



VERSO VINEYARD CHURCH

Safeguarding Policy for Children and Adults at Risk

Reviewed August 2025. To be reviewed August 2026.

Contents

In this document the word “children” is used to refer to children and young people under the age of 18, generally referred to in the church context as “kids and youth”. The terms “volunteer” or “teams” refers to voluntary workers who serve in our activities. The term ‘adults at risk’ refers to anyone over 18 years of age who may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. (The Care Act 2014). The term “leadership” is used to refer to the senior staff team.

The POLICY outlined below was agreed by the Trustees of Verso Vineyard Church on the date specified on the front cover and will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or earlier if there are changes to legislation. A copy of the policy will be given (digitally) to everyone working with children or adults at risk in activities run and supported by Verso Vineyard Church. Those to whom this applies will be required to sign an appropriate certificate indicating their agreement and understanding of this policy. These signed certificates will be held centrally by Verso Vineyard Church. All staff and volunteers who have direct contact with or responsibility for those covered under this safeguarding policy at any Verso Vineyard Church activity, are required to go through the necessary DBS (Disclosure Barring Service) checks.

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Section 1: Details of the Place of Worship and Organisation

Place of Worship:	Verso Vineyard Church
Address:	6 & 7 Brick Knoll Park, St Albans, AL15UG
General Email Address:	office@verso.church
Denomination/Organisation:	Vineyard Church UK & Ireland
Charity Number:	1066846
Insurance Company:	Ansvar Insurance

Safeguarding Co-ordinator Contact Details:

<https://www.verso.church/safeguarding>

Contact: - Gil Yon
Email: - gil@verso.church
Tel: - 07895 899906

Verso Vineyard Church is part of the wider Vineyard movement, Vineyard Churches UK & Ireland (VCUKI).

We are a registered charity with the Charity Commission.

We value the involvement of people from diverse backgrounds.

Verso Vineyard Church is a place of worship which provides children's and adult activities on a Sunday and throughout the week, based at the church building, other locations and online.

Children

- On Sunday morning children are taught and cared for in age related groups.
- A range of midweek activities are available for children in school years 6-13.
- Verso Vineyard Church Care Centre (Verso Care) provides stay & play activities for children attending the Care Centre where the parent or carer remains present, such as Refuel and family sessions.

Adults

- The church runs Verso Care, providing support to those in need, including Bridge, KIT, drop-in café, drop-in clinics, and FEED.
- Pastoral care and prayer support is offered through Sunday services, onsite and online, and through staff and volunteers, small groups, courses, and other ministries throughout the week.

Families

- The church runs various activities and events for families across the year.

Activities are open to both church members as well as those with little or no other connection with the church.

Section 2: Our Commitment to Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the responsibility of every individual. It is about creating an environment where everyone is treated with respect, recognised, and valued regardless of age, beliefs, and abilities. Protection of children and adults at risk are both elements of safeguarding and we have developed specific policies and practices that recognise the needs of these different groups.

As the Trustees and Leadership, we recognise the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children, and adults at risk. We acknowledge that children and adults at risk can be the victims of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, and neglect. We accept the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant of Human Rights, which states that everyone is entitled to “all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. We also concur with the Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that children should be able to develop their full potential, free from hunger and want, neglect and abuse. They have a right to be protected from “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person who has care of the child.”

As a Christian Church we look to the Bible as our basis of belief and understanding for our faith. Throughout His ministry on earth, Jesus provided a guide for how we should live and care for others, scripture includes:

“Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of the orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.” Isaiah 1:17

“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve.” 1 Peter 5:2

We aim to provide an environment which is safe and where everyone finds a welcome. We are becoming increasingly a more diverse community, and we welcome and actively encourage this.

As the Trustees and Leadership, we have therefore adopted the procedures set out in this Safeguarding and other related policies in accordance with statutory guidance. We are actively committed to building constructive links with statutory and voluntary agencies involved in safeguarding.

The policy and practice guidelines we have developed are based upon legislation and guidance provided from a variety of specialist resource organisations. It is reviewed at least annually or sooner considering developments and changes to national legislation and guidance.

The Trustees and Leadership undertake to:

- **endorse and follow all national and local safeguarding legislation and procedures, in addition to the international conventions outlined above.**
- **provide on-going safeguarding training for all its workers and will regularly review the operational guidelines attached.**
- **ensure that the premises meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and all other relevant legislation, and that it is welcoming and inclusive.**
- **support the Safeguarding Coordinator(s) in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children and adults at risk.**

Our Child Protection Policy and Policy for Protecting Adults at Risk each outline definitions of who is included in each policy, along with explanations of what is abuse and neglect.

Safeguarding Awareness

Verso Vineyard Church is committed to on-going safeguarding training and development opportunities for all staff and volunteers to the appropriate level, developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help protect everyone. All our staff and volunteers will receive induction training and undertake safeguarding training on a regular basis where required.

Verso Vineyard Church will also ensure that children and adults at risk are provided with information on where to get help and advice in relation to abuse, discrimination, bullying or any other matter where they have a concern.

As strongly recommended by The Charity Commission, as an organisation working with children and young people all Trustees will undertake appropriate safeguarding training.

The Trustees and Leadership are committed to supporting all relevant staff and volunteers and ensuring that they each receive appropriate support and supervision. This means that all relevant staff and volunteers:

- Understand how to respond to:
 - any disclosure or allegation of abuse by anyone engaging in activities as part of Verso Vineyard Church.
 - any allegation of abuse made against any person working with children or adults at risk.
- Will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with government guidance on safe recruitment.
- Will be issued with a code of conduct towards children and adults at risk.

Pastoral Care

The Trustees, Leadership and Pastoral Staff are also committed to offering pastoral care, working with statutory agencies as appropriate, and support to all those who have been affected by abuse who have contact with or are part of Verso Vineyard Church.

When someone attending Verso Vineyard is known to have abused children or is known to be a risk to adults at risk the Leadership will act in accordance with the church's "Working with Ex-offenders Policy" to supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but in its safeguarding commitment to the protection of children and adults at risk, set boundaries for that person that they will be expected to keep.

Under the "Working with Ex-Offenders Policy" a contract is put in place and agreed by all parties concerned, to set appropriate boundaries and supervision and this is reviewed regularly.

Good Practice

When working with children and adults at risk we wish to operate and promote good working practice. This will enable staff and volunteers to run activities safely, develop good relationships and minimise the risk of false accusation.

As well as a general code of conduct for staff and volunteers we also have, and continue to develop, good practice guidelines for every activity we are involved in as well as other appropriate organisational policies. See Appendix 1.

Good communication is essential in promoting safeguarding, both to those we wish to protect, to everyone involved in working with children and adults at risk, to our visitors and to all those with whom we work in partnership. This safeguarding policy is just one means of promoting safeguarding.

Section 3: Safeguarding Children

Includes:

- Understanding Abuse and Neglect
- Recognising Signs of Possible Abuse
- Responding to Allegations of Abuse
- Detailed procedures where there is a concern about a child
- Allegations of abuse against a person who works with children/young people

Understanding Abuse and Neglect

Defining child abuse is a difficult and complex issue. A person may abuse by inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm. Children may be abused within a family, an institution, or a community setting. Very often the abuser is known or in a trusted relationship with the child.

To safeguard those in our church we adhere to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and have as our starting point as a definition of abuse, Article 19 which states:

"1. Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment, or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child".

"2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment, and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement".

Statutory Definitions of Abuse

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. The definitions of abuse below operate in England based on the government guidance:

What is Abuse and Neglect?

Abuse and neglect are forms 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 a stranger for example, via the Internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse 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

Emotional abuse is 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 the 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 cyberbullying), causing children to frequently 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.

Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse of a child is characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. Spiritual abuse can have a deeply damaging impact on those who experience it and can impact our ability to trust our relationships with others and can lead to feeling fearful and unsafe. Spiritual abuse can exist in isolation or alongside other forms of abuse and can be used to 'legitimise' or facilitate other forms of abuse.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child 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 (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males; women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect

Neglect is 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 because of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); or
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Child Sexual Exploitation

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 using technology.

Radicalisation

The UK Government defines extremism as: “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Extremism also includes calls for death of members of the armed forces”. (Revised Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales originally issued on 12th March 2015 and revised on 16th July 2015, paragraph 7.)

Radicalisation “refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups”. (Revised Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales, issued on 12th March 2015 and revised on 16th July 2015, definition.)

Recognising Signs of Possible Abuse

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

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*

Sexual

- Any allegations made concerning sexual abuse
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour
- Age-inappropriate sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams, or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders - anorexia, bulimia*

Emotional

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy
- Depression, aggression, extreme anxiety
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under - achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention - seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

Neglect

- Under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food
- Untreated illnesses
- Inadequate care, etc.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Children rarely self-report child sexual exploitation so it is important that practitioners are aware of potential indicators of risk, including:

- Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc without plausible explanation
- Gang-association and/or isolation from peers/social networks
- Exclusion or unexplained absences from school, college, or work
- Leaving home/care without explanation and persistently going missing or returning late
- Excessive receipt of texts/phone calls
- Returning home under the influence of drugs/alcohol
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age/sexually transmitted infections
- Evidence of/suspicions of physical or sexual assault
- Relationships with controlling or significantly older individuals or groups
- Multiple callers (unknown adults or peers)
- Frequenting areas known for sex work
- Concerning use of internet or other social media
- Increasing secretiveness around behaviours
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being

Radicalisation

Children who are at risk of radicalisation may have low self-esteem or be victims of bullying or discrimination. Extremists might target them and tell them they can be part of something special, later brainwashing them into cutting themselves off from their friends and family.

Radicalisation can be difficult to spot. Signs that may indicate a child is being radicalised include:

- Isolating themselves from family and friends
- Talking as if from a scripted speech
- Unwillingness or inability to discuss their views
- A sudden disrespectful attitude towards others
- Increased levels of anger
- Increased secretiveness, especially around internet use

* These indicate the possibility that a child is self-harming.

Responding to Allegations of Abuse

The procedure for responding to an Allegation of Abuse within Verso Vineyard Church is the same for children and adults at risk. Under no circumstances should a staff member or volunteer carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. The process below outlines the process and responsibilities of those involved, which should be kept to the minimum. Only those that need to know, should be included in the process.

Detailed procedures where there is a concern about a child

Allegations of physical injury, neglect, or emotional abuse

If a child has a physical injury, a symptom of neglect or where there are concerns about emotional abuse, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy will:

- Contact Children's Social Services (or other appropriate agency) for advice in cases of deliberate injury, if concerned about a child's safety or if a child is afraid to return home.
- Not tell the parents or carers unless advised to do so, having contacted Children's Social Services.
- Seek medical help if needed urgently, informing the doctor of any suspicions.
- For lesser concerns, (e.g. poor parenting), encourage parent/carer to seek help, but not if they believe this puts the child at risk of significant harm.

- **Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, offer to accompany them. In cases of real concern, if they still fail to act, contact Children's Social Services directly for advice.**
- **Seek and follow advice given by an appropriate agency, such as thirtyone:eight, asking them to confirm their advice in writing if unsure whether or not to refer a case to Children's Social Services.**

Allegations of Sexual Abuse

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy will:

- **Contact the Children's Social Services Department Duty Social Worker for children and families or Police Child Protection Team direct. They will NOT speak to the parent/carer or anyone else.**
- **Seek and follow advice given by an appropriate agency, such as thirtyone:eight, if unsure whether or not to refer a case to Children's Social Services. Ask the agency to confirm their advice in writing for future reference.**

Allegations of Abuse against a Person who Works with Children/Young People

If an accusation is made against a worker (whether a volunteer or paid member of staff) whilst following the procedure outlined below, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy, in accordance with Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) procedures will:

- **Liaise with Children's Social Services regarding the suspension of the worker.**
- **Make a referral to a designated officer formerly called a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) whose function is to handle all allegations against adults who work with children whether in a paid or voluntary capacity.**
- **Make a referral to Disclosure and Barring Service for consideration of the person being placed on the barred list for working with children or adults at risk. This decision should be informed by the LADO if they are involved.**

Section 4 – Safeguarding Adults at Risk

Includes:

- **Understanding Abuse and Neglect**
- **Recognising Signs of Possible Abuse**
- **Responding to Allegations of Abuse**
- **Detailed Procedures where there is a concern about an adult at risk**
- **Allegations of abuse against a person who works with children**

Understanding Abuse and Neglect

Defining abuse against an adult is a difficult and complex issue. A person may abuse by inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm. Adults at risk may be abused within a family, an institution, or a community setting. Very often the abuser is known or in a trusted relationship with the adult.

To safeguard those in our church we adhere to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights with particular reference to Article 5 which states:

“No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”.

Statutory Definitions of Abuse

The following definition of abuse is laid down in ‘No Secrets: Guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect adults at risk 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 cannot consent.

Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it”.

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 negates the wishes of the adult at risk. It is also behaviour that has a harmful effect on the adult at risk’s emotional health and development or any other form of mental cruelty.

Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse of an adult is characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. It can have a deeply damaging impact on those who experience it and can impact our ability to trust our relationships with others and can lead to feeling fearful and unsafe. Spiritual abuse can exist in isolation or alongside other forms of abuse and can be used to ‘legitimise’ or facilitate other forms of abuse. It shares some of the hallmarks of bullying

and harassment, including intimidation, manipulation and inducing fear. However, the key aspect of spiritual abuse is the religious context in which the abuse occurs and the ways in which people are controlled through the misuse and abuse of religious scripture, divine position, spiritual threats and fear of spiritual consequences and the suggestion of God as complicit. All or some of these features can be used to control or coerce.

Financial or Material Abuse

This is the inappropriate use, misappropriation, embezzlement or theft of money, property, or possessions, sometimes by coercion, manipulation, or threat.

Neglect / Self Neglect

This is the repeated deprivation of assistance that the Adult at Risk needs for important activities of daily living, including the failure to intervene in behaviour, which is dangerous to the Adult at Risk 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 an adult at risk 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.

**The church reserves its right for certain roles, both voluntary and paid, to have a genuine occupational reason for adherence to its statement of faith and ethos, or for a particular role to require specific criteria to be met, whilst continuing to treat all people with care and respect.*

Organisational Abuse

This is the mistreatment or abuse of an adult at risk 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.

Recognising Signs of Possible Abuse

Physical

- A history of unexplained falls, fractures, bruises, burns, minor injuries
- Signs of under or overuse 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

Spiritual Abuse

- Misusing scripture to coerce behaviour - e.g. by distorting Biblical messages of submission, sacrifice, obedience and forgiveness in order to meet the abuser's personal agenda
- Coercing through censorship including pressuring people into secrecy and silence - e.g. people may feel unable to ask questions, disagree or raise issues which can be associated with the need to keep unity or protect the individual, the church or God
- Requiring unquestioning obedience to the abuser which may include an implicit or explicit suggestion that this equates to obedience to God
- Using a sense of divine position to exert pressure to conform, characterised by a pattern of coercion and control, in which an individual's fear of disobeying God is used to require them to act or adopt a pattern of behaviour without there being free consent
- Enforced accountability requiring an individual to be accountable to another without consent, choice, and control over boundary setting. Accountability would however be required in the situation where a safeguarding agreement is in place
- Exclusion or isolation of individuals as a punishment for non-compliance
- Coercive behaviour through exploitation and manipulation e.g. extreme pressure to conform
- Publicly shaming and humiliating individuals to control behaviour
- Threats of spiritual consequences
- Inappropriate mentoring relationships

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 activities

Responding to Allegations of Abuse

The procedure for responding to an Allegation of Abuse within Verso Vineyard Church is the same for children and adults at risk. Under no circumstances should a staff member or volunteer carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. The process below

outlines the process and responsibilities of those involved, which should be kept to the minimum. Only those that need to know, should be included in the process.

Detailed Procedures Where There is a Concern that an Adult Needs Protection

Suspicions or allegations of abuse or harm including physical, sexual, organisational, financial, discriminatory, neglect, self-neglect, forced marriage, modern slavery, domestic abuse.

If there is concern about any of the above, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy will:

- Contact the Adult Social Care Team who have responsibility under the Care Act 2014 to investigate allegations of abuse. Alternatively, thirtyone:eight can be contacted for advice.
- If the adult is in immediate danger or has sustained a serious injury contact the Emergency Services, informing them of any suspicions.

If there is a concern regarding spiritual abuse, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy will:

- Identify support services for the victim i.e. counselling or other pastoral support
- Contact thirtyone:eight and in discussion with them will consider appropriate action with regards to the scale of the concern.

Allegations of Abuse Against a Person who works with Adults with Care and Support Needs
The Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy co-ordinator will:

- Liaise with Adult Social Services in regards the suspension of the worker
- Make a referral to the DBS following the advice of Adult Social Services

The Care Act 2014 places the duty upon Adult Services to investigate situations of harm to adults with care and support needs. This may result in a range of options including action against the person or organisation causing the harm, increasing the support for the carers or no further action if the 'victim' chooses for no further action and they have the capacity to communicate their decision. However, this is a decision for Adult Services to decide, not the church.

Section 5 - Responding to Allegations of Abuse

Under no circumstances should a staff member or volunteer carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. The procedures outlined below must be strictly followed.

How to respond to a child or adult at risk wishing to disclose abuse:

Effective Listening

Ensure the physical environment is welcoming, giving opportunity for the child or adult at risk to talk in private but making sure another team member or staff member is aware the conversation is taking place.

- It is especially important to allow time and space for the person to talk
- Above everything else listen without interrupting
- Be attentive and look at them whilst they are speaking
- Show acceptance of what they say (however unlikely you believe the story may sound) by reflecting back words or short phrases they have used
- Try to remain calm, even if you are feeling something different
- Be honest and don't make promises you can't keep regarding confidentiality
- If they decide not to tell you after all, accept their decision but let them know that you are always ready to listen.
- Use language that is age appropriate and, for those with disabilities, ensure there is someone available who understands sign language, Braille etc.

Helpful responses:

- You have done the right thing in telling
- I am glad you have told me
- I will try to 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?
- I am shocked, don't tell anyone else

Documenting a concern

1. The staff member or volunteer should speak to their line manager, team leader or the safeguarding co-ordinator and make a report of the concern on the 'Safeguarding Form' as soon as possible by accessing the website www.verso.church/safeguarding. If you are unable to complete the online form, please email safeguarding@verso.church or if urgent, call Gil Yon on **07895 899906**.

2. The person / team leader in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse should report concerns as soon as possible to:

- Name: Gil Yon
- Tel: **07895 899906**
- Email: gil@verso.church

The above is nominated by the Trustees and Leadership to act on their behalf in dealing with the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including referring the matter on to the statutory authorities.

3. In the absence of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator then the report should be made to:

- Name: Clare Mulrooney
- Tel: 07568255640
- Email: clare@verso.church

If the suspicions in any way involve the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, then the report should be made to:

- Name: Tim Winfield
- Email: tim@verso.church

If this is not possible, contact social services or the police.

4. The Safeguarding Co-ordinator should contact the appropriate agency which, for Verso Vineyard Church, is Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP).

HSCP has been set up so that all agencies and organisations who work with children and young people work together to keep children safe.

24-hour contact numbers:

To report a concern about a child, or seek support is: 0300 123 4043

To report a concern about an adult, or seek support is: 0300 123 4042

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/adult-social-services/report-a-concern-about-an-adult/report-a-concern-about-an-adult.aspx>

In an emergency call the Police on 999.

5. The Safeguarding Co-ordinator may need to inform others depending on the circumstances and/or nature of the concern:

- Chair or trustee responsible for safeguarding who may need to liaise with the insurance company or the charity commission to report a serious incident.
- Designated officer or LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) if the allegation concerns a worker or volunteer working with someone under 18.

6. Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. A written record of the concerns should be made in accordance with these procedures and kept in a secure place.

7. Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, the absence of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or a member of the Leadership should not delay referral to Social Services, the Police or taking advice.

8. The Leadership will support the Safeguarding Co-ordinator in their role and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need-to-know basis.

9. It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make a direct referral to the safeguarding agencies or seek advice from an appropriate agency. However, the Leadership hope that members of Verso Vineyard Church will use this procedure. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Safeguarding Co-ordinator has not responded appropriately, or, where they have a disagreement with the Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) as to the appropriateness of a referral, they are free to contact an outside agency directly.

We hope by making this statement that the Leadership demonstrate its commitment to effective safeguarding and the protection of all those who are vulnerable.

The role of the safeguarding co-ordinator/ deputy is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information on to statutory agencies who have a legal duty to investigate.

Appendix 1 - Related Policies and Guidelines

- **Volunteer Policy**
- **Online engagement with children & young people**
- **Technology and storage of information**
- **Data Protection Principles and compliance inc: Disclosure Request Template**
- **Health & Safety Policy**
- **Code of Conduct**
- **Conflict of Interests**
- **Working in Partnership**
- **Letting out Premises to other Individuals or Groups**
- **A clear job description for the role of Safeguarding Adults Lead Officer or Welfare Officer**
- **Whistleblowing**
- **Equality inc: Anti Bullying Policy, C & YP**
- **Social media**
- **Complaints**
- **Disciplinary**
- **Safer recruitment inc: Recruitment of Ex-offenders & Ex-offender Contract**
- **Training Requirements & Management**
- **Pastoral Care inc: Policy on Sex Offenders**
- **Mentoring Programme inc: Mentor Role Description, Mentoring Parental Consent Form**
- **Trips away**
- **Duty of care**
- **Ratios**
- **Supervision**
- **Roles and responsibilities**
- **Working with parents and carers**

Appendix 2 – Child or Adult at Risk Cause for Concern Incident Form

The Safeguarding Form can be found on the Verso website at verso.church/safeguardingform. Below is the content of the form:

Your Name

Your connection to Verso Vineyard Church

Select an option (Volunteer Team Member, Staff Member, Member of the Public, Other)

Your Contact Number

Your Email Address

Adult or Child's Full Name

Tell us who you have a concern about

Adult or Child's Address

If known, please tell us the address of the person you have a concern about

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

City / Town

Postcode

Ministry Area/Group

In which ministry area or group were you a witness to what you are reporting?

Select an option (VersoKids/VersoYouth/VersoCare/Other/General)

Ministry Area/Group

If not listed above, please identify here.

Tell us about your concern, the disclosure or the incident you are reporting, and why you think it needs action.

Please provide as much information as you can including names, times, and dates.

Where did it take place?

Who saw it?

Action taken so far

Has any action been taken by a third party? Please identify who else has been informed of this.

I confirm that the information I have included in this form is, to the best of my knowledge, accurate and I hereby give permission for St Albans Vineyard Church to contact me on the details provided if further clarification about this matter is required.

I Confirm

I have read, understand and accept your data and privacy policy

Please read here www.verso.church/privacypolicy

I Agree