

Safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures

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Next Formal Review: July 2026

Charlotte Chapel in all its work with children and young people seeks to demonstrate its love for children and view their activities as integral to church life. Charlotte Chapel takes seriously its responsibility to care for and protect the physical, emotional and spiritual welfare of the children and young people within the various activities and groups.

Charlotte Chapel's staff and volunteers always should be aware of, identify and appropriately respond to any child protection concerns regarding any forms of abuse, including those linked to culture, faith and belief.

Safeguarding children and young people should be the focus of all actions within Charlotte Chapel. The staff and volunteers should understand the legal responsibilities and the policies and practices align with the legal framework for safeguarding and supporting children and families.

While Charlotte Chapel has no parental responsibilities for a child and young person, the staff and volunteers often work closely with children and their families. Hence, it is important to recognise the *definition of a child* and to be aware of *parental rights and responsibilities*, and to understand what parents are legally entitled and expected to do.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, outlines that the "*child*" is a person who has not attained the age of 18 years.

Under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, which addresses matters concerning parents, children, and guardians, a child is defined as a person under the age of 18. However, most provisions related to parental rights and responsibilities apply only to children under the age of 16.

A parent has a responsibility '*to safeguard and promote the child's health, development and welfare; to provide, in a manner appropriate to the stage of development of the child, direction* (to a child under the age of 16 years) *and guidance* (to the child under the age of 18 years). A parent has a responsibility '*to maintain personal relations and*

direct contact with the child on a regular basis; when a child under 16 years does not live at home, and *'to act as the child's legal representative* for a child under 16 years.'

This means that while most parental responsibilities apply to a **child under 16**, the duty to provide **guidance** may continue **until the child turns 18**.

1. What is safeguarding and child protection?

1.1 Defining Safeguarding

1.1.1 Safeguarding refers to the action taken to promote welfare of children and young people to protect them from abuse and harm.

Safeguarding is defined in the Working Together to Safeguard the Children (DfE) as:

'Protecting children from maltreatment

Preventing impairment of children's health and development

Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and

taking action to enable all children to have the best outcome.'

1.1.2 Charlotte Chapel adopts a contextual safeguarding approach to safeguarding and child protection. *'Contextual safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships. Contextual safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection system in recognising that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts.'* (Dr Carlene Firmin)

1.2 Child protection

Child protection is an important part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. It refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect children who are suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm. Child protection plays an essential part of the wider work of safeguarding and promote the welfare of children.

Charlotte Chapel's Child Protection Policy and Procedure covers the following issues:

- Identifying and recognising signs of abuse.

- A disclosure by a child and young person of alleged abuse which has occurred/is occurring out with the Charlotte Chapel activity.
- An allegation about a volunteer or staff member.

Which then obliges us to adopt policies and guideline in the following areas:

- The roles of youth leader, volunteers and safeguarding coordinator
- Selection and Recruitment Procedure
- Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure
- Child Protection Procedures stipulated by Police and social work will be followed

Within the activities offered by Charlotte Chapel for children and young people, it is inevitable that information about the home and personal lives of the children who attend will be shared with the trusted adults they meet in this context. In most situations, being prepared to give the time to listen and care without being judgemental will be of great value and assistance.

Some information that is disclosed may be of a nature which demands further action. Charlotte Chapel is aware that *many* children and young people in Britain today are experiencing some form of abuse and are living in situations which put them 'at risk' for various reasons; they are trying to cope with problems which threaten their happiness, emotional stability and even their physical safety. In the event of such information being disclosed by a child, it is essential they are dealt with in the best possible way in the interests of all concerned.

Charlotte Chapel has developed procedures for volunteers, staff and those in charge to follow in the event that a child or young person makes known details of an incident or incidents which may constitute abuse or may suggest they are 'at risk' or that a criminal offence has been or is being committed against them.

1.2.1 The Scottish Government holds responsibility for child protection in Scotland, establishing the policies, legislation, and statutory guidance that shape how the child protection system operates.

The key guidance for anyone working with children in Scotland is the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021, updated 2023). '*This guidance describes the responsibilities and expectations for all involved in protecting children and will support the care and protection of children.*'

Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) is the national approach to enhancing outcomes for children and young people in Scotland. It offers a framework to help professionals deliver the right support at the right time to children and their families.

1.2.2 Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

While Local Authorities have statutory responsibilities regarding safeguarding, Charlotte Chapel believes that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. The church expects staff and volunteers to keep the children and young person at the centre of all that they do and that any actions taken are in the best interest of the child. It is expected that children and young person are listened to, and their voices are heard.

Charlotte Chapel adopts the legal framework of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 (updated 2023) regarding the single-agency responsibilities and roles, including those of the faith organizations as outlined below:

'Religious leaders, practitioners and volunteers within faith organisations have a unifying priority in relation to the protection of children. They may provide regulated care as well as a wide range of voluntary support services. Faith organisations including churches provide carefully planned activities for children, supporting families under stress and caring for those hurt by abuse in the past, as well as ministering to and managing those who have caused harm.'

Charlotte Chapel commits to take reasonable steps recommended within the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2023 which include:

To ensure 'careful selection and appointment of those who work with children.'

To ensure 'practitioners and volunteers are confident about how to respond promptly, in line with agreed protocols, when concerns arise about risk of harm to a child from abuse or neglect.'

'Child protection co-ordinators and safeguarding advisers should be available for consultation within faith organisations. They will work with social workers and police officers as and when required.'

'Practitioners and volunteers with church and faith organisations must report concerns about harm to a child to their line manager or safeguarding/child protection co-ordinator. The safety of the child or adult at risk is the priority.'

1.3 Defining Significant Harm/child abuse

1.3.1 Abuse is defined in The Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 as

'A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill-treatment that is not physical, as well as the impact of witnessing ill-treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.'

1.3.2 In the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2023) harm refers to the ill-treatment of a child or any impairment to their health or development. This includes the harm a child may experience by being exposed to, or witnessing, the ill-treatment of another person. Forming a judgment about the significance of harm requires gathering information, considering the concern within its broader context, and analysing the relevant facts and circumstances.

Consideration should be given to the following criteria when judging what constitutes significant harm:

- *the child's experience, needs and feelings as far as they are known*
- *the nature, degree and extent of physical or emotional harm apparent*
- *the duration and frequency of abuse and neglect*
- *overall parenting capacity*
- *the apparent or anticipated impact given the child's age and stage of development.*
- *extent of any premeditation*
- *the presence or degree of threat, coercion, sadism and any other factors that may accentuate risk to do with child, family or wider context.*

1.3.3 Charlotte Chapel adopts the working definitions of abuse detailed within the Scottish Government guidelines '*Protecting Children – A Shared Responsibility: Guidance on Interagency Cooperation*' where:

- *'The welfare of the child in all decision-making;*
- *Regard will be given to the child's view, taking into account the age and maturity of the child;*
- *Legal duty to refer all incidents of concern to the appropriate authorities;*

- *Communication and training in these aspects of child welfare for those working directly with children and young people.'*

1.4 Categories of Abuse

1.4.1 Physical abuse including fabricated or induced illness

This is a deliberate form of abuse and harm where someone has inflicted a physical injury or attempted to do so to a child. Some examples of physical abuse can include slapping, pinching, kicking, shoving, physical restrain or misusing drugs. As well as the administration of toxic substances, where there is knowledge or reasonable suspicion, that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

There are at least three ways in which parent or carer can fabricate or induce illness in a child and these may include: fabrication of signs and symptoms (including fabricating the child's past medical history), falsification of hospital charts, records (this may also include fabrication of letters and documents); induction of illness by a variety of means.

1.4.2 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse takes place when a child or a young person is forced or enticed to take part in sexual activities, whether there is a high level of violence or not. 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. Other forms of sexual abuse include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse can be perpetrated by both male and female adults.

1.4.3 Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child will cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. Emotional abuse happens when a child's confidence and self-esteem is repeatedly impaired. Examples of emotional abuse can include humiliation, being ignored, made to feel worthless, and being exposed to situations that can cause fear and distress.

Emotional abuse may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, threatening, shouting at a child or calling them names. This may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

1.4.4 Neglect, including Non-Organic Failure to Thrive

Neglect occurs when a child's essential needs (including physical and psychological needs) are not met, and this is likely to cause impairment of the child's physical health and development. Such needs include food, clothing, cleanliness, shelter and warmth. A lack of appropriate care, including deprivation of access to health care, may result in persistent or severe exposure, through negligence, to circumstance which endanger the child.

Non-organic failure to thrive refers to children who significantly fail to reach normal growth and developmental milestones (i.e. growth, weight, motor, social and intellectual development) where physical and genetic reasons have been medically eliminated and a diagnosis of non-organic failure to thrive has been established.

1.4.5 Female genital mutilation (FGM) is child abuse

FGM is a culture specific abusive practice affecting some communities.

Charlotte Chapel has a legal duty to share concerns regarding FGM with the Police and Local Authority, and it should always trigger child protection concerns. FGM involve the total or partial removal of the external female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The procedure is carried out on children aged between four and ten years old and it is deeply rooted in cultural practice for reasons such as: tradition, family honour, religion, hygiene, fear of exclusion from communities.

1.4.6 Online abuse, including sextortion

Technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues.

Children are at risk of abuse online as well as face to face. Please read this *in conjunction with the Staying Safe online guidance and policy, and Anti-bullying (including cyberbullying) policy.*

Sextortion refers to the practice of extorting money or sexual favours from someone by threatening to reveal evidence of their sexual activity. It is often used to describe online blackmail, where criminals threaten to release intimate or explicit images and/or videos of vulnerable children and young person, unless they pay money or carry out their demands.

1.4.7 Honour based violence and forced marriage

This is a criminal conduct with threats and abuse resulting in honour killing, and it occurs when a family or a community member, who may be a child, has shamed the family or/and the community by breaking their honour code. The punishment may include assault, abduction, confinement, threats and murder.

Forced marriage is defined as a marriage conducted without the consent of both parties and where duress is a factor. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial,

sexual and emotional pressure. There is a clear distinction being made between 'forced marriage' and 'arranged marriage'. In the case of the arranged marriage, the final decision whether to accept or not the arrangement lies with the potential spouses, where they give their full and free consent.

1.4.8 Peer on peer abuse can be harmful

Peer on peer abuse describes a child abusing other child. It can include bullying, including online bullying and bullying because of someone's race, religion, sexuality, disability; or can be an abuse committed by a girlfriend/boyfriend or partner. Please read this in conjunction with the Anti-bullying policy

1.4.9 Child exploitation and or Trafficking, including county lines

Scotland's National Action Plan to Prevent and Tackle Child Sexual Exploitation 2016 defines '*The sexual exploitation of children and young people as an often hidden form of child sexual abuse, with distinctive elements of exploitation and exchange. In practice, the sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 might involve young people being coerced, manipulated, forced or deceived into performing and/or others performing on them, sexual activities in exchange for receiving some form of material goods or other entity (for example, food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, gifts, affection). Sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology and without the child's immediate recognition.*'

Child exploitation and trafficking is a form of severe risk of significant harm to a child; it involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring and/or receipt of a child for purposes of exploitation where a child is not capable of informed consent and whether they have been buying into this by coercion or deception. Forms of exploitation of child victims of trafficking include child labour, debt bondage, domestic servitude, begging, benefit fraud, drug trafficking, illegal adoption, forced/illegal marriage, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

County lines is a type of organised criminal network which groom, persuade, coerce and force children and young people to commit criminal offences such as store and move drugs and/or money, child sexual exploitation, trafficking, gang and knife crime. Cuckooing it is an illicit practice where someone takes over a vulnerable person's home to use it as a base to facilitate exploitation.

2. Role and responsibilities

All those who come into contact with children and young people through their employment or volunteer work have a duty to promote and safeguard the children and young people's welfare.

Charlotte Chapel aims to promote the best care for the children for whom they are responsible, noticing the standards, regulations and guidance applicable to the work they are implementing.

It is important for the staff and volunteers always to have a level of professional curiosity and remain objective.

2.1 The role of the Youth Leader is:

To have an overview of all the activities and to ensure that these are delivered in a safe and nurturing way for the children and young people.

To have good communication with all the staff and volunteers involved in developing and delivering programs and activities.

To listen to and record all the safeguarding concerns raised by children and young people, liaising with the Safeguarding coordinator/deputy. Where there is a pastoral concern, the Safeguarding team will liaise with the elders/designated elder to decide the course of action.

The role is also responsible for leading on:

- Coordinating the Delivery of PVG Training on 3-year Cycle
- Involved in Monitoring PVG Training attendance
- Liaison with Children and Youth Elder and Youth Ministries
- Checking appropriate paperwork is in place for activities for young people

2.2 The role of staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers should demonstrate professional integrity when working with both children and their families. They must always be aware of their role in safeguarding children.

The staff and volunteers who work with, and on behalf of children are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority; manage risk; use resources; and safeguard children and young people.

2.3 The role of safeguarding coordinator is:

To ensure that everyone including staff, volunteers, children and families are aware of the policies and procedures and what to do if they are worried about a child.

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people involved in the church.

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To be the point of contact for anyone in Charlotte Chapel who is concerned about a child.

The role is also responsible for leading on:

Ensuring that Charlotte Chapel Safeguarding Policies and Procedures are in line with current Legislation

Discussing any significant changes in policies and procedures with church leaders as appropriate.

Communicating changes in policies and procedures to Children & Youth Ministry Leaders

Receiving and managing concerns about a child and keeping up to date with process for contacting Statutory Authorities

Responding to any concerns and disclosures

Contacting statutory authorities if necessary

Reporting, storing and retaining child protection records following the Charlotte Chapel's policies and procedures; maintaining confidential records

Raising awareness of safeguarding within the church.

3. Managing disclosure

Members of the church, staff and volunteers must know exactly what action to take when:

There are concerns or evidence that a child or young person is at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

The child or young person makes a disclosure (knowing how to listen and respond)

There are complaints in relation to poor practice or allegations of abuse involving a leader or volunteer.

They acknowledge and suspect an actual abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Legislation requires anyone working with children to report information concerning abuse or potential abuse of children, regardless of where that occurs. *Staff* and volunteers must be aware of the local arrangement for safeguarding relevant to their setting or activities.

Support offered during an investigation or disclosure

Supporting all parties (the child as well as the volunteer to whom disclosure was made) in the event of such an investigation or disclosure is vital. The process of an investigation can be very distressing, and Charlotte Chapel seeks to support the child and volunteers in a manner that is appropriate.

The Safeguarding Coordinator, the elders and other suitable qualified or experienced staff will be available for support and counsel throughout the process for all concerned.

4. Reporting concerns

Charlotte Chapel takes seriously any incident where a child or young person has suffered or likely to suffer significant harm.

Incidents will be reported immediately to the Youth Leader who will contact the Safeguarding Coordinator or Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator and complete a Child Protection Report Form. The Safeguarding Coordinator or Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator will conclude whether the incident should be reported immediately to the Social Work Department in line with the statutory child protection and/or will liaise with the Designated Elder to establish if it is a pastoral matter.

Charlotte Chapel's Volunteer Worker Handbook provides guidance as to how to respond if a child makes a disclosure, or if concerns arise that may need to be disclosed.)

- If a child discloses something which causes concern, the child will be taken seriously and will be reassured.
- Do not promise to keep what has been said a secret. It is important to explain why the information should be shared with the Youth Leader and the Safeguarding Coordinator.
- Do not investigate. It is important to gather basic information by asking open questions (Who? What? Where? When? **Never** ask How? Or Why?) or simply be curious by saying 'Tell me more about what happened.'

Responsibility for investigating rests with the statutory child protection agencies.

5. Allegations and Staff/Volunteer Grievance Procedure

The Working Together to Safeguard Children inter-agency guidance highlights the responsibility of 'Organisations and agencies working with children and families should have clear policies for dealing with allegations against people who work with children. Such policies should make a clear distinction between an allegation, a concern about the quality of care or practice or a complaint.

An allegation may relate to a person who works with children who has:

- *behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child*
- *possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child*
- *behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children*
- *behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children'*

A concern about the poor quality of the care or practice does not necessarily imply a form of abuse and neglect but in the worst cases, they can lead to that. Everyone who is concerned about an issue that presents a risk of harm, or suspect abuse or neglect, should report this to the safeguarding coordinator as soon as possible.

A complaint is when someone is unhappy with the work or the way they have been treated. Anyone who is unhappy with the treatment they have received, has the right to make a complaint, to have that complaint investigated, and be given a full and prompt reply.

Charlotte Chapel will address and inform the regulatory agencies with regards of any allegations in a timely manner.

5.1 Allegations against staff

All allegations will be taken seriously. The Charlotte Chapel managing allegations procedures must be followed.

Consideration will need to be given whether the member of staff/volunteers should retain their role subject of a risk assessment, pending any potential investigation.

All allegations and any concerns about the safety or welfare of children must be reported to the Local Authority Social Work (Children and Family Services) or Lothian Border Police or equivalent officer within one working day.

The National Child Abuse Investigation Unit (NCAIU) is a specialist unit created by the Police Scotland in 2015 to support the investigation of complex child abuse and neglect across Scotland.

5.2 Staff/Volunteer Grievance Procedure

Charlotte Chapel wishes to ensure that any concerns about unsatisfactory matters are resolved quickly and fairly, and have established a Grievance Procedure for volunteers/staff.

This procedure applies to all Charlotte Chapel volunteers and staff. It is designed to enable all volunteers to exercise their right to make representations (or complain) if they are unhappy, and to have that complaint dealt with fairly and appropriately. Many of these representations may be informal and can be rectified or acted upon by the person in charge without further discussion. Other complaints may require an official response from Charlotte Chapel.

6. Responsibilities, Principles and standard conduct concerns

6.1 Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of Charlotte Chapel to explain clearly all requirements regarding the Code of Conduct and adherence to policy and to ensure that these are updated and issued to all volunteers. The responsibility of communication of all Operational Guidelines is delegated to those in overall responsibility for any individual group. All volunteers/staff will be asked to sign to confirm receipt, reading and requirement to comply.

6.2 Principles

The person in charge of Charlotte Chapel's activities should be approachable and accessible so that volunteers are able to make complaints or comments where necessary.

If the matter cannot be dealt with to the satisfaction of the person making the complaint the opportunity should be available to make a more formal written complaint within 14 days.

All complaints or representations should receive a response as deemed appropriate by the person in charge of the activity within 28 days.

In principle, complaints should be resolved quickly and as close to the source of difficulty as possible.

Complaints will be dealt with by following the church 'Complaints Procedure'

6.3 Standard of conduct concerns:

The Youth Leader and Pastoral Team/ elder will meet with the volunteer to explore the concerns.

It is important to record the meeting with identified outcome, actions and learning.

It is important to consider the need to undertake a review of volunteer's approval if there are continuous low-level concerns or if quality of conduct remains unchanged.

7. Safer recruitment

The Safer Recruitment Policy of Charlotte Chapel sets the processes which must be followed for the recruitment of staff and volunteers.

Safer recruitment is a set of practices to help make sure staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children and young people. This is to create a safe and caring environment within the church and to keep children and young people safe.

8. Volunteers training

All prospective volunteers are required to undertake safeguarding training. The training will be refreshed every other 3 years.

Charlotte Chapel is required to ensure that volunteers' training covers the following: Recognising signs of abuse and harm; Disclosure procedures; Safeguarding and child protection forms a main part of the skills essential to a volunteer's training and all potential volunteers must attend.

Essential further training includes:

- C&YP Volunteers' handbook
- Code of good practice
- Staff/volunteer disciplinary procedure
- Staff/volunteer grievance procedure
- Procedure for the appointment of new volunteers
- Overview of PVG Scheme
- Complaints procedure