

Westhill Community Church



Safeguarding Policy

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SECTION 1: DETAILS OF THE PLACE OF WORSHIP / ORGANISATION

Name of Place of Worship / Organisation: **Westhill Community Church (WCC)**

Address: **Old Skene Road, Westhill, Aberdeenshire AB32 6AQ**

Tel No: **01224 737380**

General Email Address: **office@westhillcommunitychurch.org**

Senior Leader Name: **Vestry Chair Dave McCarthy & Judith Scurfield**

Senior Leader Contact Telephone / Email: **sciovestrychair@westhillcommunitychurch.org**

Safeguarding Lead Name: **Jenny Townsend**

Safeguarding Lead Contact Telephone / Email: **07964847968**

Membership of Denomination/Organisation: **Anglican – member of Anglican Convocation in Europe (ACE)**

Denomination / Organisation Safeguarding Lead: **Jenny Townsend**

Contact Details for Denomination / Organisation Safeguarding Lead:

jenny.townsend@aceanglicans.org

Charity Number: **SCO49910**

Regulators: **OSCR Scottish Charity Regulator**

Insurance Company: **Ecclesiastical**

The following is a brief description of our place of worship / organisation and the type of work / activities we undertake with children and adults who have care and support needs:

Creche, Sunday School and Youth Bible Study – on Sunday mornings

Wellbeing café – for adults

Mainly Music – parents/carers attend with children

Prayer ministry – mostly in sanctuary on Sundays

Pastoral care – in peoples' homes

Foodbank

Holiday Bible Club – once a year with local churches

Care in the Community

We recognise the special status of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Because of their vulnerability, they will be awarded special protection. **They are to be respected as persons in their own right, created and loved by God.** We therefore commit ourselves to take all steps within our power to keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe from physical, sexual and emotional harm.

SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION

Good governance helps an organisation prevent abuse and means it can respond quickly and with integrity when concerns arise. WCC vestry will take on this role.

The vestry is appointed to have independent authority and legal responsibility for Westhill Community Church and have a critical role in decision making and compliance as well as setting the values, standards and behaviours of the church.

The standards and behaviours may be referred to as the culture of the church or “the way we do things around here”. Culture can be shaped in both negative and positive ways.

“The culture of a charity goes beyond mere compliance with legal and regulatory demands. Charity governance is most effective when it provides assurances not just that legal requirements are met, but that the behaviour of people working for the charity, and those who come into contact with it, is proper and ethical. Culture, alongside good governance, can be pivotal to whether a charity achieves its stated object” (ICSA The Governance Institute, 2017).

Positions of Trust

All adults working with children, young people and vulnerable adults are in a position of trust. All those in positions of trust need to understand the power this can give them over those they care for, and the responsibility they have because of this relationship.

It is vital that all workers ensure they do not, even unknowingly, use their position of power and authority inappropriately. They should always maintain professional boundaries and the following Safeguarding Policy and Statement aims, to not only meet the requirements of ensuring a safe environment for those accessing activities in our organisation but to also build an open culture where:

- those who lead do so by example and are committed to the safeguarding of all;
- those that work or volunteer are safely recruited and trained for their roles and there are accountability structures;
- with codes of conduct, the values of the organisation are embedded in its day-to-day actions and behaviours of its people;
- and there is open communication.

Our commitment

As a church, we recognise the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children, young people and adults. We acknowledge that children, young people and 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 state 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”. 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.” As a church, we have therefore adopted the procedures set out in this safeguarding policy in accordance with statutory guidance. We are committed to build constructive links with statutory and voluntary agencies involved in safeguarding.

Westhill Community Church’s safeguarding statement for display can be found in APPENDIX 1.

The policy and any attached practice guidelines are based on the ten safeguarding standards published by thirtyone:eight (thirtyoneeight.org/ten-standards).

SECTION 3: PREVENTION

Understanding abuse and neglect

Defining child abuse or abuse against an adult is a difficult and complex issue. A person may abuse by inflicting harm or 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 adult.

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 that

- 1. 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.*
- 2. 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.*

Also, for adults, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights with particular reference to Article 5:

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

Detailed definitions, and signs and indicators of abuse, as well as how to respond to a disclosure of abuse, are included here in our policy. APPENDIX 2.

Safer recruitment

The vestry will ensure all workers will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with government guidance on safe recruitment. This includes ensuring that:

for paid staff involved in working with children and/or vulnerable adults

- There is a written job description / person specification for the post;
- Those applying have completed an application form;
- Those short listed have been interviewed;
- Safeguarding has been discussed at interview;
- Written references have been obtained, and followed up where appropriate;
- A PVG check has been completed for all those doing regulated work with children and vulnerable adults. (We will comply with Code of Practice requirements concerning the fair treatment of applicants and the handling of information);
- Qualifications, where relevant, have been verified;
- A suitable training programme is provided for the successful applicant;
- The applicant will complete a probationary period;
- The applicant has been given a copy of the organisation's safeguarding policy and knows how to report concerns.

for volunteers:

- There is a written job profile;
- Safeguarding has been discussed;
- An application form has been received
- One reference has been obtained;
- A PVG check has been completed for all those doing regulated work with children and vulnerable adults (We will comply with Code of Practice requirements concerning the fair treatment of applicants and the handling of information);
- The applicant has been given a copy of the organisation's safeguarding policy and knows how to report concerns.
- Due to Disclosure Scotland Act 2020 to be implemented on April 1st 2025 one of the changes stipulates people must have a PVG before serving and PVG is a legal requirement

Safeguarding Training The vestry is committed to on-going safeguarding training and development opportunities for all paid staff and volunteers, developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help protect everyone. All our staff and volunteers serving with children and/or vulnerable adults will undertake recognised safeguarding training on a regular basis.

The vestry will also ensure that children and adults with care and support needs are signposted to appropriate support when needed.

Practice Guidelines

As a place of worship, working with children, young people and adults with care and support needs, 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 or unfounded accusation.

For some activities specific forms are needed, e.g., consent forms, risk assessments.

Management of Workers – Codes of Conduct

As a vestry we are committed to supporting all workers and ensuring they receive support and supervision. All workers have been issued with a code of conduct towards children, young people and adults with care and support needs, and will be given clear expectations about what is expected of them both within their job role and out. They will also receive further training as necessary.

SECTION 4: PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The diversity of organisations and settings means there can be great variation in practice when it comes to safeguarding children, young people and 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 with 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 the standards for robust safeguarding

We believe good communication is essential in promoting safeguarding, both to those we wish to protect, to everyone involved in working with children and adults and to all those with whom we work in partnership. This safeguarding policy is just one means of promoting safeguarding.

SECTION 5: RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

Under no circumstances should a volunteer or worker carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. They should not discuss it with anyone but report it immediately to the safeguarding lead.

The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse should report concerns as soon as possible to one of the safeguarding leads below:

Name: Jenny Townsend

Tel: 07964847968

Email: jennyatowndsend12@gmail.com

Name: Michelle Skellern

Tel: 07588809787

Email: michelle.skellern@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

The above are nominated by the vestry 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.

If the suspicions implicate the safeguarding lead, then the report should be made, in the first instance, to:

thirtyone:eight PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ.

Tel: 0303 003 1111 (choose option 2 on the call)

Alternatively, contact Social Services or the police.

The safeguarding lead should contact the appropriate agency or they may first ring the thirtyone:eight helpline for advice. They should then contact social services in the area where the child or adult lives.

Name of local authority: Aberdeenshire

Children's Social Services

Tel: 01467534555

Out of hours Tel: 03456081206

Website Address: aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Adult Social Services

Tel: 01467 537745

Out of hours Tel: 03456081206

Website Address: aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Police Protection Team Tel: 101

- The safeguarding lead may need to inform others depending on the circumstances and/or nature of the concern.
 - This may include the chair of vestry who may need to liaise with the insurance company or the charity commission to report a serious incident.

- 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 lead, the absence of the safeguarding lead or deputy should not delay referral to Social Services or the police, or taking advice from thirtyone:eight.
- The vestry will support the safeguarding lead/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 vestry hope that members of the place of worship / organisation will use this procedure. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the safeguarding lead/deputy has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the safeguarding lead (s) as to the appropriateness of a referral, they are free to contact an outside agency directly. We hope by making this statement that the vestry demonstrate its commitment to effective safeguarding and the protection of all those who are vulnerable.

The role of the safeguarding lead/ 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:

Allegations 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 lead/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 parent/carer 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.

Allegations of sexual abuse

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the safeguarding lead/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.

Detailed procedures where there is a concern that an adult needs protection:

Suspicions or allegations of abuse or harm including; physical, sexual, organisational, financial, discriminatory, neglect, self-neglect, forced marriage, modern slavery, domestic abuse.

If there is concern about any of the above, safeguarding lead/deputy will:

- Contact the Adult Social Care Team who have responsibility under the Care Act 2014 to investigate allegations of abuse. Alternatively, thirtyone:eight can be contacted for advice;
- If the adult is in immediate danger or has sustained a serious injury, contact the Emergency Services, informing them of any suspicions.

If there is a concern regarding spiritual abuse, safeguarding lead will:

- Identify support services for the victim i.e., counselling or other pastoral support;
- Contact thirtyone:eight and in discussion with them will consider appropriate action with regards to the scale of the concern.

Allegations of abuse against a person who works with children/young people

If an accusation is made against a worker (whether a volunteer or paid member of staff) whilst following the procedure outlined above, the safeguarding lead will contact thirtyone:eight for advice after which we may need the worker to step aside from their role

Allegations of abuse against a person who works with adults with care and support needs

The safeguarding lead will contact thirtyone:eight for advice after which we may need them to step aside from their role.

SECTION 6: PASTORAL CARE

Supporting those affected by abuse

The vestry 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 Westhill Community Church.

Working with offenders and those who may pose a risk

When someone attending Westhill Community Church is known to have abused children, is under investigation, or is known to be a risk to adults with care and support needs, the vestry will supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but in its safeguarding commitment to the protection of children and adults with care and support needs, set boundaries for that person, which they will be expected to keep. These boundaries will be based on a risk assessment and consultation with appropriate parties.

Adoption of the policy

This policy was agreed by the vestry and will be reviewed annually in October :

Signed by:	Judith Scurfield	Position: Vestry chair
	Dave McCarthy	Position: Vestry chair
	George Laing	Position: Vestry secretary

Date: November 3rd 2025

A copy of this policy is also lodged in the Church Office and is published on the Church website.

[https:// www.westhillcommunitychurch.org/safeguarding.html](https://www.westhillcommunitychurch.org/safeguarding.html)

APPENDIX 1: SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

Westhill Community Church Policy Statement on Safeguarding To be displayed in a prominent place

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS POLICY STATEMENT

Westhill Community Church

The following statement was agreed by the vestry on November 6th.2023

- WCC is committed to the safeguarding of children and adults with care and support needs, and ensuring their well-being.
- We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent harm or abuse to children and adults with care and support needs in all their recognised forms.
- We recognise the personal dignity and rights of adults and children and will ensure all our policies and procedures will reflect this.
- We believe all people should enjoy and have access to every aspect of the life of the place of worship/organisation.
- We undertake to exercise proper care in the appointment and selection of those who will work with children and adults with care and support needs.
- We believe every child and adult should be valued, safe and happy. We want to make sure that all those we have contact with know this and are empowered to tell us if they are experiencing significant harm.

We are committed to:

- Following statutory denominational and specialist guidelines in relation to safeguarding children and adults and will ensure that, as a place of worship/organisation, all workers will work within the agreed procedure of our safeguarding policy;
- Implementing the requirements of all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, The Children (Scotland) Act 1995, The Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Adult Support & Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, The Care Act 2014 and UNCRC Bill March 2021; Disclosure Scotland Act 2020
- Supporting, resourcing and training those who undertake this work;
- Ensuring that we are keeping up to date with national and local developments relating to safeguarding;

- Ensuring that everyone agrees to abide by these recommendations and the guidelines established by this place of worship/organisation;
- Supporting all in the place of worship/organisation affected by abuse.

We recognise:

- Children’s Social Services has lead responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse where there are concerns about a child. Adult Social Care has lead responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse where there are concerns about an adult with care and support needs;
- Where an allegation suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed then the police should be contacted as a matter of urgency;
- Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.

We will review this statement and our policy annually.

If you have any concerns for a child or adult, then speak to one of the following who have been approved as safeguarding co-ordinators for this place of worship

Jenny Townsend	<i>Safeguarding Lead</i>
Michelle Skellern	<i>Deputy Safeguarding Lead</i>

A copy of this place of worship’s policy can be seen on the church website as a pdf

Signed _	Judith Scurfield	Position	Vestry chair
	Dave McCarthy	Position	Vestry chair
	George Laing	Position	Vestry secretary

Date 3rd November 2025

APPENDIX 2: DEFINITIONS, AND SIGNS AND INDICATORS OF ABUSE

CHILDREN

How do we recognise abuse (physical, sexual, emotional) or neglect?

Physical Abuse:

Definition:

This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating.

It may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child they are looking after.

Possible Indicators may include:

- Unexplained injuries or burns
- Implausible explanation for an injury
- Recurring 'accidents'
- Untreated injuries
- Reluctance to discuss injuries
- Fear of returning home or chronic running away

Emotional Abuse:

Definition:

It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

It may involve the imposition of age- or developmentally-inappropriate expectations on a child. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, or exploiting or corrupting children.

Possible Indicators may include:

- Constantly being put down, ridiculed, scapegoated
- Being treated differently from other children in the family
- Extremes of passivity and aggression or outbursts
- Lack of concentration
- Low self-esteem
- Running away
- Self-harm

Sexual Abuse:

Definition:

Sexual abuse involves any act involving the child or young person in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person.

Possible Indicators may include:

Behaviour changes e.g., being withdrawn, anxiety, isolation, depression

Developmental regression

Anxiety associated with certain places or people

Lack of trust or over familiarity and attention seeking

Sexual knowledge and awareness beyond age

Sexualised acting out with other children or toy

Risk taking behaviours e.g., drug or alcohol misuse

Self-harm

Neglect:

Definition:

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs in an age and stage appropriate manner and is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

It may involve the failure to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

In its extreme form children can be at serious risk from the effects of malnutrition, lack of nurturing and

Possible Indicators may include:

Always hungry

Inappropriate clothing

Health needs not being met

Appointments not kept

Poor personal hygiene

Poor self-esteem

Social isolation

stimulation leading to serious long-term effects such as greater susceptibility to serious childhood illnesses and reduction in potential stature. With young children in particular, the consequences may be life-threatening within a relatively short period of time

Left unattended or with inappropriate adults

Poorly supervised

Increasingly we are seeing newer forms of child abuse which staff in schools may be well placed to identify:

- Harmful traditional practices, such as honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Child sexual exploitation
- Children/young people who are missing
- Child trafficking
- Unsafe online and mobile phone activity

VULNERABLE ADULTS

There are many forms of abuse and neglect.

Sexual abuse

This includes:

- indecent exposure
- sexual harassment
- inappropriate looking or touching
- sexual teasing or innuendo
- sexual photography
- being forced to watch pornography or sexual acts
- being forced or pressured to take part in sexual acts
- rape

Physical abuse

This includes:

- being hit, slapped, pushed or restrained
- being denied food or water
- not being helped to go to the bathroom when you need to
- misuse of your medicines

Psychological abuse

This includes:

- emotional abuse
- threats to hurt or abandon you
- stopping you from seeing people
- humiliating, blaming, controlling, intimidating or harassing you
- verbal abuse
- cyberbullying and isolation
- an unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or support networks

Domestic abuse

This is typically an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse by someone who is, or has been, an intimate partner or family member.

Discriminatory abuse

This includes some forms of harassment, slurs or unfair treatment because of:

- race
- sex
- gender and gender identity
- age
- disability
- sexual orientation
- religion
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave

Financial abuse

This could be someone stealing money or other valuables from you. Or it might be that someone appointed to look after your money on your behalf is using it inappropriately or coercing you to spend it in a way you're not happy with.

Internet scams and doorstep crime are also common forms of financial abuse.

Neglect

Neglect includes:

- not being provided with enough food or with the right kind of food
- not being taken proper care of leaving you without help to wash or change dirty or wet clothes
- not getting you to a doctor when you need one
- not making sure you have the right medicines