

# THE BRIDGE

## Safeguarding Children and Adults Practice Guidelines

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The following pages set out our safer practice guidelines for The Bridge (including St John's, St Stephen's, Burton Green and all activities carried out by or on behalf of any base)

The following good practice guidelines are to be read in conjunction with *Promoting a Safer Church* (the national Church of England Safeguarding Policy) and with the Safeguarding Procedures for the Diocese of Coventry. These should always be accessed via the Diocese of Coventry website to ensure that the most up-to-date versions are used: <http://www.dioceseofcoventry.org/safeguarding>

### **How to use these safer practice guidelines**

Please ensure that you read *Promoting a Safer Church* before using these guidelines. It summarises our safeguarding responsibilities as part of the Church of England.

This pack is designed to make it easy for you to find the information you need. For example, if you are volunteering with a kids' team, you may want to find out straightaway what the guidelines are for safe practice with children. Each section is a standalone page which you can pull out for easy reference. Please be aware though that there is some crossover between sections. For example, if you are planning to take children out in a vehicle, you will also need to read the section relating to transport.

### **What to do in the event of a safeguarding concern?**

You should report your concern immediately in the case of an emergency or disclosure, or within 24 hours for all other concerns. Concerns should normally be referred to the Benefice Safeguarding Officer. More detail is available in the following places.

- Section
- Displayed on a poster in the church/hall (at St John's, St Stephen's and Burton Green)
- On the Diocese website: <http://www.dioceseofcoventry.org/safeguarding>

## **How churches within The Bridge will implement the Policy Commitments within *Promoting a Safer Church*: in summary**

1. Promoting a safer environment and culture
  - We will work with the Diocese of Coventry to adhere to safer working practices and to ensure that The Bridge is the safest place it can be.
2. Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children and vulnerable adults within the Church
  - We will safely recruit all those (staff and volunteers) with any responsibility related to children, young people and adults at risk, in line with current guidance from Coventry Diocese.
3. Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation
  - We will ensure that clear information is on display in every base so that people know who to contact if there is a safeguarding concern.
  - We will follow Diocese of Coventry procedures on responding to allegations and concerns in a timely fashion.
4. Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons
  - We will seek to understand the needs of those affected by abuse and provide a caring, pastoral response, taking advice from the Diocese of Coventry.
5. Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons
  - We will work together with the Diocese of Coventry to care for those who are the subject of allegations and concerns while assessing and acting on risks in order to protect others.
6. Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others
  - We will work with the Diocese of Coventry to implement guidance on assessing and managing risk in the form of safeguarding agreements.

## **1. Working with Children and Young People**

### **Risk assessments**

- Written risk assessments should be carried out by group leaders when a new group first starts up and before going on any extra outings (see below). A risk assessment form can be obtained from the church office and should be used in all cases. Leaders should ensure that their volunteers are aware of and able to implement the risk assessment.

- Risk assessments should be reviewed at least annually. The overall leader responsible for work with children and young people in each base will check that this has been done prior to each Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), usually held in April.

**Formal regulated activities: (e.g. all weekly groups, The House etc)**

- Groups must have at least two safely recruited leaders (but see also below for required ratios), preferably at least one male, one female.
- Wherever possible, do not leave the group with a single adult. If the group does have to be left with a single adult in an emergency situation, make arrangements as soon as possible to let an appropriate leader know the circumstances (e.g. Children and Families Worker or Parish Safeguarding Officer).
- Under 18s may be group helpers but no person under the age of 18 can count as an adult leader (i.e. the group must still have two leaders over 18 and an under 18 helper will not count towards recommended staffing levels - see below).
- If a situation arises where you must be alone with a child, inform another adult on the team, ideally the team leader, as soon as possible.
- A registration and consent form should be completed by parents/carers when the young person first joins the group and this should be renewed annually (this can be done by getting parents to simply check, re-sign and date the same form).
- A register should be kept of young people and leaders attending each session.

**Staffing ratios for children’s and youth groups**

These ratios are to be applied taking into account that *there must be a minimum of two adult leaders for **any** group* and to be based on the risk assessment.

0-2 years	1 adult for every 3 children	1:3
2-3 years	1 adult for every 4 children	1:4
4-8 years	1 adult for every 6 children	1:6
9-12 years	1 adult for every 8 children	1:8
13-18 years	1 adult for every 10 children	1:10

**Informal situations: (e.g. a young person from your group comes to your house outside of the normal group setting)**

- Never be alone with one young person in a private setting (for example, speak

to them on the doorstep but do not invite them in).

- Let an appropriate leader (e.g. Children and Families Worker or Parish Safeguarding Officer) know what is /has happened as soon as possible.

### **Children's groups taking place in church members' homes (e.g. The House)**

- Written risk assessments should be carried out and agreed with overall church leaders whenever a new group is set up, and reviewed annually.
- Any adults present at the meeting must have gone through the Safer Recruitment Procedure unless they are 'visitors' (see Safer Recruitment section). If a leader's housemate, friend or family member has not been through the Safer Recruitment Procedure they should not be part of the meeting.
- Young people should not be allowed upstairs except to access the toilet if there is none downstairs, and should never be allowed in bedrooms.

### **Mentoring of under-18s**

- It may be helpful for a leader to mentor a young person one to one. However, such a mentoring relationship **should not be entered into** without further training and guidance.

### **Group members over the age of 18**

- Group leaders should be mindful of the dynamics involved with having a mixture of under- and over-18s in their group. Efforts should be made to address acceptable behaviour and the responsibilities of becoming an adult within the group on an ongoing basis so as not to single out young people when they turn 18. If there are any concerns arising from this issue, they should be discussed with overall leaders.

### **Touch**

- Touch is a valuable way of showing praise, reassurance and love. There are many forms of appropriate use of touch e.g. a hug for a hurt child, or restraining a child in an emergency to prevent them from physical harm. However, adults working with children need to be aware of the implications of possible misinterpretation when physical contact occurs, and should be led by the child's needs. For example, it may be better to ask a child if they would like a hug rather than the adult initiating this. Touch should rarely be used if an adult is alone with a child or young person. The use of touch should always be appropriate to the situation, taking into account the age and development of the child, and it should never undermine the dignity of the child or young person.

### **Discipline**

- Each group should agree and communicate a policy for appropriate (non-physical) discipline, which should be signed off by overall leaders.

## **Outings and one-off events**

- It may be necessary to recruit more adults for these occasions (see guidelines below).
- Temporary helpers should not have unsupervised access to children.
- Parents/ carers should complete consent forms specific to the outing or activity.
- The event should comply with the current parish insurance policy.
- Leaders must carry out and implement a sufficient risk assessment for the outing.

## **Guidelines for appointment of Invited (temporary) Workers**

If these adults are not cleared through the Safer Recruitment process, they should:

1. Complete an Invited Workers Form and Confidential Declaration (available from the office).
2. Be well known to a member of the staff team, who can vouch that they are an appropriate person to undertake the role.
3. Undergo a brief conversation with an appropriate member of staff (e.g. children's worker/ youth worker) laying out our basic safeguarding boundaries and best practice (e.g. toileting etc). A tick must be entered on the Invited Workers list to record this has taken place.

## **Transport**

- Children and young people should not be taken out with transport without the prior consent of a parent/ guardian/ carer.
- If in an emergency a driver has to transport a child on his/her own, the child must sit in the back of the car. If at all possible, parents/ guardian/ carers should be contacted in advance.
- Best practice would be to have two adults in the car, at least one of whom had been through Safer Recruitment. The reality may be that only one adult will be available; this adult must have been safely recruited to work with children.
- Drivers must ensure that they are compliant with legal requirements regarding child seats and restraint.
- Drivers who transport for church activities on a regular basis are required to have car insurance for business/volunteering.

## **2. Working with adults who have care and support needs**

If you are setting up or running a group for adults, consider who it is for. Some groups are more likely than others to attract attendance from adults with care and support needs. For example, Time Out may be attended by older people who have physical mobility needs, frailty or dementia/memory problems; any group may be attended by adults with learning disabilities or mental health problems.

### **Things to take into account**

- If you are not expecting attendance from adults with care and support needs, consider why. Do you need to do anything to make your group more accessible to people?
- Who is in charge? Safer recruitment practices are just as important when working with adults as they are with children.
- Plan for unexpected scenarios. If there are two group leaders but 15 people turn up to the group and all need pastoral support, will you be able to manage this?
- What are your transport arrangements? See handout **5. Transport**, below.

### **Risk assessments**

- Written risk assessments should be carried out by group leaders when a new group first starts up and before going on any extra outings (see below). A risk assessment form can be obtained from the church office and should be used in all cases. Leaders should ensure that their volunteers are aware of and able to implement the risk assessment.
- Risk assessments should be reviewed at least annually. The Parish Safeguarding Officer and overall leader responsible for in each base will check that this has been done prior to each Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), usually held in April.

## **3. Missional communities**

### **Leading a Missional Community**

- Missional Community leaders are in a position of significant trust and as such should be safely recruited and trained in the same way as other leaders. Missional Community leaders should be mindful that they hold a position of authority, and that power can be positive or can cause harm, depending on how it is used.
- It is to be assumed that children and adults with care and support needs will be involved with missional community activities on a number of different levels, reflecting the wider life of the church. It is therefore important to be

aware of the additional considerations which need to be made in order that everyone can safely take part.

- It is also important to be aware that any adult can become “vulnerable” at different times in their lives and for different reasons (illness, bereavement and loss, mental health issues, etc).

### **Accountability**

- It is an expectation that all Missional Community Leaders will be members of a Huddle and will attend/take part regularly.

### **Roles of Leaders**

- **Huddle Leaders** will ensure that Missional Community Leaders are trained, supported and held accountable for ensuring that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place for each Missional Community.
- **Missional Community Leaders** are responsible for the pastoral care and safeguarding of those in their group and will proactively seek to identify any issues which may need particular consideration in their group circumstances.
- Some examples of where it would be essential for a Missional Community Leader to have a discussion with their Huddle Leader:
  - If someone with a criminal history wishes to join a group, or an existing group member discloses a behaviour of concern.
  - When someone is joining a missional community but is not previously known to the church and there are children or adults with care and support needs in the group.
  - If children are taking part in meetings without their parents or if children are likely to be in another part of the house without direct supervision while meetings are taking place.
  - If a group member has significant pastoral needs (e.g. severe mental health issues, survivor of abuse) which are beyond the skills of the group leaders to provide.
  - If there are requests for in-depth prayer ministry or deliverance.

## **4. Mentoring**

- Mentors are in a position of significant trust and as such should be safely recruited and trained in the same way as other leaders. Mentors should be mindful that they hold a position of authority, and that power can be positive or can cause harm, depending on how it is used.
- Children and adults with care and support needs may request a mentor. It is therefore important to be aware of the additional considerations which need to be made in order that everyone can safely take part. No-one should enter into a mentoring relationship with a child or adult without ensuring that appropriate procedures have been followed.
- It is important to be aware that any adult can become “vulnerable” at different times in their lives and for different reasons (illness, bereavement and loss,



mental health issues, etc).

### **Accountability**

- It is an expectation that all mentors will be members of a Huddle and will attend/take part regularly.

### **Arrangements for mentoring**

- Mentors will meet with a mentee on a one-to-one basis at an agreed time. The regularity and duration of these sessions will be agreed between the mentor and mentee beforehand.
- The mentoring relationship is entered into voluntarily and it should be clear to both parties that the relationship can be terminated at any time by either mentor or mentee.
- The mentor's role will involve listening, encouraging and disciplining the mentee in line with the ethos of the Bridge. They will offer support and guidance where appropriate with a non-judgmental approach. They will make it clear to the mentee that their advice and guidance is offered in good faith but the mentee is free to take on board or reject the advice as they choose. The exception would be if the mentee was not prepared to work within the requirements of these safeguarding guidelines or other expectations they have signed up to (for example, if the mentee holds a leadership role, they would be expected to conduct themselves in a way which is appropriate to that role, as set out in the role description).
- Mentoring sessions will be confidential. The only exception to this would be where it comes to light that the mentee or someone else may be at risk of harm, or if the mentee's conduct calls into question their ability to appropriately carry out a role that they have been appointed to undertake on behalf of the church.

## **5. Prophecy Clinic and Prayer Ministry**

Prophecy Clinics and Prayer Ministry are activities which place people in a position of significant vulnerability and places those leading these in a position of trust with those attending clinics or receiving prayer.

### **Prophecy Clinics**

Prophecy Clinic team members should be safely recruited and appropriately trained. There must always be at least two team members for any prophecy clinic held preferably at least one male and one female. If a prophecy clinic is to be held for a sole individual then the prophecy clinic team members must include someone of the opposite sex to the person attending.

### **Prayer Ministry**

We are all called to pray for each other and to minister to one another in prayer. When conducting Prayer Ministry as part of a worship service, a safely recruited and appropriately trained team leader is to be on duty. If part of the prayer

ministry team, badges/lanyards should be worn to help identify those who are members of the prayer ministry team. Prayer ministry team should be appropriately trained in prayer ministry.

Members of the congregation who are not part of the prayer ministry team may be asked to help facilitate prayer ministry and should operate under the expressed permission of the service leader. Where possible these members of the congregation should be paired with a member of the prayer ministry team and should be well known to a member of the staff team, who can vouch that they are an appropriate person to undertake the prayer ministry.

The following guidelines should be followed by anyone carrying out prayer ministry.

- Always ask permission before laying on hands and be sensitive to people's personal space.
- When laying on hands, always explain and ask permission in such a way that the person may accept or decline without prejudice.
- Be aware of the difficulties that touch could generate.
- Men should pray for men and women for women.
- In a worship setting, ensure that prayer ministry is conducted within audible reach of other adults.
- Ensure a high level of confidentiality

Prayer Ministry outside of worship times;

- Anyone conducting prayer ministry outside of a worship service should be safely recruited and appropriately trained.
- Ensure that at least one other person is informed of the time and place of ministry and two authorised prayer ministry team (one of same sex to the person receiving prayer ministry) should facilitate the session.
- In a street setting ensure there are witnesses.

## **6. Communication including use of social media**

These guidelines are most pertinent to work with children and young people; however, it is important to be aware that some adults with care and support needs may also be at risk from inappropriate use of communication technology and social media. Additionally, there is a risk of excluding certain people/groups of people by preferring one means of communication over another. The most appropriate communication methods for your group or activity should be considered.

### **Use of mobile phones, electronic communication and social media**

Many young people have mobile phones which can be very useful to them and their parents/ carers. However, it is important to be aware of the potential dangers offered by technology and take appropriate precautions. Consider providing

opportunities to talk to the children/young people in your group about internet safety.

Access - if children/ young people could have access to your computer consider:

- Using passwords to prevent unauthorised use.
- Using parent protection or similar controls to minimise the likelihood of access to adult content.

### **When communicating with young people or adults with additional communication needs, transparency is key.**

#### **Use communication sensibly:**

- Avoid private communication with young people wherever possible. Let the young people in your group know in advance that your communication will not be kept private.
- If you receive a private email or text message from a young person, forward it to your group leader and copy them into your response. It may be preferable to set up a group messaging system (e.g. Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger, Google Hangouts) whereby all messages can be seen by the whole group. If workers are sending e-mails to young people, e.g. to remind them of future meetings or events, these should be group e-mails. A copy of the e-mail should be saved and a copy sent to your supervisor/ an appointed person.
- Obtain written parental consent before contacting children and young people directly via phone or online messaging.
- Consider when you are making contact. It is best practice not to initiate electronic communication during the later parts of the evening or overnight, and the age of the young person should be taken into account.

#### **Social network sites**

- Consider the aim of using the site: is it the most helpful means of communication for your group?
- Consider having a group/page or role specific profile for your group/role rather than a personal profile, bearing in mind that Facebook requires people not to have more than one account in their name.
- Choose and regularly review the Privacy and Security options for each site you use carefully (don't leave this to chance by leaving the default settings in place: they are unlikely to be sufficient). Good practice is to only allow your young people to see a limited profile of you (this provides control over personal information; maintains distance to help preserve the worker-young person relationship; ensure any inappropriate photos cannot be seen by young people)
- Any profile/group should have an administrator who agrees to ensure that only appropriate people have access to the group.
- Content must be continually monitored, and any concerns raised in a timely fashion.

- Think carefully about the boundaries between your church 'role' and your 'personal life'- consider what is an appropriate level of sharing of your personal life in a public context.
- Inform your supervisor/leader about the site you are using.
- Work with young people to explore opportunities and risks with social networking.
- Don't accept or add anything on the site which could bring the church into disrepute.
- Don't post photos of under 18s without permission of the young person (if they are old enough to give this) as well as written parental permission. Be aware that children may have limited control over what is posted about them online and consider whether it is in their interests to post the photo.
- Be aware that whilst your site/profile may be totally wholesome, you have no control over the content of your friends' sites which are only one click away.
- Be aware of (check) the age young people are allowed to sign up to the site (e.g. for Facebook it is 13) and do not add young people who have started using it under that age.
- All communication should be public: either on a public wall, group or in a group message where a copy is sent to your supervisor/ a designated person. (Facebook Messenger is a good method of communication since it is very easy to add in another adult into the conversation).
- **Important note about chat rooms & instant messaging** (e.g. Snapchat or any other private form of instant messaging). Due to the potential for misuse by those who are a risk to children and the difficulties of managing the use of chat rooms and instant messaging it is expected that workers **do not** communicate with an individual young person through these mediums.

### **Text messages**

- Text messages are private by nature, so take care when using them. First consider using another, more transparent means of communication.
- In general use group messages rather than sending personal texts. Occasionally it would be appropriate to send a message to an individual young person - but remember appropriateness, transparency (forwarding to another leader), and avoid sending any large volume of messages.
- If you do have to use text messages, all messages to young people should be copied to your supervisor/ designated person. This doesn't have to be in text form - there are now many apps that you can use to automatically forward your message to an e-mail address.
- Make sure that your communication is appropriate (make sure that your communication is such that, in principle, it would not embarrass you for it to be seen by the young person's parent or your supervisor).

### **Taking and sharing photographs**

- This applies for still photographs, digital images or films, and regardless of the technology used.
- Obtain consent of children and written consent of their parents for the making

and use of images of children. (Be aware that parents/ carers may have good reasons for refusing consent- e.g. legal disputes, fostering or adoption - do not press for reasons).

- Avoid naming the child if the photograph is to be published (if needed just use a first name).
- If children are scantily dressed (e.g. for swimming) then don't take photographs.

## 7. Transport

As a church family, we may regularly offer each other lifts/help with transportation. This will usually be an informal arrangement among friends and does not need to be considered under these safer practice guidelines.

However, there are times when transport arrangements could be more formal. For example:

- You may be arranging to take a group of children for a day out or to a summer conference.
- You may want to ask a group volunteer to pick up group members who have dementia or learning disabilities and bring them to the group each week.
- You may want to ask a team member to take a frail older person to the shops every week.

These type of arrangements require additional consideration and planning.

### Guidelines

- See also Section **1. Working with Children and Young People** for more information about transporting under-18s.
- Carry out a risk assessment for your transport arrangements. If transport is provided on a regular basis, include this in your overall activity risk assessment.
- Consider whether it is appropriate to take an adult in the car with just the driver. Are there any particular circumstances that may make this unwise? Is the driver able to adequately assist with mobility requirements?
- Anyone who is regularly transporting children or adults with care and support needs must be safely recruited and have the appropriate type and level of DBS check – discuss with the Parish Safeguarding Officer if unsure.
- Car insurance companies require drivers to be insured for driving people in a voluntary and/or business role. Ensure that team members who provide transport are adequately insured.
- Drivers need to have appropriate legal child seats when transporting children.

## **8. Hope into Action**

Hope into Action (HIA) befriending and mentoring volunteers work with vulnerable adults housed in partnership with Hope into Action Coventry. All HIA volunteers must be safely recruited. Training is provided by Hope into Action Coventry, evidence of this training should be supplied to the parish safeguarding officer as soon as it is completed.

HIA volunteers should follow the guidelines and procedures provided by HIA. <http://coventry.hopeintoaction.org.uk/safeguarding>

## 9. Responding to a Safeguarding Concern or Allegation

There are many situations whereby a member of the church may have concerns, or be made aware of concerns, regarding a child, young person and adult. For example:

- A child, young person or adult discloses abuse;
- Someone discloses concern for a child, young person or adult;
- Someone notices signs of potential abuse of a child, young person or adult;
- A child, young person or adult makes a disclosure about their own behaviour towards another child, young person or adult;
- Someone witnesses concerning behaviour during a church activity or during a home visit.

The concern or allegation might relate to someone at church or to someone elsewhere (e.g. at home, work or school). It might be a current situation, or something that happened in the past.

This procedure must be followed by all church officers and it is strongly recommended for all other church members.

The PCC should add further information here, having first considered the following questions:

This procedure should be distributed by the Parish Safeguarding Officer to all teams working with children or young people.

Any safeguarding concerns should be raised with the Parish Safeguarding Officer. If there is no Parish Safeguarding Officer, concerns should be directed to the PCC Safeguarding Lead or the Priest-in-Charge

### Listen carefully

Whenever anyone reports that they are suffering or have suffered significant harm through abuse or neglect, or have caused or are causing harm to others, the initial response should be limited to listening carefully. If someone makes a disclosure this might be the only time they will tell someone about what is happening.

#### **Please...**

- Listen.
- Take what is said seriously.
- Remain calm.
- Take into account the person's age and level of understanding.
- Offer reassurance that disclosing is the right thing to do.
- Explain that information will need to be shared with the appropriate people.
- Only use open questions.



- Establish only as much information as is needed to be able to report what is believed to have happened, when and where.
- At the end, check that you have understood everything correctly.
- Check out what the person hopes to result from the disclosure.
- Tell the child or adult what you are going to do next.

## However...

- Do NOT make promises that cannot be kept (e.g. that you won't share the information).
- Do NOT make assumptions or offer alternative explanations.
- Do NOT investigate.
- Do NOT contact the person about whom allegations have been made.
- Do NOT carry out a physical or medical examination.
- Do NOT share with anyone other than those persons mentioned on the previous page.

## Make a record...

- Make some very brief notes at the time, if appropriate, and write them up in detail as soon as possible.
- Do not destroy your original notes in case they are required by the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser or the statutory authorities.
- Record the date, time, place and how the person appeared to you. If possible, try to record the actual words used, including any swear words or slang.
- Record facts and observable things, not your interpretations or assumptions.
- Don't speculate or jump to conclusions.

## Report promptly...

Never do nothing. Always follow the procedure below.

