

INTRODUCTION TO WORKING WITH ADULTS AT LIFE CHURCH BATH

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Date of next review: August 2025

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It is important remember that almost any role within church conveys a level of trustworthiness and responsibility. All those who are involved in church life must consider how they relate to others and, in particular, to those who are vulnerable.

Someone seeking assistance may be distressed, sad, confused or frightened, adding to their vulnerability. This makes it even more important that those responding to them are aware of their status and power. Relationships can become blurred, dependent or exploitative in such situations if boundaries are not maintained. This is all the more the case in church, where our relationships may be less formal than other settings.

The core of safeguarding relies on an understanding of the dynamics of power and vulnerability in relationships. This is not a specialist activity that is only undertaken by those with qualifications in the safeguarding field. To practice safely, elders, leaders, volunteers and others engaged in pastoral work, community work or counselling need to reflect on these issues and their boundaries in these relationships. The evidence from secular organisations working in the social welfare field is that good safeguarding is an indicator of good practice in other areas.

When Life Church Bath has taken responsibility for organising a volunteering service provided to the Life Church Bath family (rather than people helping neighbours or family as private citizens), then you must follow safeguarding policies and practice guidance. These include Safer Recruitment (which applies to volunteers and paid members of staff).

Safer Recruitment

This is an important part of creating a safe environment at Life Church Bath. It helps make sure that everybody working with adults (beneficiaries), whether volunteers or in a paid capacity, is suitable to do so and ensures that the process is fair for all applicants.

Those interested in providing pastoral care at Life Church Bath will be an active member of the Church family.

They will be required to:

- Fill in a volunteer application form
- Complete a self-declaration form
- Apply for a DBS check at the appropriate level

In the event of an unsatisfactory check the potential worker would be disqualified from any involvement. This would be shared with the Disclosure and Barring Service as appropriate.

- Attend an Introduction to Safeguarding Training session before serving.
- Meet with a member of the Safeguarding Team who will discuss the details on the self-declaration form.
- Both paid staff and volunteers who continue working in this way will be required to complete a self-declaration form and DBS check every 3 years. We recognise that this is good practice and in line with the recommendation of the Charity Commission.
- All workers will be asked to sign a policy commitment form.

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- All workers are required to attend annual ongoing safeguarding training provided by Life Church Bath.

Safer Working Practice

All those working, including volunteering, on behalf of Life Church Bath with adults must:

- Treat all individuals with respect and dignity
- Respect people's rights to privacy and dignity
- Ensure that your own language, tone of voice and body language are respectful
- Ensure that beneficiaries know who they can talk to about a personal concern
- Record any report any concerns about a beneficiary or the behaviour of another worker with the activity leader and a member of the Safeguarding Team. All written records should be signed and dated.
- Obtain written consent for any photographs or videos to be taken, shown, displayed or stored.
- Know how to report a concern.

All those working, including volunteering, on behalf of Life Church Bath with adults must NOT:

- Use any form of physical punishment
- Be sexually suggestive about or to an individual
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject an individual or group
- Permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying
- Show favouritism to any one individual or group
- Allow an individual to involve them in excessive attention seeking
- Allow unknown adults access to adults who may be vulnerable. Visitors should always be accompanied by an approved person
- Allow strangers to give lifts to adults who may be vulnerable in the group
- Take photographs on personal phones or cameras as this means that images are stored on personal devices. See photography guidance below.
- Share any strong personal views which could be considered prejudiced or discriminatory, unless expressly asked for such.
- Give personal care without prior agreement, which must be given by a beneficiary who has capacity or the next of kin. In such situations a clear plan of what will be completed must be in place, clearly documented and 2 people must be present, with due consideration for the gender of the person receiving personal care.

Ways to Safeguard beneficiaries:

- Know how to recognise and report harm or risk of harm
- Ask people to volunteer in pairs
- Be clear why roles have certain limitations and stay within them, e.g. not going into people's houses

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- Do not overstate the checks that have been carried out on volunteers – this might create a false sense of security for beneficiaries
- Do not collect or store personal details of people unless necessary

Acceptable Touch

Sympathetic attention, encouragement and appropriate physical contact are often needed, and some physical contact can be wholly appropriate.

However, abusers can use touch that appears safe to 'normalise' physical contact which then becomes abusive.

As a general rule, the use of touch between adults in positions of responsibility and beneficiaries should be initiated by the person themselves and kept to the minimum. In addition to this, always follow the guidelines below:

- Ask permission before you touch someone. This includes before praying for someone with the laying on of hands.
- Allow the other person to determine the degree of touch except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. when they need medical attention)
- Avoid any physical contact that is or could be construed as sexual, abusive or offensive
- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors
- Touch should be in response to a person's needs and not related to the worker's needs.

Good Practice When Entering Someone's Home

- Ideally let people you are visiting know in advance that you are going to visit, particularly if it is your first visit.
- If this is a first visit, or if the conversation is likely to move onto sensitive pastoral matters, ensure that the person is aware that the conversation is confidential, but also what the boundaries of confidentiality are.
- If possible, visit in pairs - again, especially if it is the first visit. However, it is recognised that much pastoral visiting is done alone and this guidance does not place a restriction on that, as long as the other aspects of safer working practice in this guidance are followed.
- If you are making a pastoral visit on your own, then a female worker should visit a female, and a male worker a male.
- Carry some identification on the first visit and be proactive in letting the person see it. This is particularly important for elderly people living alone, who may have other people ('bogus callers') visiting to exploit them in some way. Letting them know that they have a right to see identification does them a great service.
- Consider the risks of the visit. Is the person, or another occupant, volatile or unpredictable? Do they have a dog who does not like visitors? You may not know everything before a first visit but try and find out what you can.

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- Carry a mobile phone and let someone know where you are, the journey you are taking and when you expect to return.
- Ask the person whether they would like repeat visits (if you are able to offer this) whether and how they would like to be contacted again, and so on. Leave them feeling fully in control of your contact with them.
- Make a note of the visit; store all such notes in accordance with data protection requirements. The note does not need to be extensive, but the date, time of arrival and departure, and any significant observations or points of conversation should be recorded. Let the person you are visiting know that you keep brief records, and always be prepared to show them your notes should they ask.
- If you are asked to make any purchases on behalf of the person, always retain receipts and return both them and any change to the person immediately. Keep a record of any transactions and the reason for them.
- Set appropriate boundaries and be wary of over-promising. If you do not have the ability to meet the needs of the person you are visiting, say that you will try and find suitable help, but avoid getting drawn into a dependant relationship that ultimately disempowers the person you are visiting.
- Take care regarding accepting any gifts other than token items, to avoid misunderstandings or subsequent accusations from the person or their family. If courtesy demands that you accept a small gift, make a note of this to ensure transparency.
- If someone wants to make a donation to the church, put it in an envelope, mark it on the outside as a donation and obtain a receipt from a member of the Finance Team.

Before Entering A Person's Property (House or Garden)

It is good practice to do a risk assessment before entering a person's property, taking the following into consideration:

- What are the risks?
- Who might be harmed?
- What are you already doing to reduce the risk?
- What additional steps are you going to take to reduce the risk?
- Who is going to take action?
- When are you going to take action?
- Keep accurate records
- Keep things under review

Photography Guidance For Adults

You may want to take photos and/or videos to promote a ministry, for instance, the Ministry of Helps may want to take photos and / or videos of a before and after photo when gardening, decorating etc. Permission from the homeowner must be sought before doing so.

When an adult is the main subject or would be recognised, you should:

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- Seek consent from the adult, letting them know how their image will be used. If they lack capacity to consent do not use their image.
- Legally, the only person who can offer consent for the use of their image is the adult themselves. Family members such as adult children, parents, spouses or siblings and support workers/ personal assistants should not be approached to sign consent forms for adults.
- Information about how the images will be used should be provided to an adult in an accessible format, using for example, easy-to-read language or pictures.
- If you have any concerns that an adult does not have the capacity to give consent to photography or filming or understand that photographs or films are being taken during an activity, you must discuss this with them, including if appropriate, any support person or personal assistant for the adult. If after this conversation you feel that the adult still cannot give consent, then do not use their photograph / film them.
- Remember that consent for use of the photograph or film is only for that one purpose and should not be reused in any other promotional event without further consent.
- Photos must not be posted on an individual's personal social media page.