

Life Church Matlock Safeguarding Policy

August 2026

Life Church Matlock, as a Christian Church and organisation, is committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment in which everyone can develop socially and emotionally and form positive relationships.

All church employees, leaders and volunteers (church members) should follow this policy guidance to ensure the safeguarding of children and young people who take part in activities organised by our organisation. Since church members may at times become aware of sensitive information, including abuse occurring in the lives of children, it is imperative they know how to identify them and also how to respond to protect children from further harm.

Definitions of Abuse:

Physical

Deliberately hurting a child, causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts. Not accidental - children suffer violence such as being hit, kicked, poisoned, burned, slapped or having objects thrown at them. Injuries are likely to be concealed under clothes and often on soft tissue areas, rather than joints.

Sexual

Children are forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This doesn't have to be physical contact and it can happen online. Sometimes the child won't understand that what's happening to them is abuse. **Contact** abuse may involve touching of any part of a child's body. **Non-contact** may involve exposing the child to inappropriate words, images or ideas, relating to sexual behaviours.

Emotional

The ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child. It's sometimes called psychological abuse and can seriously damage a child's emotional health and development. It can involve deliberately trying to scare or humiliate a child or isolating or ignoring them.

Neglect

The ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs; the most common form of child abuse. A child may be left hungry or dirty, without adequate clothing, shelter, supervision, medical or health care. They may be put in danger or not protected from physical or emotional harm. They may not get the love, care and attention they need from their parents and often suffer from other forms of abuse.

Other types to be aware of:

Bullying and Cyberbullying (ongoing mistreatment, often emotional or physical), **Sexual exploitation** (children exploited for money, power or status), **FGM** (Female Genital Mutilation aka 'cutting' / 'female circumcision'. This is non-medical and a criminal offence, often carried out for religious or cultural reasons), **Grooming** (building an emotional connection to a child for the purpose of abuse exploitation or child trafficking).

What to look out for:

Signs of abuse may be varied and often concealed by the victim. Some common signs may include:

Physical injuries that cannot be explained easily, poor hygiene, withdrawn or secretive behaviour, talking of being left alone or with strangers, poor bond or relationship with parent (attachment), acting out excessive violence with other children, lacking social skills, challenging or disruptive behaviour.

What to do if you suspect abuse:

1. Tell Life Church Matlock Safeguarding Officer (Aaron), Children's church leader (Lisa) or Pastor (Andy) so that advice may be given.
2. Agree with other adults (above) what action, if any, is to be taken.
3. Record any facts and discussions with the child that support your suspicions. Write the date, your name and any action taken on a Concern Form to file.

If a child discloses to you:

1. Allow the child to speak without interruption, accepting what is said, but not asking leading questions or putting words in their mouth.
2. Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation. Assure them they are not to blame.
3. Advise that you will try to offer help and support, but that you must pass the information on so that they can get the help they need.

If you receive an allegation about any other adult or about yourself:

1. Immediately tell The Safeguarding Officer/ Pastor/ Leader to seek advice.
2. Record the **facts** as you know them.
3. Try to ensure no-one else is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.

Life Church Kids' Church Arrangements and Advice on working with children:

Children who are school age can take part in Life Church 'Kids' Church' activities during Sunday mornings, with their parents'/ carers' permission. This will involve splitting into two groups, one primary (5-11s), one secondary (11s-16+) to spend time together, playing games, doing crafts, learning from bible stories and characters, praying and having a snack/drink.

The primary group will always have at least 2 DBS checked adult helpers working with them. The secondary age group will have two, where possible. Where there is only one adult available, the glass doors between the two Kids' Church rooms will be kept open to allow communication between leaders if necessary.

A younger or vulnerable child may be accompanied to the toilet by one appropriately recruited adult when necessary. The adult should inform another worker, and the child's privacy and dignity must be respected.

General Principles:

- treat everyone with respect and provide an example you wish others to follow.
- plan other activities which involve more than one other person being present, or at least which are within sight or hearing of others.
- respect a young person's right to personal privacy.
- if on a residential visit, have separate sleeping accommodation for leaders and young people, male and female.
- encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like.
- avoid physical play with children, such as wrestling or tickling.
- remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well-intentioned.
- recognise that sensitivity is required in moments when you are discussing issues, such as bullying, bereavement, abuse or personal development.

Procedure Following Allegations or Suspicion of Abuse by a Leader or Partner:

All allegations of abuse or suspicions of abuse concerning leaders are to be referred immediately and directly to Life Church Matlock Safeguarding Officer, who must refer immediately to the Pastor/ Senior Leader.

No investigating or questioning is to be undertaken. If the Senior Leader is implicated, refer directly to the leaders, or Safeguarding Officer. All allegations/suspicions are to be referred, no matter how insignificant they seem to be, or when they occur.

If the situation is immediately critical, leaders may decide to contact the police or social services if they feel that a child/children/vulnerable adult is at risk.

Any individual under suspicion, or against whom an allegation or complaint has been made may be suspended by Life Church Matlock until the conclusion of any investigations. A letter/ email informing the individual of their suspension will be sent from Life Church Matlock, and copies sent to the Senior Leader/ Pastor, leaders and to the Safeguarding Officer. While under suspension, a leader may not be involved in any Life Church Matlock activity other than attending worship.

Useful websites:

NSPCC <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/>

Government Home Office site: www.thinkyouknow.com

Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre www.ceop.gov.uk

Who to speak to in the event of an allegation:

Safeguarding Officer: Aaron Himsworth: 07952348914

Pastor: Andy Robey: 07502457040

Leaders:

Philippa Roine

Hannah Himsworth

Alan Smith

Graham Powell

Andre Potgieter

Other important contact details

Police: 999 (If urgent help required)

Social Services (Call Derbyshire): 01629 533190

Out of hours emergency contact: 01629 532600

Policy approved:

Approved by:

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