

Frequently Asked Questions regarding Safeguarding issues

1. What is a Safeguarding Co-ordinator?

A Safeguarding Co-ordinator is a designated person or persons to be responsible for implementing the Safeguarding Policy of the congregation and responding to concerns. A Safeguarding Co-ordinator is not compulsory, but the GA advises it as good practice.

2. What are the duties of a Safeguarding Co-ordinator?

Someone to go on a day's training on Safeguarding issues and to help the congregation draw up their own Safeguarding policy and to make sure people know about it – i.e. to follow proper steps when appointing a new children's leader.

To prepare and implement the Safeguarding Policy of the congregation and conduct an annual review. Ensuring policies and procedure are followed. Act as an advocate on behalf of children and adults in need of protection. Make sure that anyone involved in leading children's groups has a DBS check (Disclosure Vetting and Barring Scheme – formally called a CRB check). Arrange and make sure that volunteers and leaders attend relevant training.

Keep accurate records relating to Safeguarding concerns. Work in partnership with statutory bodies and other agencies.

3. What is a Safeguarding Policy?

Each congregation should have a Safeguarding policy – it doesn't have to be a big document. It needs to be on display, on the premises, to show the public that they have one in operation.

4. Who is being Safeguarded?

Children (under 16), young people, vulnerable young people, vulnerable adults and indeed the whole community.

5. Who are vulnerable young people?

Young people between the ages of 16-18 years who are experiencing difficulty accessing services which are essential for their well-being. Young people who are vulnerable and need services to successfully move into adult life, for example, those with inadequate support networks or young people with moderate learning difficulties.

6. Who are vulnerable adults?

Aged 18 years or over. Users of community care services. Requires support due to mental or other disability, age or illness. May be unable to fully take care of him/her self. May be unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. Any adult who is accessing a special activity run by the congregation – i.e. an outing to the seaside or an organised holiday.

7. What would the commitment be legally?

There is no clear legal commitment, but if there is a serious allegation towards a children's leader at the church and the church didn't have any Safeguarding measures in place then the congregation are more likely to have many questions to answer, if the courts get involved.

8. What would be the time commitment to this?

The GA are generally advising congregations to proceed asap. To have some measures in place - ie having a Safeguarding Co-ordinator and a Safeguarding Policy is good practice for any congregation.

9. Would the Safeguarding Co-ordinator have to always be there when the church was in use?

No.

10. What about outside groups using the church premises?

The congregation should remind them that they should have their own Safeguarding policy. Most insurance policies ask for a Safeguarding policy and the policy may not be valid if a group, such as a yoga group, do not have one – but this is the responsibility of church user groups – you can just point it out.

11. Is there someone who can answer any questions that arise?

Yes. The GA Safeguarding team. Yes, Rev John Harley for general questions, Rev Linda Phillips for ministerial questions and issues. Derek McAuley is available when John and Linda cannot be contacted.

12. What is the actual legal document that makes this something that has to be complied with?

As far as we are aware there is not one document that covers all this, but it's all about congregations trying to follow good practice and demonstrating that they have thought about and acted on these issues, so that in the worst case scenario occurs - and there is a Safeguarding issue - then the church can say they followed Safeguarding steps.

13. Will the GA be giving congregations Safeguarding guidelines?

Yes. The GA has published a brand new Safeguarding Policy - Safe and Sound, which is available on-line, to download and use. Also information can be found on the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) website www.ccpas.co.uk. They also have a telephone number which you can ring for help and advice: 0845 120 45 50.

14. Who needs a CRB check?

Ministers, Lay Leaders and Lay Pastors who have charge of a congregation should have a DBS check processed every 5 years and also anyone who leads regular children's or young people's activities.

15. What is the expectation for ministers in terms of reporting confessions or disclosures even when made during confidential pastoral sessions?

If appropriate or relevant ministers need to point out to the person they are listening to/counselling that if they disclose some information which suggests that, from a safeguarding point of view, this person or someone else is in danger, then the minister may have to inform a colleague or professional and take steps.

16. Keeping a log book is recommended in the Safe and Sound policy. What about data protection issues of recording personal information?

The log book needs to be kept in a locked and secure place. Names, times and a brief description of any incidents or issues need to be written up. Addresses of people do not need to be recorded.