

PRACTICAL GUIDE

Church Growth Trust and Christian Safeguarding Services

Church and your safeguarding arrangements

August 2022

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1.0 Purpose of this paper

This practical guide has been co-produced by Christian Safeguarding Services and Church Growth Trust to help churches to understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Our aim is to provide a useful overview guide that introduces the theme of safeguarding and points to other useful resources and support. The guide should not be used as an alternative to training, or as a substitute for understanding the more detailed guidance. Rather, it provides an outline of the issues that need to be considered and helps to identify next steps.

The world of safeguarding is constantly changing, and requirements and expectations are increasing all of the time. This paper will be updated from time to time; however our aim is to help churches to understand the underlying principles of safeguarding, which change less frequently.

2.0 Understanding our context

It is important that church trustees and leaders understand the legal and regulatory context. Regardless of whether a church is registered with the Charity Commission (or equivalent regulator), they are required to comply with charity legislation and guidance.

Trustees are required to ensure that reasonable steps are taken so that those who come into contact with the charity, whether beneficiaries, staff, volunteers or others who make contact with the church, are protected from exploitation, harassment, abuse or other harm. This would include ensuring that:

- legally compliant policies, including a safeguarding policy are in place and that they are up to date, effective and reviewed annually;
- a suitably experienced and skilled Designated Safeguarding Lead is appointed, supported and adequately resourced for the task;
- all staff and volunteers know how to recognise and respond to safeguarding concerns, who to report them to and how to do so;
- the church makes clear to those who take part in the church's activities (or to their parents or carers) how concerns can be raised and addressed;
- there are clear processes for raising complaints or making allegations and that these are publicly available;
- there are clear routes for challenging any decision, practice etc that could adversely affect the wellbeing of a beneficiary, volunteer, member of staff or anyone else who has contact with the charity, and that the culture supports and expects staff and volunteers to raise such concerns;
- they provide accountability to anyone who has delegated responsibility;
- they assess the effectiveness of the arrangements regularly;
- serious incidents are reported to the Charity Commission in a timely manner.

There is a range of legislation and guidance that applies to churches and charities, and this is outlined in the Christian Safeguarding Services website: www.thecss.co.uk/2020/05/14/current-legislation/

3.0 A biblical perspective

“Safeguarding is a practical outworking of our biblically based values and our Gospel witness”.

While matters of legal and regulatory compliance are important, for us as Christians, the biblical perspective moves us to exceed rather than simply meet the legal requirements. We are taught to obey those that the Lord has set in authority over us, but more than that; we are to live in ever greater conformity to the likeness of Christ and to do everything for God’s glory.

Scripture does not speak to safeguarding as we know it in our times. However, the biblical worldview has a great deal to say about how we should care for one another and that we should pay particular attention to the weak, vulnerable, and defenceless among us.

Biblical teachings and principles that shape our approach to safeguarding include:

- that all people are made in the image of God and therefore have an inherent value and dignity in his sight;
- that God cares about the unborn child, the elderly and those with disabilities;
- that we live as sinners in a fallen and broken world;
- that the human heart, corrupted by sin, is wicked and deceitful and cannot be trusted;
- that we should protect those within our society who are vulnerable (the widow, orphan, and stranger);
- that we should deal honestly with everyone and that those with power should care for, and not exploit, those who have less or no power;
- Jesus’ own teaching and example;
- the example and teaching of the first century Church in its care for the widows and others in need;
- the teachings of Jesus, Peter and Paul that we are to honour and obey those that God has set in authority over us;
- that our conduct should glorify our heavenly Father;
- that sin and hypocrisy are often brought into the open and challenged, not hidden, or supported;
- that we will all stand before the judgment seat of God, and that in that day, even those secrets that have been taken to the grave will be exposed and judged;
- that discipline is both necessary and loving, aiming for repentance and restoration.

Many more principles could be outlined, but these will suffice for now. There is a fuller description of the biblical principles on the www.thecss.co.uk/about-us/biblical-principles/

4.0 What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding is about upholding and promoting the rights and wellbeing of all people, but with particular focus on those who due to their age or some other factor are unable, or less able, to protect themselves from harm. Safeguarding includes:

- protecting vulnerable people from harm;
- promoting their wellbeing;

- ensuring that the circumstances in which they live are safe and supportive of their needs.

It is important that we understand some key principles here. Safeguarding is a broad range of activities that include the protection of children, young people, and adults at risk of abuse, but is much broader than protection from harm. The concept of safeguarding children is more clearly defined and established than the concept of safeguarding adults. However, the broad principles are the same. A child is defined as a person who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

4.1 Universal safeguarding

Universal safeguarding involves all of the basic measures that are needed to keep everyone safe, including policies procedures and systems, health and safety policy and risk assessments and safer recruitment.

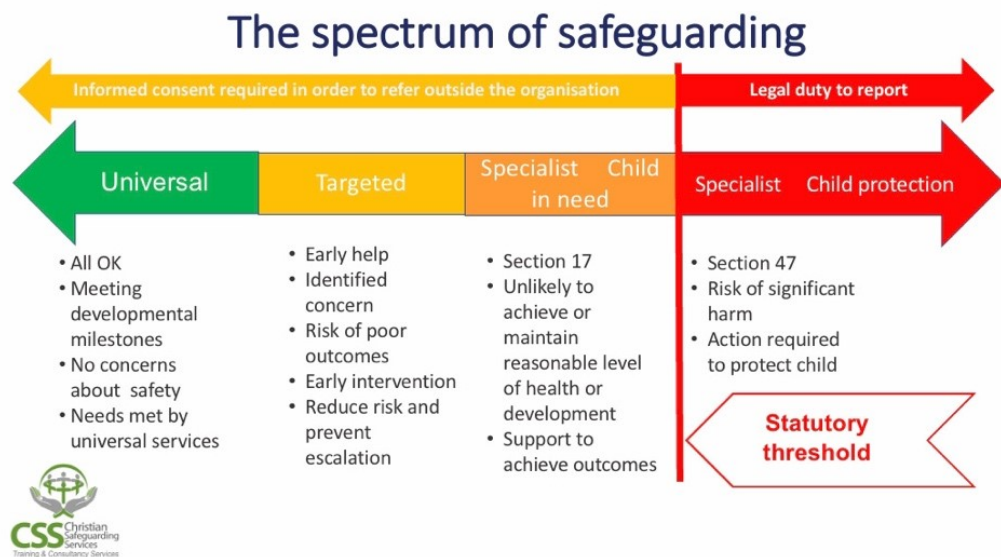
4.2 Targeted safeguarding

Targeted safeguarding involves supporting children and families who have specific needs requiring some additional support. If the child does not receive the support, there is a risk that their development or wellbeing will be affected in the long term.

4.3 Specialist safeguarding (child in need)

Specialist safeguarding (child in need) involves supporting children & families who have more complex specific needs requiring additional support. If the child does not receive the support, they are unlikely to achieve or maintain a satisfactory level of health, development or wellbeing.

This can be seen in the diagram below:



In the first three sections (universal, targeted and specialist child in need) you can only share information about a child or family **outside** of your organisation with consent from the family. If, for example the family need support such as accessing a food bank, debt advice, drug and alcohol support, you can only refer to, or share information with an outside agency **with** consent of the person or the parents. "Consent" means informed consent. This means that

the person giving consent understands what information will be shared, who it will be shared with, and why the information needs to be shared.

4.4 Specialist safeguarding (child protection)

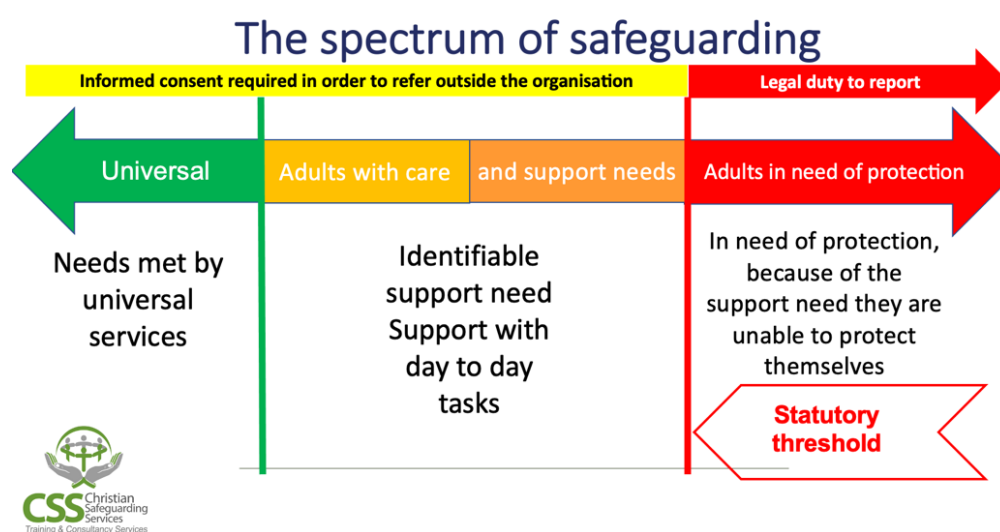
Specialist safeguarding (child protection) involves protecting children who are at risk of significant harm. Where this is the case, we have a legal duty to report the concern to either the Local Authority (social care) or the police. Consent is not required; however we usually inform the parents before making the referral, unless doing so would:

- place a child at increased risk of harm;
- place an adult at increased risk of harm;
- be unwise due to a psychological condition such as “Fabricated or Induced Illness”.

Safeguarding adults can be understood in relation to safeguarding children by combining targeted and specialist child in need. This produces a three-tier model that can be described as:

- adults with no additional needs;
- adults with additional support needs;
- adults in need of protection (adults at risk of abuse).

This can be seen in the diagram below:



5.0 Your context

Churches, like other organisations in society, have a responsibility to work with the Local Authority, the police, and other local partners to ensure that children, young people, and vulnerable adults are protected. There are, however, some unusual features that you must consider. For example, in the church community, there could be people who pose a risk to those who are vulnerable within the community. This risk must be managed, while at the same time supporting the individual who poses a risk to be as involved in the life of the church as is

possible. Effective safeguarding arrangements are therefore essential. There are six key elements to ensuring a safe environment, which are referred to as the six pillars of effective safeguarding practice.

6.0 Six pillars of effective safeguarding practice



6.1 Pillar one: Policies

Your policies are **statements of commitment and intent**. They acknowledge your responsibilities and outline in broad terms how you will meet them.

6.2 Pillar two: Procedures

Procedures are the **detailed instructions** that outline how you will meet your commitments and provide step-by-step instruction for what to do in given situations. They should be written in clear and simple terms that are understandable to the person performing the particular function and not ambiguous. They should contain contact details of named person and your local statutory agencies.

6.3 Pillar three: Codes of conduct

Codes of Conduct outline the standards of behaviour that are expected of different groups of people. A code of conduct for staff and volunteers is essential. It is recommended that you have a code of conduct relating to the provision of pastoral care, either by staff or volunteer leaders (i.e. the volunteer pastoral care team), such as the formal care provided within a small group context. In some situations it may be helpful to have a code of conduct for those who attend groups delivered by the church. This outlines the expected behaviours and sanctions that will be imposed for failure to comply.

Where a code of conduct for those attending groups is required, it may be worth considering adopting a policy for the parents and carers of those who attend the groups. The purpose of this policy is to communicate two key messages:

- that safeguarding is important to you and that if the parents have any concerns at all they should talk to you, and you will work with them to resolve the issues;
- that when engaging with staff and volunteers, you expect them to do so with the same courtesy and respect that is offered to them by your staff and volunteers.

6.4 Pillar four: Systems

The safeguarding system ensures that all the elements above work together effectively. The system should include standard documents for key functions and provide a secure and confidential means for passing information to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and secure storage for all records. The system should be as simple as possible and should be reviewed for effectiveness on a regular basis.

6.5 Pillar five: Culture

A culture of safety in the church should be intentionally formed. It should be open and transparent, providing appropriate accountability, and should be pervasive across the whole organisation. The culture, supported by the policies, procedures and systems should ensure that concerns can be raised with the leadership, and that every voice is heard, including those who may find it difficult to speak up. Safeguarding should not be seen as an “add on” to our main activity. Rather, it should be woven into the fabric of the organisation, embedded in the DNA of the church. Safeguarding should be a natural outworking of your Gospel principles.

6.6 Pillar six: integration

The sixth pillar is the one that is most often neglected. It is essential that leaders give consideration to the **integration** of the previous five pillars. If you imagine safeguarding as the safety net that protects everyone involved in the church, you must ensure that each element works together as a cohesive whole. Leaders need, on a regular basis, to take a large step back and ensure that the arrangements that have been put in place are effective in keeping everyone safe.

7.0 Competence

Over more recent years a number of significant trends have emerged. One of these is a move from a prescriptive approach that defines exactly how things should be done to an approach allows greater flexibility, by focussing on effectiveness and results rather than process. A further trend has been towards the wider view of safeguarding as described under the “Spectrum of Safeguarding” above. A further key development has been the move from knowledge to competence (i.e. putting that knowledge into practice). Training has therefore become a key issue that you must address.

8.0 Identifying training needs



There are three main tiers of safeguarding training:

8.1 Governance and strategic leadership of safeguarding

This training is for trustees and church leaders and deals with legal compliance and organisational leadership

8.2 Operational leadership (Designated Safeguarding Lead)

This training is for the Designated Safeguarding Lead (i.e. the person that staff and volunteers would report concerns to) and covers:

- understanding safeguarding and abuse;
- responding appropriately to concerns of allegations of abuse;
- supporting staff and volunteers in the discharge of their duties;
- working confidently and competently with local statutory services;
- the importance of effective systems;
- the importance of culture in managing concerns and referrals.

8.3 Essential awareness of safeguarding

This training is for those who work directly with children or vulnerable adults in the ministries of the church and covers:

- signs and indicators of abuse;
- definitions of the categories of abuse;
- when things concern you, what do you do?
- recording and reporting harm to a child/young person/adult at risk;
- responsible reporting (whistleblowing);
- barriers to reporting concerns;
- supporting a healthy culture in church;
- the Safeguarding Spectrum and thresholds for services.

In addition to these, churches should also consider safer recruitment training.

9.0 Insurance

When purchasing your Public Liability Insurance, it is usual for insurance agencies to require churches/charities to have safeguarding policies. It is also important to note that all church activities should be risk assessed; otherwise, should a serious incident occur, you may find that your insurance is invalid.

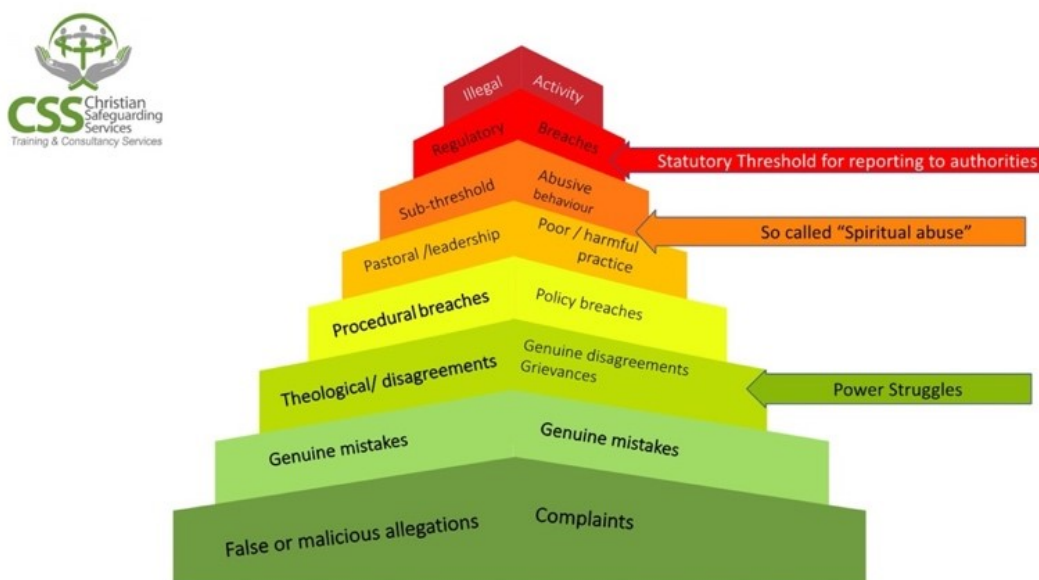
10.0 How Christian Safeguarding Services can help your church

Christian Safeguarding Services (CSS) have a suite of template policies that member churches can download and fit into their context (see www.thecss.co.uk/register/). It is recognised that every church is different and **proportionality** is key to managing safeguarding; doing that which is necessary to keep everyone safe.

CSS has a tool for churches that will help you **self-audit and assess** what is working well and what needs more work on. It can be downloaded from their website free of charge; only an email address is needed (www.thecss.co.uk).

11.0 Managing allegations and serious incidents

Churches are not immune from disagreements and problems related to abuse. This visual demonstrates the various types of issues that can occur in your church; from complaints right through to issues that meet a statutory threshold for reporting to either the Charity Commission, the Local Authority, or the police.



While you can not guarantee avoiding such problems, the way that you handle them is critical. Open, transparent and accountable handling of such situations, listening to the concerns and responding appropriately, taking the concerns seriously and investigating them carefully where

necessary are all important as you seek to reconcile the issues with the complainant and to avoid unnecessary escalation.

In order to ensure that such issues are handled carefully and biblically, you need to have clear policies and processes, through which concerns and complaints can be raised, and these should be clear, accessible and simple.

12.0 Next Steps

This can all feel quite daunting. However, that is where the partnership between Church Growth Trust (CGT) and Christian Safeguarding Services (CSS) comes in. As CGT's staff come into contact with churches that need help, they can recommend they use CSS's services. CSS provide a full range of services on a flexible basis and are able to guide and support churches and other Christian faith-based organisations as they seek to address these important matters.

There is a free audit tool on the CSS website that will help you to assess where you are up to and identify actions that need to be taken. For additional services that CSS offer, see Appendix C.

Appendix A: Case Study

How CSS supported one of Church Growth Trust Church's occupying churches on their safeguarding journey.

Someone from the church contacted CSS in 2019. He was new in post at the church and as one of his responsibilities was the Designated Safeguarding Lead for the church, he was tasked with updating the church's Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.

He attended one of CSS's courses in Birmingham to understand the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and so he was more informed around his new role. From there CSS were able to advise and support him to get the church's Safeguarding Policies and Procedures to a place where the church was happy to sign them off.

The next step for the church was to train all their staff and volunteers. Having a thorough working knowledge of his church's Safeguarding Policies and Procedures the person was in an ideal place to deliver training to the church and chose to attend CSS's Train the Trainer (TtheT) session. He was given tools and resources to enable him to train all his volunteers. So, in December 2019, he attended CSS's first TtheT session and then delivered his training to the church staff and volunteers just before lockdown in February 2020.

Appendix B: Contact details

Contact Details: Church Growth Trust

Your experts in church properties

Address: 1 Manor Farm Barn, Baines Lane, Seaton, Oakham, Rutland LE15 9HP

Telephone : 01536 201339

Email: enquiries@churchgrowth.org.uk

Website: www.churchgrowth.org.uk

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Contact details: Christian Safeguarding Services

Serving, Equipping & Empowering Churches & faith-based charities to exceed best practice in safeguarding

Address: Registered Address 6 Marshalsea Road London SE1 1HL

Telephone: 0116 218 4420

Email: contact@thecss.co.uk

Website: www.thecss.co.uk

Appendix C: Introduction to Christian Safeguarding Services (CSS)

“CSS are tipping the whole thing upside down and have upped the game so far as service to churches is concerned. We wonder what we have been doing for so long without this. We look back and think, why weren’t we told this before because we could have done so much better in the past.” Quote from a Manchester church

We partner with churches and other faith-based organisations to help them to think through their approach to safeguarding. We support and serve churches to help them to develop their policies, procedures, systems, and the culture that is needed to safeguard their congregations; supporting churches and faith-based organisations by being biblically faithful in a God-honouring way. We also offer churches a very flexible approach to their safeguarding needs. It does not have to cost churches a huge amount of money and there are some services they can use with us for FREE, without being a paid member.

We work professionally in the safeguarding field. We are also evangelical believers, who are actively involved in church leadership. Paul Harrison, who founded CSS with his wife Sue, is a preaching elder in an FIEC church. Our passion is to help churches and faith-based organisations think through this important theme from a biblical frame of reference. As an organisation Christian Safeguarding Services provides services based upon evangelical principles.

CSS also offer additional services, including:

- an advice line;
- training and consultancy;
- free and premium resources;
- DBS check processing;
- policy development and review;
- safeguarding audits;
- learning reviews;
- a membership scheme.

More information about these services is available at www.thecss.co.uk