



SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

Policy Author	Dr Ramy Labib - Designated Safeguarding Lead for Children
Approved by	Fr David Zeitoune - Church Minister for Children & Youths Dr Ramez Gabriel - Lead Trustee for Safeguarding
Approval Date	June 2024
Review Date	June 2027
Churches	St. Mary & St. Mark's Coptic Centre, Lapworth St. Mary & Archangel Michael's Cathedral, Solihull St. Mary & St. Anthony's Church, Hampton in Arden
Target Staff	All paid and unpaid staff working with children or responsible for the safeguarding of children: Clergy, Trustees, Sunday School Teachers (Servants), Safeguarding Team

Introduction

The Egyptian Christian Orthodox Association for the Midlands (Registration Charity No. 515637) is wholly committed to safeguarding every member, especially our children, and is resolute that every child is entitled to being safe and protected from any form of abuse or harm to enable them to safely enjoy and benefit from all the services and activities offered by our churches.

This policy applies to the activity of our three Churches in Birmingham: St. Mary & St. Mark's Coptic Centre, St. Mary & Archangel Michael's Cathedral and St. Mary & St. Anthony's Church.

To continue to achieve this objective we are committed to ensuring that all clergy, paid and unpaid staff and volunteers (hereinafter referred to as Servants) who have contact with children are aware of their responsibilities and the applicable policy standards (this document) and that there are appropriate protection and reporting procedures in place.

Under this policy, the term children shall mean any person who is under eighteen years of age. All our churches will adopt these procedures and regularly monitor their performance so that they continue to comply with these procedures.

This document outlines the policies and procedures for safeguarding children and is divided into the following sections:

1. Safe Recruitment
2. Training Policy
3. Procedure for Responding to a Safeguarding Concern
4. Good Practice Guidelines for Working with Children

Appendices:

1. Safeguarding Incident Report Form
2. List of Contacts

1.0 Safe Recruitment

The following standards should be followed:

- All paid Workers, Servants, Clergy, and trustees are subject to regular DBS checks.
- All prospective Servants who will be serving Children in any capacity should:
 - Have a new Enhanced DBS clearance before they start.
 - Be interviewed to establish previous experience of working in an environment where there is contact with children.
 - Provide references about their experience and behaviour.
- All appointments to work with children should be subject to an agreed probationary period under supervision.
- New members of staff should be clear about their responsibilities and wherever possible, work to an agreed job description.
- These guidelines should be available to all Servants and discussed as part of an induction process.
- UK residency status and the right to work in the UK will be checked when recruiting for a paid role.

Under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, it is an offence for anyone disqualified from working with children or adults at risk to knowingly apply, accept or offer to work with children or adults at risk. It is also a criminal offence to knowingly offer work with children or adults at risk to an individual who is so disqualified or to knowingly allow such an individual to continue to work with children or adults at risk.

2.0 Training Policy

The care and protection of all who are involved in Church activities is the responsibility of the whole Church. Everyone who participates in the services of the Church has a role in promoting a safer Church for all. This policy highlights specific safeguarding training requirements for all Servants who will be serving Children and/or Vulnerable Adults in any capacity, concerning the

care and protection for children and vulnerable adults in the Church context to ensure that the Church is and a safe place.

2.1 The following standards should be followed:

- All servants, clergy and other volunteers who interact with children as part of their service, should complete Safeguarding Children training.
- Safeguarding Lead and Trustee Lead for Safeguarding should complete Safeguarding Children Level 3 training.
- Training can either be done face to face or online and needs to be updated every 3 years.
- Equivalent training attended through the primary place of work (e.g. NHS or Schools) will be accepted if it is in date.

2.2 Core safeguarding training:

Taking into consideration the Church context, all training needs to: -

1- Have the primary objective of reducing the risk of harm and ensuring any potential for abuse is spotted and eradicated.

2- Focus on developing healthy safeguarding practice.

3- Integrate safeguarding training relating to work with children and vulnerable adults so as broaden knowledge within our church communities.

4- Equip participants to:

Recognise what might be a safeguarding concern and the signs and symptoms of abuse.

Respond well to complainants / victims of abuse and other affected persons as well as those who are the subject of concerns or allegations.

Record safeguarding information appropriately.

Refer safeguarding concerns on; knowing who they can and should contact.

5- Include many and varied examples of what harm can look like.

6- Build on the knowledge base of participants, emphasising the need to work together.

7- Pay attention to the Servant's own vulnerabilities in the caring roles they fulfil, and how they can protect themselves and others by working safely.

8- Provide opportunities for participants to relate their learning to their faith and take responsibility for their own development.

3.0 Procedure for Responding to a Safeguarding Concern

Anyone receiving information about or observing a safeguarding concern or allegation, where a child is in immediate danger or requires immediate medical attention must call the emergency services on 999 without delay.

If a child raises a concern or makes a disclosure, the Servant (Respondent) must follow the following steps:

- 1- Stay calm and listen carefully, taking the child seriously.
- 2- Reassure the child and be patient with them. Explain that it is fine to seek help and do not judge them.
- 3- Let the child speak and avoid asking leading, probing, or intrusive questions.
- 4- Make a confidential written documentation of all information as soon as it is practically possible and avoid any voice or video recording. Use the child's words and not your own assumptions or interpretation.
- 5- Avoid making false claims about confidentiality but explain that the information will only be discussed with the appropriate personal in charge of keeping the safety of children.
- 6- All allegations and concerns about child abuse must be reported as soon as possible to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for Children and the Church Priest.
- 7- If the allegations concern one of the Sunday School Servants, then the Sunday School Lead will also have to be informed.
- 8- Do not contact the alleged abuser and do not investigate the incident yourself.

The DSL will then take over the responsibility to decide on the next steps of action following the procedure below:

- 1- Depending on the perceived urgency, the DSL will start an initial internal review within the first 24 hours if necessary.

2- The purpose of the initial review is to decide whether there is a requirement to refer to one or more of the statutory agencies, e.g. Local Safeguarding Children Board, Police, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and Social Workers.

3- An Investigation Panel should be formed internally which can include the following members:

a- Designated Safeguarding Lead for Children.

b- A priest that is not directly involved with the child's family.

c- Designated Lead Trustee for Safeguarding.

d- Sunday School Lead / Coordinator if relevant.

4- The Investigation Panel must not include anyone who may be a witness, a family member of the child or the respondent.

5- The panel will conduct its investigation as deemed appropriate, having the safety of the child concerned and other children as their priority. Discussions must be documented, remain confidential and securely always stored.

6- The panel will decide on the actions required and the agreed outcome should be communicated with the Bishop of the Diocese.

4.0 Good Practice Guidelines for Working with Children

This good practice guide is designed to assist Servants in identifying and avoiding situations giving rise to a risk of harm to children who are being served by the Church.

The guidance is not designed to be exhaustive or legalistic, but the Servant is encouraged to operate with an appropriate degree of intuition to avoid bringing about a risk of harm (actual or perceived) or causing themselves or the service any harm.

A Servant should feel confident to carry out their service in a manner which is open, transparent, appropriate, and commensurate to the Servant's responsibilities.

4.1 All those working with children on behalf of the church should observe the following:

- Treat everyone with respect and dignity.

- Be mindful of your language, tone of voice and body language.
- Be aware of any physical contact you have with a child and record it if necessary. For example, if you must stop a fight, administer first aid, give a comforting hug to a distressed child, or protect yourself from danger.
- Do not scapegoat, belittle, ridicule, or reject a child at risk.
- Do not make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child.
- Avoid rough games involving physical contact between servants and children.
- Ensure that the child and parents are aware of any activity that requires physical contact and of its nature before the activity takes place.
- Do not invade the privacy of children when using the toilets or showering.
- The level of assistance with personal care must be appropriate to the age of the child and relevant to any special needs.
- Do not use physical punishment to discipline children. On the rare occasion, it might be necessary to restrain a child to protect them or a third person from danger.
- Always aim to work with another adult or at least in the sight of another adult.
- If a child wants to talk on a one-to-one basis, you should try to talk in a corner of a room where you are visible, leave the room door open or make sure another team member is aware of your whereabouts.
- Do not casually arrange to give a child a lift home. In an emergency, contact the child's parents / carers in the first instance to take their permission.

4.2 Communication on social media

- Communicating with children over the phone or by text, should follow the same guidance as to the face-to-face communication. The parents' permission must be sought, and the communication should be relevant to the child and the church services.
- Chat groups to facilitate communication of essential matters is acceptable after seeking the permission of the Church Minister for Children & Youths;

Fr. David Zeitoune. This only applies to secondary school-age children. The parents' permission must be sought, and the online activity should be monitored by them. Communication on these groups should only be for the purpose of running and facilitating the Sunday school and its related activities.

- Online virtual meetings that include children should be approved by the Church Minister for Children & Youths. The parents must give permission and it is their responsibility to monitor their children during this activity. Participating children and servants must always keep their cameras on and must be present in a communal space i.e. a living or dining room, rather than a bedroom. All participants must be dressed appropriately as in the case of meeting face to face at church.
- Adult volunteers must not initiate friendships with any children on social media. If adults receive a friendship request from a child, they should decline it and inform the Church Minister for Children & Youths.
- With the parents' permission, friendship and communication on social media can be allowed between young adult (university student-age) volunteers and older children (15 to 17 years old). This is only acceptable if allowed by the child's parents and therefore it is their responsibility to monitor the online activity.
- Online friendship established between two children may continue when one of them reaches the age of 18. It is also the responsibility of the parents to monitor this.

Appendix 1

Safeguarding Incident Report Form

Person Reporting the Incident or Concern

Name:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Church Role:

Details of Child at Risk

Name:

DOB / Age:

Email:

Phone:

Are they aware that you are sharing this concern? Yes No

Details of Person with Parental Responsibility

Name:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Relationship to the child:

Are they aware that you are sharing this concern? Yes No

Detail of Alleged Perpetrator

Name:

Age (Adult / Child):

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Relationship to the child:

Do they live with the child? Yes No

Details of the Incident / Concern

- Remember to include What happened, When, Where & Who.
- Be clear whether this is something you have been told about or something that you have observed.
- Include names of anyone who witnessed the incident or is aware of the concern.
- Any action that has been taken.
- If unsure what to include, refer to the policy and speak to the Safeguarding Lead

Have you contacted anyone else (Social Services, Police, Priest)

Please give details of who & when

Signature:

Date:

This form should be completed as soon as possible following an incident and be passed on confidentially to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for Children.

Appendix 2

List of Contacts

Church Role	Name	Contact Details
Church Minister for Children & Youths	Father David Zeitoune	Contact details are available on request to protect these contacts from spam. Church members can access these contact details within the Church App in the Safeguarding Policy. If you are not a church member, please email your request to birmingham@ukmidcopts.org with the subject "Safeguarding Contact Request" and mention the name(s) of the contacts you require contact details for. Please DO NOT disclose any safeguarding incidents when doing this.
Lead Trustee for Safeguarding	Dr Ramez Gabriel	
Sunday School Lead for Primary School Children	Mrs Heba Soliman	
Sunday School Lead for Secondary School Children	Dr Samia Fayek	
Sunday School Service Coordinator	Mrs Maggie Fahmy	
Designated Safeguarding Lead for Children	Dr Ramy Labib	

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline	08088005000
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH Team) - Solihull	01217884300 option 2 01216056060 (out of hours - emergency)
Birmingham Children Trust – Children’s Advice & Support Service	01213031888 01216754806 (out of hours - emergency)
Warwickshire Children and Families Front Door	01926414144 01926886922 (out of hours - emergency)
Police – If the child is at immediate risk	999

Useful Links

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)	https://www.nspcc.org.uk
Birmingham Children’s Trust	https://www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk
Safeguarding Warwickshire	https://www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk