kit (see guidelines on first aid)

5.4 First Aid Guidelines

All premises used by a child/young person/vulnerable adult should have a properly equipped first aid kit. Its contents should be stored in a waterproof container and the designated worker should regularly check contents. Workers are encouraged to attend training run by the St John's Ambulance Brigade or the Red Cross etc.

A suggested minimum for a first aid kit:

2 x small wound dressing
 1 x large wound dressing
 1 x eye pad
 4 x triangular bandages
 2 x non-stick dressing 5cm x 5 cm
 2 x non-stick dressing 10cm x 10cm
 1 reel of low allergy adhesive tape
 4 x safety pins
 5 x pairs of disposable latex gloves
 2 x conforming bandages 6cm
 1 x resuscitation shield
 20 x wrapped adhesive dressings (plasters)
 2 x crepe bandages 5cm
 1 x disposable apron
 1 x sealed eye wash
 1 x emergency aid card
 4 x individually wrapped cleansing wipes (non alcoholic)
 An accident report book with forms

HIV / HVB / Hepatitis

Good hygiene and universal precautions should always be practised. Disposable latex free gloves and an apron should be used if possible when dealing with broken skin, bodily fluids or faeces.

5.5 Safe Touch Guidelines

Guidelines on touch for those who work with children.

- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors
- Touch should be related to the child/young person/vulnerable adult needs, not the worker's
- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child/young person/vulnerable adult rather than the worker
- Avoid any physical activity that is, or may be thought to be sensual, or sexually stimulating to the adult or the child/vulnerable adult
- Children/young people/vulnerable adults have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in exceptional circumstances when they need urgent medical attention
- Team members should monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They should be free to help each other by pointing out anything, which could be misconstrued.
- Concerns about abuse should always be reported.

5.6 Discipline

- Work on each individual child/young person/vulnerable adult positives, do not compare them with each other, but encourage and build them up, giving them responsibility for simple tasks.
- Build healthy relationships with children/young people/vulnerable adults and be a good role model, setting a good example. You can't expect children/vulnerable adults to observe ground rules if you break them yourself.
- Take care to give quieter and well-behaved children/young people/vulnerable adults attention and don't allow some children/young people/vulnerable adults to take all your time and energy.
- Be consistent in what you say and ensure that other team members know what you have said – this avoids manipulation.
- Look honestly at your programme – if children/young people/vulnerable adults are bored, they misbehave. Is the programme at fault?
- **NEVER smack or hit a child/young people/vulnerable adult, this is deemed Physical assault, is a crime and the Police will be informed immediately.**
- Don't shout – change voice tone if necessary.
- Discipline out of care and concern, NEVER anger. (Call on support from other leaders if you feel you may deal with the situation unwisely in your anger.)
- Lay down ground rules e.g. no swearing, discriminatory remarks or calling each other names, a respect for property, and make sure the children understand what action will be taken if not kept.
- If a child/adult behaves inappropriately towards a child/adult, such as to make a sexual, racist, discriminatory comment or to inappropriately touch a child, this **must be reported to the SAT.**
- Each child/young person/vulnerable adult is unique, special and individual, and each child/young person/vulnerable adult needs a different method of being dealt with. We need to ask why the child is behaving that way.
- Separate children/young people/vulnerable adults who have a tendency to be disruptive when together. Give them a chance, warn them and only separate if they are disruptive as a last resort.
- Have the child/young person/vulnerable adult sit right in front of you or get a helper to sit next to the child/young person/vulnerable adult.
- Be proactive and encourage helpers to be proactive and not wait to be told to deal with a situation.
- Take the child/young person/vulnerable adult aside and talk to them, challenge them to change, whilst encouraging them on their strengths.
- Warn a child/young person/vulnerable adult that you will speak to their parents and do so if necessary. Warn them, send them outside the room / activity (care supervision), or ban them for a session. (Never a total ban without reference to your leader and ensure parents are advised in cases of banning.)
- If a child/young person/vulnerable adult's behaviour is constantly disruptive, seek advice and guidance from a leader.
- Talk over the session before you leave.

5.7 Relationships/Position of Trust

All staff and volunteers working with children, young people and adults at risk are considered to occupy a **Position of Trust** and must maintain appropriate professional boundaries at all times.

The team must ensure that interactions with other people are appropriate and in no way open to misinterpretation. Young people and vulnerable adults may look up to a team member and it is not uncommon for misunderstanding to happen in a helping relationship. A young person, for example, could start seeing their youth worker as a close friend or in a romantic way.

If a team member is ever concerned that a person is beginning to see them in any other way than a team member, helper or youth worker, they should address this with their team leader. In such a situation, it may be appropriate to have a tactful, mediated conversation to clarify the relationship.

NOTE: Even if a child is over the age of consent (16) it is illegal to engage in sexual activity with any 16 or 17 year old if you hold a **Position of Trust**.

If a team member is concerned about another member of the team, they should address this with the team leader. If the concern relates to the team leader, the team member should speak to the Safeguarding Lead or a member of the SAT.

5.8 Clothing for Team Members

- Team members should dress appropriately for the kind of work they are doing. This includes team uniforms/ t-shirts/ lanyards if required, which allow the team to be easily identified by guests, young people and parents.
- Team members must be dressed modestly, which enables them to be taken seriously in the roles they carry out. The '4 B's' (Boobs, Belly, Bum, 'Bulge') must be well covered at all times.
- Team members should be mindful of appropriate dress when posting photos on social media, even on their own personal accounts.
- Any explicit tattoos, or tattoos that may raise controversy should be covered.
- Team members should not wear clothing bearing slogans or messaging that is, or could be interpreted as, offensive, misleading or controversial

6 Training

Safeguarding training should be considered for each staff/volunteer role within Ground Level - depending on the role, type of work and access to Children & Vulnerable adults - see below. For irregular activities the organisation will consider the support of a nominated Safeguarding Coordinator who has experience from another field of work or volunteering. Ground Level will ensure that adequate briefing and training is supplied to volunteers as required.

- All staff and volunteers will complete safeguarding training every three years.
- Safeguarding Leads will complete advanced safeguarding training every two years.
- Directors and Trustees will complete safeguarding governance training every three years.

7 Digital Communication

Youth and Children's Workers regularly communicate with children/young people using social media, instant messaging, text messages and email. Ground Level recognises that it is important for young people to have positive role models and relationships online as well as face to face and as such all Children and Youth Workers using these methods of communication will have read the Safeguarding Policy and the following guidelines for communicating through social media, instant messaging, text messages or email:

- Parental consent must be sought to use young people's mobile numbers, social media accounts and email addresses to communicate directly.
- Staff and Volunteers should not initiate friend/follow requests but can accept requests from young people that they already know.
- Communication with young people online should be transparent and where possible on public platforms. If necessary, use group chats involving other responsible staff or volunteers rather than direct messaging.
- Young people can find it easier to communicate through social media, instant messaging, text messages or email as nobody is physically present. This means a child or young person may be more willing to share personal or sensitive information about themselves or a given situation than they would face to face. Whilst it is entirely appropriate to offer general advice and support, counselling should only be done by those qualified to give it and confidentiality should never be promised.
- It is good practice to limit the length of a conversation with young people via social media and for any conversation not to take place late at night.
- Communication methods where conversations are automatically deleted and not viewable (either immediately or historically) by anyone else should not be used (such as Snapchat).
- If conversations through any of these methods of communication lead to a conversation of potential concern, if at all possible a record of these should be saved and passed on/shown to the worker's team leader. Any conversations with children/young people should be able to be viewed by a team leader if they feel it is necessary.
- No conversation is to be entered into that involves sexual or pornographic content. If they do come up in conversation, this must be reported to the Safeguarding Officer immediately and the conversation should be terminated.
- If content suspected to be extremist in nature comes up in the conversation, whilst general advice and support may be appropriate, if you have serious concerns you should seek guidance from the Safeguarding Lead.
- When communicating with young people through social media, instant messaging, text messages or email use clear, unambiguous language to reduce the risk of misinterpretation. i.e. Do not use words such as 'luv' or include XX at the end of a text. Adhering to these guidelines should provide a good level of protection for Children's & Youth Workers as well as the young people/children themselves.

8 Working in Partnership

The diversity of organisations and settings means there can be great variation in practice when it comes to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. This can be because of cultural tradition, belief and religious practice or understanding, for example, of what constitutes abuse. We therefore will share this policy with any intended partners who will be working with Children or Vulnerable Adults on behalf of Ground Level for them to read and agree to, and will likewise expect to see their own safeguarding policy.

As established in the Scope of this policy the above statement does not apply to a member church of Ground Level, whom carry their own responsibility for encouraging best practice in Safeguarding, Ground Level will insist that all member churches have in place a Safeguarding Policy, Trained Safeguarding Co-ordinator and may ask for evidence of this at an annual membership review.

Good communication is essential in promoting safeguarding, to those we wish to protect, to everyone involved in working with children and vulnerable adults and to all those with whom we work in partnership. This safeguarding policy is just one means of promoting safeguarding. We actively work within a multi agency approach, effectively communicating with service providers and local governments ensuring we share information securely during this process.

9 Policy Access & Distribution

All staff members and volunteers working with Children or Vulnerable adults will be given access to this policy, this policy will also be made available on the Ground Level Network website - www.groundlevel.org.uk

As this is an umbrella policy which will be adapted and expanded due to the needs of specific events, volunteers for those events will be provided with a sub version of this policy rather than the overarching document.

Appendix 1 - Safeguarding Guidelines

Safeguarding Guidelines

Abuse Allegations

If a child/young person/vulnerable adult makes a disclosure about any allegations of abuse or neglect, be it a worker, parent, child or another adult, pass it on **immediately** to the safeguarding leader and complete the **Sensitive Info Report**. They will then contact the Safeguarding Advisory team (SAT), who will then contact the relevant agencies and keep you informed of this process, if appropriate.

Do not ask leading questions, but inform them of what you will do next. e.g. Inform the Safeguarding Lead. Reassure the reporter and avoid reacting to the disclosure in an overtly negative or dramatic manner.

Abuse falls into four key categories: *(ensure you read full definitions in the main body of the policy)*

Physical Injury: When a person injures or harms a young person or does not knowingly prevent it.

Neglect: Failure to meet a young person's need for food, warmth, protection and care.

Emotional Abuse: Persistent, severe emotional treatment or rejection that severely affects the emotional and behavioural development of a child/young person/vulnerable adult.

Sexual Abuse: The use of a child/young person/vulnerable adult to meet an adult's sexual needs.

Appendix 2 - Safeguarding Reporting Procedure

1

Listen to the person and do not promise total confidentiality

2

Keep calm, do not ask leading questions, say encouraging things.

3

Allow the person to finish in their own time, and let them know what you will do next.

4

Immediately inform Safeguarding Leader Joy Wooffindin - safeguarding@groundlevel.org.uk who will deal with the matter as necessary.

When writing your email if you deem a report to be of a serious nature you should start the subject line 'URGENT' normal emails will be responded to in 72 hours and urgent emails in 24.

If you are unable to put details in writing you should email to request a callback or call the Ground Level Office on 01522 217556

If the safeguarding Leader is not available ring Thirtyone:eight - a 24/7 safeguarding advisory service

0303 003 1111

5

Fill in a ***Sensitive Info Report*** and give to Safeguarding Leader

6

Safeguarding leader to contact Safeguarding Advisory team (SAT)

If the Safeguarding Leader or member of the SAT is implicated by the report contact the Ground Level Operations Manager **Jason Gibson - jason@groundlevel.org.uk**

If you believe the person is in **immediate danger**, contact Children's Services or Adult Social Care:

- Children's Service - 01522 782111 (or relevant local numbers)
- Adult Social Care - 01522 782155 (or relevant local numbers)
- Out of hours (for both) - 01522 782333 (or relevant local numbers)

These will always be answered, even if you have to wait for several minutes.

- Dialling 999 is an option if unsuccessful with any of the above options and you are certain of immediate danger

Note: For Children and Young People, consult with parents (or one of them) where possible, unless there is a very good reason not to (such as putting you or the person in danger)

Appendix 3 - Sensitive information report

Is your concern about (circle)	An adult (aged 18 or over) A Child (under 18)
About you	
Your name	
Your role/relationship to the concerned	
Your phone number	
About the person you are concerned for	
Name	
Date of Birth	
If under 18, please state parents names and ages, if known	
Address and postcode of person you are concerned for	
Your concern	
Location where concern arose	
Date and Time concern arose	
Provide detailed content of information given including; exact words used by child/adult, clear description of injuries or other concerns. Consider including a body map below for accurate recording of visible injuries.	

Appendix 4 - Contacts

Contact	Name	Telephone	Email
Safeguarding Lead	Joy Wooffindin	Callback available via 01522 217556	safeguarding@groundlevel.org.uk
Safeguarding Advisory Team	Joy Wooffindin Mark Hopkins Claire Bell		
Thirtyone:Eight		0303 003 1111	
Children's Services Adult Social Care Out of Hours (both) Police		01522 782111 01522 782155 01522 782333 999	
Operations Manager	Jason Gibson	01522 217556	jason@groundlevel.org.uk