

Safeguarding Policy for Garden Church

Introduction

Garden Church believes that safeguarding is an expression of our commitment to love, care, and respect for one another. We aim to create a safe environment in our homes and gatherings, where everyone, regardless of age, background, or experience, can feel secure and valued. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and each person plays a vital role in fostering a safe and caring community.

Garden Church follows the Church of England's national safeguarding policy, *Promoting a Safer Church*, supplemented by local policies specific to Garden Church and its network of missional communities in the Diocese of Norwich. Since 28th May 2024, Garden Church has operated under a Bishop's Mission Order (BMO) and now has a dedicated Safeguarding Officer, **Daniel St John**, who is contactable at safeguarding@garden-church.org.

1. Culture, Leadership, and Capacity

- Garden Church promotes a safe and healthy culture by embedding safeguarding into all activities.
- The welfare and voice of children, vulnerable adults, victims, and survivors are actively engaged and promoted.
- Leaders are trained to recognize safeguarding risks and ensure all necessary measures are in place to protect the community.

2. Prevention

- **Safer Recruitment:** Garden Church follows the House of Bishops' guidance on safer recruitment and people management, ensuring all leaders and volunteers are appropriately vetted.
- **Training:** All leaders complete **Basic Awareness (Level 1)**, **Foundation (Level 2)**, **Leadership (Level 3)**, and other necessary safeguarding training.
- **Safeguarding Discussions:** Regular safeguarding discussions take place at leadership meetings, community gatherings, and volunteer sessions.
- **Awareness:** Garden Church raises awareness of different forms of abuse, including domestic and spiritual abuse, modern slavery, and county lines.
- **Risk Management:** Risk assessments are conducted for all activities, particularly in home-based gatherings, to ensure the safety of both hosts and attendees.
- **Lone Working Precautions:** Leaders avoid lone working where possible and take appropriate measures when necessary.
- **Boundaries and Physical Contact:** Guidance is provided on appropriate boundaries, including interactions during gatherings such as passing the peace and welcoming gestures.
- **Church Building Layout Considerations:** As Garden Church operates in various spaces, safeguarding risks linked to building layout, access to toilets, and potential blind spots are considered.

3. Recognising, Assessing, and Managing Risk

- All safeguarding concerns are reported in accordance with House of Bishops' Guidance and statutory requirements.
- Clear and concise records are maintained for all safeguarding matters.
- Personal information is stored and shared in compliance with GDPR and data protection legislation.
- Work-related communication is conducted through official channels, ensuring confidentiality and accountability.

4. Victims and Survivors

- Garden Church is committed to listening, respecting, and believing those who report abuse.
- Safeguarding disclosures are handled in a **victim-centred and trauma-informed** manner.
- Leaders are aware of the reporting process and communicate it clearly to those who disclose abuse.
- Concerns are acted upon **transparently and in a timely manner**.
- The church follows the *Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse* guidance from the House of Bishops.
- Support is available for victims and survivors of both **Church-based and non-Church-based abuse**, including those with broader safeguarding needs such as mental health challenges and homelessness.
- Theological support is provided **sensitively and with consent**, ensuring that biblical teachings are not misused in ways that could harm victims.

5. Learning, Supervision, and Support

- Leaders and volunteers **maintain up-to-date safeguarding training** in line with national Church requirements.
- The **Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)** and clergy receive additional training and supervision to support their safeguarding roles.
- New PSOs and leaders attend **induction programmes** to ensure they understand safeguarding responsibilities.
- Ongoing **mentorship and supervision** are provided to leaders to reinforce safeguarding practices.

Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

Immediate Risk

If a child or adult is in **immediate danger** or requires **urgent medical attention**, call **999** immediately.

Reporting Channels

- Contact **Daniel St John, Garden Church Safeguarding Officer** at safeguarding@garden-church.org.
- Report concerns directly to the **Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser** at safeguarding@dioceseofnorwich.org or **01603 882345**.
- Contact external agencies such as **Norfolk Constabulary, Children's Services, or Adult Social Care** if needed.

Entry and Exit Processes

- New members are introduced through relational invitation or pop-up events.
- Before attending a home-based gathering, guests watch a **safeguarding video** outlining key safety principles.
- A **secure database** tracks attendance for support and communication purposes.
- Leaders conduct **risk assessments** and ensure **new members are appropriately supported**.
- When individuals leave, an **exit conversation** is offered to address concerns and improve safeguarding.

Safeguarding in Informal Settings

- Informal settings, such as home gatherings, **adhere to safeguarding principles**.
- Offering transport to meetings follows **safety guidelines**.
- Boundaries are maintained in all interactions, especially with **minors and vulnerable adults**.

Communication and Digital Safety

- Policies ensure **safe online communication**, including:
 - No private messaging of minors.
 - Awareness of privacy when sharing contact details.
 - A **safeguarding video** on the website reinforcing digital safety.

Inclusivity and Accessibility

- Gatherings are made **physically accessible**.
- Leaders are trained to support individuals with **learning difficulties and disabilities**.
- A **respectful and understanding** environment is fostered at all times, ensuring that **differences in theology, personal beliefs and practices** do not create an unsafe space.
- We warmly welcome people of all backgrounds and stories in the firm belief that everyone is made in the image and likeness of God.
- Everyone is encouraged to use their gifts.

Commitment to Safeguarding as a Shared Responsibility

- Safeguarding is a **community-wide commitment**, with all members encouraged to uphold these standards.
- Garden Church regularly **reviews and updates** its safeguarding practices.

Annual Review

This policy will be reviewed **annually** to reflect the latest Church of England safeguarding guidance and meet the evolving needs of the Garden Church community.

Last updated: February 2025