Introduction

Any organisation that works with children and adults must ensure that those people are properly cared for and protected.

This is particularly relevant for places of worship and faith groups who are often unique because of the inclusion of adults and children together in close proximity and the need to address issues for both the abused and the abuser.

Places of worship and most faith communities open their doors to anyone and they can be called upon to help at anytime, particularly in a crisis. Usually leaders will know what to do but sometimes expert guidance is needed. So it is vital that leaders and workers are trained and aware of how to work confidently and effectively with vulnerable children, young people and adults including when an allegation of abuse or a concern arises.

Over the last 40 years, we’ve developed these ten standards to be used as a framework and template for developing your own safeguarding arrangements.

This booklet is a summary of our comprehensive online safeguarding manual which covers the needs of children (those under 18 years) and adults who may be at risk in places of worship and other organisations.

References in the text to ‘organisations’ refer to a place of worship or any other group working with children. More information can be found on our website thirtyoneeight.org

Our Ten Standards for creating safer places

We have developed ten standards to assist organisations to operate safely and in a manner that complies with relevant UK law and good practice.

Some organisations will be at the beginning of a ‘journey’ towards safeguarding whilst others will be well on their way to implementing these standards. Wherever your organisation is at, our standards are a good place to start and our team is always on the end of phone to answer any questions you may have.

Charitable Status

Any UK-based organisation wanting to register as a charity working with children or adults with care and support needs will need to meet the safeguarding requirements of the regulators (e.g. England and Wales – Charity Commission). This will include following a safeguarding policy and safe recruitment of workers.

Insurance

Your insurance company will require that you have a safeguarding policy, are recruiting safely and have appropriately trained your workers otherwise you may find you are not covered.

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Unless stated otherwise, the information contained in this booklet applies to all four nations of the UK; England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
Safeguarding Policy

Organisations should adopt a formal, working safeguarding policy.

The government expects all organisations open to or likely to have contact with children or adults at risk to adopt and implement a safeguarding policy. It is important that leaders and workers know how to respond to concerns about possible abuse, recruit safely and follow safe practice guidelines in their work.

This standard includes the appointment of a Safeguarding Coordinator who will deal with concerns and suspicions of abuse on behalf of the leadership. Their job will also include promoting safeguarding throughout their organisation.

The leaders and the safeguarding Coordinator should make sure everyone knows where they can see or get a copy of your safeguarding policy.

More information

All our member organisations have access to our popular model safeguarding policy template which can be used as a basis for structuring and developing your own policy. Members can also access our policy writing workshops and review service so you can be confident that your policy is not only legally compliant but also fit for purpose.
Developing Safeguarding Awareness and Training

Organisations must develop safeguarding awareness and provide training.

Everyone needs to know how children and adults with care and support needs are being kept safe and what to do if there is a concern about possible abuse. This includes the leaders, safeguarding Coordinator, workers, parents/carers and children.

The organisation has a responsibility to provide training and development opportunities for all it’s workers, including paid and un-paid staff and volunteers.

More information

As a CPD member organisation, all our courses are designed to ensure everyone in your organisation is confident and competent in working safely. We provide three levels of learning from foundation to advanced level and specialist topic areas.

We offer face-to-face training at venues across the UK, plus online training and bespoke training packages.
Safer Recruitment

Organisations should adopt a formal safer recruitment policy for both paid and voluntary workers.

Safer recruitment is often the first opportunity any organisation gets to safeguard the vulnerable people it works with. It is vital because it minimises the likelihood of people being harmed by those in positions of trust. Leaders, workers and others with particular roles must undergo a thorough recruitment process.

This includes the creation of a job or role description, an application form, an interview, taking up references and criminal records checks (where eligible) all of which have a part to play in the assessment of a candidate’s suitability. If this is done, then the chances of someone who could pose a risk to children and other vulnerable people being able to work with them will be greatly reduced.

More information

Our secure, easy-to-use online DBS service and step-by-step support and guidance makes managing the recruitment of your workers convenient and manageable. We are relied on as the largest provider of DBS checks to the faith sector. We can advise on eligibility requirements and what to do should a check come back with relevant conviction information.
Management of Workers

Workers, paid and voluntary, should be appropriately managed, supervised and supported.

Workers need encouragement and help, particularly when they are first appointed. Abuse is more likely to occur where workers are not accountable to others. All workers should be given the opportunity to attend team meetings and training to help them develop their skills and to work as a team.

Working as a team will help people show responsibility for and to each other and motivate them to strive for the best possible practice in their work. All leaders and workers need to know who to talk to if they have a worry or concern. Procedures should exist to help and encourage workers to report concerns (commonly known as ‘whistle blowing’). Organisations also need to have procedures in place for managing allegations against workers that will involve contact with the statutory authorities.

More information
Our comprehensive range of free to download resources, information and guidance are available from our website to support workers implement safeguarding effectively.
Working Safely

Organisations must ensure they adopt safer working practice.

Working safely means the organisation must think about the safety aspects of every organised activity, including outings and holidays, and then do what is necessary to keep children and adults safe. This is called a risk assessment.

Working safely also applies in areas such as transportation, pastoral visiting, discipline, dealing with bullying and first aid. If the organisation is committed to making sure children and adults are safe, workers will feel more confident about running activities, develop good relationships and minimise the risk of unfounded allegations.

Places of worship often provide different activities in different locations (e.g. toddler groups, Sunday school, foodbanks, lunch clubs and other support groups). This makes it even more important to follow and have guidelines for running these activities.
Communicating Effectively

Organisations should ensure that workers know how to listen and relate to children and adults with whom they come in to contact.

Effective communication helps develop positive and trusting relationships, build self-esteem and create an environment of acceptance where those being cared for feel able to share what may be troubling them.

Effective communication not only encourages people to speak out, but it helps to create and embed a positive and safer culture in an organisation. The way in which we communicate can either give confidence to those who struggle to find their voice or can have the opposite effect. Leaders and workers have a joint responsibility to set and maintain safer cultures - this often begins in the manner we communicate, demonstrating commitment, sensitivity, compassion and adopting appropriate boundaries around confidentiality.

More information

To support workers communicate effectively we have a range of free to download resources, information and guidance available on our website plus a range of training opportunities.
Responding to Concerns

Workers must develop awareness of the issues surrounding abuse, be able to recognise possible signs and indicators and respond appropriately.

Where there is a suspicion or allegation of abuse the organisation must know who to contact. In the case of sexual abuse, deliberate injury or where there are concerns for a child or adult's safety, the Safeguarding Coordinator should contact the appropriate statutory agency (Children's Services, Adult Services or the Police) for advice without delay.

Sometimes people are worried about doing this but both Children's Services, Adult Services and the Police are highly trained to respond sensitively and appropriately. Medical help should be sought in an emergency and the doctor informed of any concerns.

More information

We have a range of help and advice available for workers on reporting concerns including our popular handy pocket guide.
Pastoral Care

Organisations should ensure pastoral care and support is available to all those affected by abuse.

It may be in the present, recent or distant past, but the effects of abuse can be devastating and long term, not only for the person who has been abused but also for family members, friends, social groups and the organisation or faith community. Those affected may struggle with a range of issues, including aspects of faith and spirituality – particularly where the abuse occurred within a faith context. So, this needs sensitive handling.

Showing care and compassion, being available to listen and offering support are important in responding to the needs of adult survivors. Some people will need professional help and it is important to recognise this.

More information

We have lots of help and advice available including a half-day training course on pastoral care and supporting survivors.
Managing Those Who May Pose A Risk

Organisations must supervise and manage those who may pose a risk to others.

There are those living in the community who may pose a risk to others. They may wish to be actively involved in local organisations or groups. Some violent or sexual offenders genuinely want to change but others try to join places of worship and faith communities because they see them as places where they will easily gain access to children or adults. This is because forgiveness, mercy and unconditional acceptance are often important aspects of faith and belief.

Organisations and faith communities must understand that no matter how well intentioned some people are, sex offending is often addictive. However repentant a person may appear to be, it is potentially very dangerous to allow them contact with children and/or adults with care and support needs. This does not mean the person should be rejected but it does mean organisations must have strong policies in place to supervise, manage and support anyone who has committed or been accused of sexual or violent crimes against children or adults at risk. This also means that people who pose a potential risk should not be given any position or responsibility that may be perceived by others as a position of trust. Accountability is crucial and where operated effectively can act as a protective factor and reduce re-offending.

More information

We offer support with risk assessments and have lots of help available to support organisations in drawing up contracts and agreements and in managing those that may pose a risk.
Working in Partnership

Organisations working in specialised areas, culturally diverse settings or through partner organisations or agencies must ensure appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures are in place.

Organisations working in specialist areas may include overseas projects, independent schools and a range of support services to the local community like education, domestic violence, counselling and pregnancy advice.

The diversity of such organisations and settings mean there can be great variation in practice when it comes to safeguarding standards perhaps because of legal frameworks, law enforcement, cultural tradition, belief or religious practice.

There must be an understanding and clear guidance given on how safeguarding policies can be applied in ways that are sensitive to cultural tradition but without condoning practices that are harmful, abusive or neglectful.

More information

We have developed a new international self audit tool which is free to download from our website that allows organisations to review the safeguarding arrangements of overseas partners.
Five Essential Questions

1. Does your organisation have a safeguarding policy and appropriate forms?

2. Would everyone know what to do if there was a concern about possible abuse?

3. Are you recruiting workers safely – including DBS checks where possible?

4. Are you training and supporting your leaders and children’s workers?

5. Do those who attend activities or come to services know what you are doing to keep children and adults safe?

For expert help, easy to follow advice and guidance from the UK’s only independent Christian safeguarding charity contact us and find out how membership with us could help you.