

Good Safeguarding Practice for Community and Church Volunteers during the Coronavirus Pandemic

During the current coronavirus outbreak many of us are giving our time to support the community efforts of our churches. This will often involve us in situations which we are unfamiliar with, such as delivering food parcels to people who are self-isolating or in crisis or engaging pastorally with people in the community who are in great need.

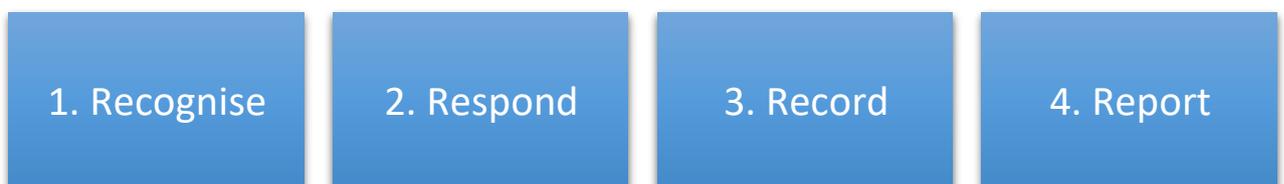
Our church safeguarding policy covers all activities carried out under the auspices of the church, whether our activities take place inside the church e.g. children's groups and elder persons lunch club or take us out into the community. Now we are, of necessity, going out into our community more, meeting people on their own doorsteps or speaking to them on the phone or by video chat. Below are a few questions that reflect the sort of safeguarding situations that you may come across as a volunteer at this time.

The principles of good safeguarding practice are still the same, and if you have completed Level 2 Excellence in Safeguarding or watched the Interim Safeguarding Video produced specifically for sharing as an alternative to face to face training during the Coronavirus Pandemic, you will be familiar with the following information. If you would like to watch this video please make contact with your Association Safeguarding Officer; [association safeguarding lead in your regional area](#).

You are also able to read our 'Gateway to Level 2 Excellence in Safeguarding' booklet which goes into detail about responding to safeguarding concerns. It is available on the Baptist Union website or by following the link here: [Gateway to Level 2 Excellence in Safeguarding](#)

Responding to Concerns

If you are concerned about the wellbeing of a child or adult, or if you spot something that worries you, use 'the 4 Rs' to help you know what to do next:



Recognise

Does it look right? Does it sound right? Does it feel right? Trust your gut instinct; if it feels wrong, then it probably is wrong.

Remember that abuse can take many forms and sometimes it's hard to know what to look out for. In the press we often hear about physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect, but there are also other ways that abuse can happen.

Always pass on any concerns you have to the Designated Person for Safeguarding at your church. It is their job to listen and decide whether or not further action is needed. They are best placed to

decide how the situation needs to proceed and whether or not anyone else needs to be involved.

Respond

If you have recognised something that causes you concern, or if a concern is disclosed to you, please don't ignore it - RESPOND. Share your concerns with the Designated Person for Safeguarding at your church. It is not your job to investigate or to tell anyone apart from the Designated Person for Safeguarding, but you need to speak to them quickly and promptly.

Record

Write down what concerns you have or what was disclosed to you without delay, using the person's own words where possible. The four W's are a useful tool:

What? When? Where? Who?

- Who was involved? – names of the key people
- What happened? – facts not opinions
- Where did it happen?
- When did it happen – date and time

To help make sure you record everything clearly, a safeguarding incident form is available from your Designated Person for Safeguarding.

Report

Report any concerns or disclosures to your church's Designated Person for Safeguarding without delay. The next steps will vary depending on whether a child or adult is involved, as well as the individual circumstances. The Designated Person for Safeguarding will know what to do next, or who best to contact for advice and support.

'Little TED'

Sometimes when we are concerned about a potential safeguarding situation, we need to be able to gather a little bit more information to clarify whether we have a correct understanding of what is happening. Sometimes we find it difficult to know the words to say when we are worried and faced with a new situation. It helps to keep it simple and so we recommend that you ask clarifying questions that help the other person to express more of their own situation in their own words. A good place to start is Little TED:

- Tell me
- Explain to me
- Describe to me

Make sure you write down what has been said as soon as possible after the conversation using the words of the person you have been speaking to as much as possible, even if they are words you wouldn't usually use.

Remember these questions are to clarify what information you may need to pass to your Designated Person for Safeguarding - it is not your job to investigate.

Case Studies

We have developed the following case studies to help you think about some of the situations that you might come across when volunteering out in the community. The case studies below reflect things that are sadly common within our society at all times. However, we recognise that in the present climate some situations will be exacerbated by additional stresses and others will simply be more visible to the community as food parcels are delivered to people's doors and struggles met by the church and community at large rather than just the minister or statutory agencies.

Pamela

<p>I keep getting calls from Pamela, a lady from the church. She appears really anxious and says that she is convinced that she will get ill and die. She feels lonely and isolated from the world. How should I respond?</p>	<p>What do we recognise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She is feeling isolated • Risk of emotional harm – anxiety, depression, loneliness
<p>How could you respond?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check with Pamela whether she feels unwell at the moment – has a high temperature or a new persistent dry cough. If so, then she needs to self-isolate for the next 7 days. • If not, reassure Pamela that she is okay and talk through the things that are worrying her at this moment. • Consider the support that the church is offering at the moment – is there anything that Pamela might be able to engage with? Invite her to be involved. • Record on a safeguarding incident sheet and Report the matter to the to the DPS. • Seek consent from Pamela to share her phone number with the pastoral team who are supporting vulnerable people at this time. • Advise her to call the NHS on 111 if she is unwell and may need additional support. 	

Esther

<p>My daughter's teenage friend Esther has been messaging her and telling her that she is really struggling to cope. How should I respond?</p>	<p>What do we recognise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible deterioration in mental health. • Possible risk of harm to self • Is she having suicidal thoughts?
<p>How could you respond?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell your daughter to let Esther know that she is worried about her and has told you about the messages. • Check what she means by 'struggling to cope'. Ask your daughter to seek consent from Esther for you to see the messages (that way you get will get a better understanding of what is being expressed). • Consider whether there is an immediate risk that she could harm herself – if so, contact the police and advise them of a risk to life. • Talk to Esther (ask your daughter to begin the telephone or online conversation and then hand over to you, whilst staying nearby) and encourage her to tell her parents how she is feeling. If you believe there is a significant risk of harm you may need to talk to them without her consent. • Contact the MASH / Children's Social Care team for further advice and support as Esther is not connected to church. 	

George

<p>Whilst doing deliveries from our local food bank I went to take a parcel to a local family. A child, George answered the door and I noticed what appears to be bruising on both his wrists. How do I respond?</p>	<p>What do we recognise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible physical abuse to a child. • Family under financial pressure (using food bank) increases the risk of relationship breakdowns, domestic and child abuse
<p>How could you respond?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the child if he is okay. (Consider whether there are other people around who can hear and whether this may increase the risk. If you are concerned do not ask him). • Make a note of any response (once you have left the house). • Report to the safeguarding lead for the Food Bank and let them know what has happened. • Make a written record of what you observed and what the child said to you and pass to the Foodbank DPS. Follow their policy and procedures • Ensure that you have recorded on a Body Map where the bruises are (available from the church DPS or online) • DO NOT take photos of the injuries • Either you or the Foodbank DPS should then contact the police or MASH (Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub / Children’s Social Care of your local authority and let them know what you have observed. Do not delay reporting to the statutory authorities if the DPS is not available. George may be at imminent risk of further harm. 	

Nicola

<p>When I went to take a bag of food to Nicola, a single mum from church, she seemed anxious when she opened the door. She said that her ex-boyfriend has moved back in and they are not getting on. I know that the police have been involved before when he lived with them. How should I respond?</p>	<p>What do we recognise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible domestic abuse (DA) • Previous police involvement because of DA. • Children are living in the house • Nicola seems anxious • There may be an even greater risk of a DA incident due to the pressure of the current lock down
<p>How could you respond?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassure Nicola that you would like to help her. • If Nicola is alone and it is safe to do so signpost her to Women’s Aid or the Police for additional support • Contact the DPS from the church and let them know about the conversation you have had with Nicola • Record your observations on a safeguarding incident report form and report to the DPS (pass on the incident form). • As there are children in the house the DPS should contact the MASH or Children’s Social Care Team. If possible, the DPS should let Nicola know that this call has been made so she can manage any increased risk that could arise from this contact. • If there is evidence of an on-going incident which could indicate imminent harm contact the police using 999. 	

William

<p>I went to see my neighbour, William, who is an adult with learning difficulties and has major health problems. He does not have the medication that he needs and told me that someone has stolen it because he could not give them the money they demanded when they came to deliver the medication.</p>	<p>What do we recognise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William has learning difficulties and could be at an increased risk of being a victim of fraud or other crimes • Criminal offences: Theft • Possible financial abuse • Increased risk of harm from not having medication leading to deterioration in health • William may need help to access additional medication
<p>How could you respond?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support William to report the theft to the police. As William is not part of the church you do not need to report to the DPS. • Help William to contact his GP to arrange for further medication or access immediate medical intervention. • Help William access a prescription delivery service for his future needs. • Record what has happened on the Safeguarding Incident Form for your own records and to share with the police. • Offer William the opportunity to have someone give him a call from the church on a regular basis to offer pastoral support. 	

Doris

<p>When I rang Doris, an elderly lady from church she said she is worried that she is being taken advantage of by a neighbour, Brian, who is charging her £30 as a 'delivery fee' each time he does her shopping. How should I respond?</p>	<p>What do we recognise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible financial abuse • That Doris is worried • The man lives next door and that might add to the worry for Doris • The neighbour could be making the offer to other vulnerable and elderly people in the community
<p>How could you respond?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassure Doris that she did the right thing telling you. • Report the situation to the DPS and let them know what has happened - follow any advice they give you. • Record what has happened on a safeguarding incident form and pass to the DPS. • Ask Doris if she would like you to arrange for a volunteer from the church to do her shopping for free. • Help Doris to write a letter to her neighbour thanking him for the help but explaining that she no longer needs it. • The DPS may consider notifying the local police of Brian's actions in case there are other vulnerable victims. 	

Finally...

- ✓ Always speak to your church DPS in the first instance but don't delay taking action if you believe that someone may be in imminent danger and you have not been able to contact the DPS.
- ✓ Your DPS will work with you where there are further steps that you can take and if there is a need to escalate a situation to a statutory authority the DPS can take the lead on this in most situations.
- ✓ Become familiar with your church Safeguarding Policy and Procedures so you can be more confident in the steps you need to take when a safeguarding concern arises.
- ✓ When undertaking volunteer work for community projects which may be linked to a third-party organisation (i.e. an organisation that is separate from your home church) or is an ecumenical project (a project supported by several churches working together), make sure you know who safeguarding concerns should be reported to and what the safeguarding policy and procedures are for the project.
- ✓ Whilst it may seem challenging to offer reassurance and support at a distance remember to maintain social distancing and stand at least 2 metres away from the person you are talking to.
- ✓ If you are concerned that someone is in immediate risk of serious harm, you must contact the police (from a place of personal safety), then let your DPS know that you have done so.