



Cornerstone Collective of Churches Safeguarding Policy with the Safer Recruitment Statement

Section 1 - Details of the places of worship/organisation

Name: Cornerstone Collective of Churches

Includes Cornerstone Church Liverpool, Cornerstone Church Wirral, Liberti Church Lark Lane and Hope Church Kensington.

Registered address: Cornerstone Collective of Churches, Cornerstone Church, Dovedale Road, Liverpool, L18 1DW

Email address: info@cornerstone-collective.org

Membership of Denomination/Organisation: Independent Local Churches and members of the FIEC

Charity Number: 1152099

Company Number: 8133846

Regulators details (if any): N/A

The following is a brief description of our place of worship/organisation and the type of work/activities we undertake with children/vulnerable adults:

Cornerstone Collective of Churches is a number of independent local evangelical churches planted from the former Open Brethren church on Ramilies Road in Liverpool. The churches are Elder led, with a number of them paid as full time Preachers and Pastors (with all of the Elders, paid and unpaid, have a pastoral role) who are answerable to the Elders and the Trustees of the Cornerstone Collective of Churches. The Elders are the governing body for delivery of worship and they are responsible for ensuring the churches remains doctrinally correct. The Trustees lease them the premises the Trust owns (with additional premises leased from other parties separate to the churches and Trust) and they provide legal and charitable accountability and governance.

We offer Sunday services in each of the churches within the Collective for the whole church family; with a Creche Group and Kids Church Groups (formerly Sunday School with children withdrawn from the family service for a children's age-appropriate lesson) included in the Sunday gatherings. Teenagers remain in the main service where we celebrate communion and preach and teach the Gospel in accordance with our Statement of Faith.

Outside of the events taking place on Sundays, there are weekly (term-time) adult and baby/toddler groups in the Liverpool and Wirral churches, study and/or prayer groups for men and women and occasionally a drop in coffee morning. The children aged school Year 7 through to Year 10 in the Liverpool congregation are invited to meet on a mid-week evening each week for a time of Bible study, fellowship and food in different leader's or parent's homes. We also meet in smaller gatherings as Gospel Communities during the week in homes of people who attend our churches. Our aim is to grow through outreach and evangelisation of the local communities and to plant new churches, which will include the development of further activities for adults, youth and young children.

Our commitment:

As a Leadership we recognise the need to provide a safe and environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults. We acknowledge that children, young people and vulnerable adults 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"*. Additionally, we recognise that adults can be vulnerable in a range of pastoral situations and that adults can be at risk of Spiritual Abuse in the context of churches and there is further consideration of these areas in this policy.

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."*¹

As a Leadership we have adopted the procedures set out in this safeguarding policy in accordance with statutory guidance and with the above statements and areas of importance in mind. We are committed to building constructive links with statutory and voluntary agencies involved in safeguarding.

The Leadership undertakes to:

- endorse and follow all national and local safeguarding legislation and procedures, in addition to the international conventions outlined above.

¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989 entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

- provide on-going safeguarding training for all its workers (both paid and volunteers, including Trustees and Elders) and will regularly review the operational guidelines attached.
- ensure that the premises meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and all other relevant legislation, and that it is welcoming and inclusive.
- support the Safeguarding Coordinator, the Operations Director and other appointed members of the Safeguarding Team in their work, and in any action, they may need to take in order to protect children, vulnerable adults and staff (paid and volunteers)
- respond appropriately to any alleged instances of abuse or other concerns which fall under the remit of this safeguarding policy, linking with the appropriate local authority Safeguarding Board.

Section 2

Understanding abuse and neglect:

Defining child abuse or abuse against a vulnerable adult is a difficult and complex issue. A person may abuse by inflicting harm, but also by failing to prevent harm. Children and adults in need of protection 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 or vulnerable adult. The concept of spiritual abuse further widens the remit of this safeguarding policy and the importance of protecting all persons operating within Cornerstone Collective of Churches.

In order to safeguard those in our places of worship and organisations 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:

- *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.*
- *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.*²

In addition, and relating to adults, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights with particular reference to Article 5 states:

- *No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.*³

The safeguarding of vulnerable adults is in many ways more complex than the safeguarding of children, partly because most adults are deemed to be able to make choices for themselves and

² Convention on the Rights of the Child Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989 entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> **Article 19**

³ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> Article 5

enter and leave relationships. It is acknowledged that some adults are particularly vulnerable due to additional care and support needs and there are certain situations where there is a significant power imbalance where the potential for harm is increased.

Pastoral care for adults is a significant area in which the churches of the Collective operate, and by its nature, pastoral care and support is entered into willingly by adults. However, as identified by CSS and thirtyone:eight; pastoral care and support is often offered to people at points of vulnerability, either due to the circumstances of life or because they are working through past events or hurts. There is always a risk of an imbalance of power between those giving and those receiving pastoral support. This imbalance can be exploited if leaders are not exercising authentic leadership or if, within the church culture, teaching about sin is not properly balanced by teaching about grace. In such contexts drawing the line between abuse and non-abuse is particularly challenging.⁴ It is therefore imperative that Cornerstone Collective and its encompassed churches have an acute awareness of the risks of harm faced by adults who are vulnerable as a result of a wide range of factors, including many of the pastoral care triggers dealt with by staff, Elders and other volunteers.

One area of risk to adults in a safeguarding capacity has been referred to in the past as Spiritual abuse, but more recently this has become criticised for not having an agreed definition and for therefore creating more issues than it solves as a term. Therefore, the Elders and Trustees of Cornerstone Collective and its churches have agreed that the culture and operations within the organisation and its churches should seek to ensure that the following aspects are considered in all works within the Collective, consequently mitigating the risk of abuse of adults in our settings: avoiding all abusive behaviours; creating a healthy culture of Biblically faithful practices which model safeguarding; handling disagreements well (following our complaints procedure); providing everyone with a voice that is listened to and considered; and taking responsibility individually and collectively for the actions of all staff and volunteers within the organisation and its churches.

Detailed definitions, and signs and symptoms of abuse, as well as how to respond to a disclosure of abuse, are included here in our policy or are provided at mandatory safeguarding training (required to be refreshed at appropriate intervals).

Safeguarding awareness:

The Leadership is committed to ensuring on-going awareness of safeguarding and will develop training opportunities for all workers (paid staff and volunteers as appropriate to the role, including Trustees), developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help protect everyone.

The Leadership will also ensure that children and vulnerable adults are provided with information on where to get help and advice in relation to abuse, discrimination, bullying or any other matter about which they have a concern.

Responding to allegations of abuse:

Under no circumstances should a worker carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. Following procedures as below:

- The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse should report concerns as soon as possible to Alan Taylor (hereafter the "Safeguarding Co-ordinator") tel. no: 0151 722 8480 or

⁴ Independent Learning Review for The Crowded House October 2020. Pg. 13
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07809 042 104, who is nominated by the 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 where necessary.

- In the absence of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or, if the suspicions in any way involve the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, then the report should be made to:
 - Operations Director for Cornerstone Collective Anna Wood (07989919729)
 - Liverpool: Steven Robinson (07966 793766) or Paul Elms (07789 630 364)
 - Wirral: Joshua Walsh (07912 304496)
- If the suspicions implicate both the Safeguarding Co-ordinator and/or one of the deputies, then the report should be made in the first instance to the safeguarding specialist organisation with whom we are members; thirtyone:eight, PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ, telephone 03030031111. Alternatively, contact Social Services or the police.
- Where the concern is about a child, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator should contact Children's Services. Where the concern is regarding an adult in need of protection contact Adult Social Services or take advice from thirtyone:eight as above.
- The local Children's Services office telephone number for Liverpool City Council (office hours) is 0151 233 3700. The out of hours emergency number is 0151 233 3700.
- The local Children's Services office telephone number for Wirral Council (office hours) is 0151 606 2008. The out of hours emergency number is 0151 677 6557.
- The local Adult Services office telephone number Liverpool City Council (office hours) is 0151 233 3800. The out of hours emergency number is 0151 233 3800.
- The local Adult Services office telephone number Wirral Council (office hours) is 0151 514 2222. The out of hours emergency number is 0151 677 6557.
- The Police Child Protection Team telephone number is 0151 709 6010.
- Where required, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator should then immediately inform the insurance company and other strategic personnel within the Collective.
- 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.
- Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, the absence of the Safeguarding Coordinator or one of the deputies should not delay referral to Social Services, the Police or taking advice from thirtyone:eight.
- The Leadership will support the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy 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.
- 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 thirtyone:eight, although the Leadership hope that members of Cornerstone Collective and its churches will use the internal procedures set out in this policy in the first instance so that appropriate and direct actions can be taken in relation to the safeguarding concerns raised. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy/Operations Director 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.

Detailed procedures where there is a concern about a child:

Allegation 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 Thirtyone:eight) 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 and signpost the parent/carer(s) to seek help, but not if this places 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 thirtyone:eight (who will confirm their advice in writing) if unsure whether or not to refer a case to Children's Social Services.
- Written records of each stage of the concern and subsequent actions/referrals will be kept securely (in line with GDPR regulations) by the Safeguarding Officer with input from any other parties involved in the case.

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 the advice given by thirtyone:eight if, for any reason they are unsure whether or not to contact Children's Social Services/Police. Thirtyone:eight will confirm its advice in writing for future reference.
- Written records of each stage of the concern and subsequent actions/referrals will be kept securely (in line with GDPR regulations) by the Safeguarding Officer with input from any other parties involved in the case.

The following procedure will be followed where there is a concern that an adult is in need of protection:

Suspensions or allegations of physical or sexual abuse:

If a vulnerable adult has a physical injury or symptom of sexual abuse, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy will:

- Discuss any concerns with the individual themselves giving due regard to their autonomy, privacy and rights to lead an independent life.
- If the vulnerable adult is in immediate danger or has sustained a serious injury, contact the Emergency Services, informing them of any suspicions.
- For advice contact the Adult Social Care Vulnerable Adults Team who have responsibility under Section 47 of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 and government guidance, 'No

Secrets', to investigate allegations of abuse. Alternatively thirtyone:eight can be contacted for advice.

- Written records of each stage of the concern and subsequent actions/referrals will be kept securely (in line with GDPR regulations) by the Safeguarding Officer with input from any other parties involved in the case.

Allegations of abuse against a person who works with Children:

- If an accusation is made against a worker (whether a volunteer or paid member of staff) whilst following the procedure outlined above, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, in accordance with Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures will need to liaise with Children's Social Services in regards to the suspension of the worker whilst the investigative steps outlined previously are taken, also making a referral to a Safeguarding Adviser (SA) / Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- Written records of each stage of the concern and subsequent actions/referrals will be kept securely (in line with GDPR regulations) by the Safeguarding Officer with input from any other parties involved in the case.

Safeguarding vulnerable adults experiencing pastoral care:

The Leadership acknowledge that where pastoral care, or on occasion church discipline, is undertaken with adults, this can place the adults involved in a vulnerable position. This is the area in which defining 'abuse or neglect' can be difficult, but it is imperative that those involved in undertaking pastoral care and/or discipline of church members/attendees act in ways which identify the vulnerability that can be exposed. Where concerns of this nature arise, the following procedures should be followed:

- The Elder responsible for the pastoral care/discipline should keep brief written records of any meetings, or other communications of concern, with an outline of aspects discussed and actions to be taken by the Elder and/or the person(s) being cared for.
- Any concerns regarding the vulnerability of the person(s) being cared for (e.g. risk of self-harm) should be reported to the Safeguarding Officer as a first point of call. The Safeguarding Officer may decide to refer the concern to a local church Safeguarding Deputy, but either way, the advice and guidance available from the Adult Social Care Vulnerable Adults Team or thirtyone:eight should be sought and acted up as appropriate.
- Written records of each stage of the concern and subsequent actions/referrals will be kept securely (in line with GDPR regulations) by the Safeguarding Officer with input from any other parties involved in the case.

Safeguarding against Abuse that can occur in religious settings (formerly 'Spiritual Abuse'):

- All Elders and staff/volunteers with leadership responsibility within churches of the Cornerstone Collective need to undergo regular training on safeguarding (a minimum of annually updating training), which includes raising awareness and understanding how abuses of power and authority in religious settings can occur and how to avoid them.
- Where there is a concern that this form of abuse is occurring in any situation falling under their remit of responsibility in the Collective or local church, the power imbalance needs to be redressed with the person concerned about the abuse being able to report this to the Safeguarding Officer (in the first instance, unless it involves them, in which case the Operations Director will need to be approached) without fear of reprisal unless malicious intent is proven. The Safeguarding Officer or other approached person will then investigate the referral in the same way as outlined in previous sections.

- Written records of each stage of the concern and subsequent actions/referrals will be kept securely (in line with GDPR regulations) by the Safeguarding Officer with input from any other parties involved in the case.

Safeguarding in informal settings with associations to Cornerstone Collective or its churches

- The Leaderships of the Collective and its churches actively encourages interaction between members/attendees of the churches and also with people outside the churches (e.g. neighbours, family, friends).
- It is recognised that this interaction can be in formal settings (e.g. Church Services, Kids Church, Bolder, Parent/Carer and Baby/Toddler groups, Study Groups etc.) and in these settings the appointed leaders will have received safeguarding training and will have an awareness of the signs to look out for in terms of safeguarding concerns.
- It is also recognised that interaction also takes place in more informal settings (e.g. Gospel Community groups meeting in peoples' homes) and in these settings the Leadership acknowledge that safeguarding risks still exist and concerns can still be raised.
- Where a safeguarding concern is identified in an informal setting, the same approach to investigating the concern will be taken by the Safeguarding Officer or other appointed/approached person with safeguarding authority/training. People holding such informal events in their homes or elsewhere on behalf of the work of the church will be directed towards a copy of the safeguarding policy, as well as any relevant training on safeguarding that is identified by the Safeguarding Officer so that concerns can be raised and dealt with in the appropriate ways.
- Written records of each stage of the concern and subsequent actions/referrals will be kept securely (in line with GDPR regulations) by the Safeguarding Officer with input from any other parties involved in the case.

Section 3 – Prevention

Safer recruitment statement of practice:

The Leadership will ensure all workers (paid or volunteers) are vetted in accordance with the rules presently in place:

- Safeguarding awareness and the importance of it has been discussed at interview
- Written references have been obtained with enquires about their character and suitability for the position, and followed up where appropriate
- A criminal records disclosure has been completed (we will comply with Code of Practice requirements concerning the fair treatment of applicants and the handling of information). This will involve the carrying out of DBS checks on all those for whom they are required.
- Qualifications, where relevant, have been verified
- The applicant has completed a probationary period
- The applicant has been given a copy of the organisation's safeguarding policy and knows how to identify and report concerns.
- Once appointed, the workers will commit to undertaking safeguarding training annually in order to keep up to date about how to spot safeguarding concerns and what to do with those concerns. The Safeguarding Officers commits to co-ordinating this training and the Operations Director commits to monitoring its execution.

Management of Workers; Codes of Conduct:

As a Leadership we are committed to supporting all workers and ensuring they receive support and supervision. Further details on the Code of Conduct for workers in Cornerstone Collective of Churches can be found in the Staff Handbook or by request from the Operations Director.

Section 4 - Pastoral Care in specific circumstances

Supporting those affected by abuse:

The Leadership is 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 the place of worship/organisation.

Working with offenders:

When someone attending the place of worship/organisation is known to have abused children, or is known to be a risk to vulnerable adults the Leadership will supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but in its safeguarding commitment to the protection of children and vulnerable adults, set boundaries for that person which they will be expected to keep. This will be monitored by an appointed person and further actions taken should they be required.

Section 5 - Practice Guidelines

As an organisation / place of worship working with children, young people and vulnerable adults we wish to operate and promote good working practice. This will enable workers to run activities safely, develop good relationships and minimise the risk of false accusation. As well as a general code of conduct for workers we also wish to have specific good practice guidelines for every activity we are involved in and these will be developed as and when required by the leaders of those activities.

Working in Partnership

The diversity of organisations and settings means there can be great variation in practice when it comes to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. This can be because of cultural tradition, belief and religious practice or understanding, for example, of what constitutes abuse. We therefore have clear guidelines in regards to our expectations of those with whom we work in partnership, whether in the UK or not. We will discuss with all partners our safeguarding expectations and have a partnership agreement for safeguarding. It is also our expectation that any organisation using our premises, as part of the letting agreement, will have their own policy that meets thirtyone:eights' safeguarding standards. Good communication is essential in promoting safeguarding; for those we wish to protect, for everyone involved in working with children and vulnerable adults and for all those with whom we work in partnership. This safeguarding policy is just one means of promoting safeguarding.

Signed by: _____

Date: _____