



Oxford Churches Debt Centre Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

Approved by Trustees September 2025

Due for review: September 2026 or if any significant new legislation is introduced.

J. Blain
11th September 2025

Oxford Churches Debt Centre

1. Safeguarding Adults Policy.

OCDC is passionate about releasing people in our nation from a life sentence of debt, poverty and their causes. Working with our partner churches we bring good news, hope and freedom. OCDC is therefore committed to its responsibilities for the safeguarding of all adults (those over the age of 18) regardless of gender, ethnicity, ability or any other characteristic.

2. What is a 'vulnerable adult'?

The term 'adult' applies to anyone over the age of 18 while 'vulnerable' is anyone “who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of disability, age or illness; and is or may be unable to take care of unable to protect him or herself against significant harm' (Department of Health, 2000).

This covers a wide range of people from all types of different backgrounds, however, given the nature of debt, it is likely that those CAP work with can be described as 'vulnerable'. Examples of people who are described as vulnerable include:

- People who have physical care e.g. help with washing or dressing
- People who are not able to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation - sexual, financial, emotional, physical etc.
- People with dementia
- People with learning disabilities
- People with mental health problems, chronic or acute
- People with drug or alcohol problems
- People with sight, hearing or physical disabilities
- People who through age or illness are dependent on other people to help them

3. What is Abuse?

Oxford County Council notes that 'Abuse is mistreatment by any other person or persons that violates a person's human and civil rights. The abuse can vary, from treating someone with disrespect in a way that significantly affects the person's quality of life, to causing actual physical or mental suffering.'

It is important to remember that abuse can happen anywhere - even in places seen as 'safe' such a care home or their own home.

Often the person responsible for the abuse is often well known to the person being abused such as a family member including partner or child, or friend; it is less likely to be a stranger although this is possible too.

4. Types of harm.

Oxford City council's Safeguarding Adults Board offers the following as types of harm for which we should be alert.

4.1 Physical:

This includes injuries, such as bruising, lacerations or welts, burns, fractures or dislocations or other forms of avoidable injury or deterioration in the persons physical health.

Physical harm may arise from hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, and misuse of medication, falls, and misuse of restraint, or inappropriate sanctions, unsafe practice including misuse of lifting and handling equipment.

4.2 Sexual.

This includes rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting.

4.3 Psychological.

This includes any avoidable emotional distress or deterioration in the person's emotional or mental health. This may arise from threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

4.4 Financial or material.

Theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

4.5 Neglect and acts of omission (including self-neglect).

Ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

4.6 Discriminatory.

This includes racist or sexist remarks or comments based on a person's impairment, disability, age or illness, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment. This may also include isolation or withdrawal from religious or cultural activity, services or supportive networks; and

4.7 Institutional.

This involves the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to vulnerable people. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour that amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping. It includes a failure to ensure the necessary safeguards are in place to protect vulnerable adults and maintain good standards of care in accordance with individual needs, including training of staff, supervision and management, record keeping and liaising with other providers of care.

Further information can be found at:

Oxford City Safeguarding Adults Board :

http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decCD/Policies_and_Plans_occw.htm

'No Secrets' - guidance document from the government.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/194272/No_secrets_guidance_on_developing_and_implementing_multi-agency_policies_and_procedures_to_protect_vulnerable_adults_from_abuse.pdf

5. What should I do if I suspect or witness Adult Safeguarding issues?

If an employee or volunteer member of ODCD has concerns about an adult, they should contact the Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible to discuss their concerns. The consent of the person concerned is normally needed. However, if they are not able to give informal consent or are being intimidated, then they can be referred without consent. An abuse of power is a safeguarding issue. If the adult is in immediate danger, call 999.

CAP employees/volunteers should:

- 1) Make notes of concerns or incidents as soon as possible, ensuring the notes are dated and include only factual information. Write down exactly what was said, who was present, where you were etc. Keep all original notes safe even if you type them up later. Further details of how to navigate the conversation are given below.
- 2) Contact the Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible. If the Safeguarding Officer is not available by the end of the day, contact should be made with the Designated Trustee for Safeguarding instead.
- 3) Ensure concerns are only discussed with the Safeguarding Officer and not with anyone else.
- 4) If the concerns regard the Safeguarding Officer or the Designated Trustee, contact should be made with the Chair of Trustees who will follow the procedure. They will then feedback to the committee. If there are concerns raised about any trustee, staff member or volunteer, they should withdraw from their post while investigations are followed. No conclusions should be drawn from this other than this being part of procedure.
- 5) Should there be immediate danger to the adult, the police should be contacted through the 999 service by the volunteer/employee.

The Safeguarding Officer should, on receiving a report of a concern:

1. Record the conversations which the employee/volunteer had with the vulnerable adult and the reason they are concerned.
1. Immediately contact the Local Authority Designated Officer and take advice, then act on this advice.
2. Advise the Safeguarding Trustee that action has been taken. The Designated Safeguarding Trustee will inform the Trustee group.

Employees/volunteers/trustees should never attempt to carry out an investigation but should always refer to the appropriate agency.

See Appendix 1 for Flowchart.

6. Safer recruitment of staff and volunteers.

During the course of work with OCDC, it is likely that staff and volunteers will encounter adults and children who are considered vulnerable. OCDC will make every effort to ensure staff and volunteers are appropriately recruited and trained. All those working for OCDC, where they have direct contact with children or vulnerable adults, (or any personal information about them including names) will be required to undergo a DBS check. (Anyone who declines a DBS check is automatically barred from working or volunteering for OCDC). The possession of a criminal record will not always prevent an individual from working with OCDC, however, where the criminal record relates to any area which can impinge on safeguarding (Including but not limited to: violent acts, domestic abuse, stalking, harassment, online abuse, any previous offence against children or vulnerable adults, no matter how long ago). The DSO will consult with the relevant Trustee in any case of doubt. the individual will be disqualified from working for OCDC. The Safeguarding Officer and Designated Trustee (plus the Centre Manager if s/he is not the Safeguarding Officer) will discuss each situation considering a) any risk to vulnerable adults b) any support needed by the employee/volunteer, c) appropriate roles which may be undertaken.

Note: any activity involving contact with a vulnerable adult undertaken by an employee or volunteer of OCDC falls within the requirement for a clear DBS check. This includes, but is not limited to, giving someone a lift to appointments, doing shopping for them.

All staff and volunteers will need to give an undertaking that they will immediately inform the OCDC Safeguarding Officer if they should be subject to

- 1) criminal investigation for any matter or
- 2) made subject of an investigation regarding Safeguarding within any voluntary or paid employment posts they made hold.

This information will be dealt with in strictest confidence and discussed only between the Safeguarding Officer, Designated Trustee and the Centre Manager (if s/he is not the Safeguarding Officer)/Chair of Trustees unless the information poses a risk to other individuals.

7. Training of staff and volunteers

OCDC is committed to ensuring staff and volunteers are adequately trained. Training will be organised to enable staff and volunteers who have direct contact with families, to consider a wide variety of situations which involve safeguarding children and their obligations under UK law. Volunteers will also have on-going support from the CAP Centre Manager. Volunteers will be expected to maintain brief records of contacts and ensure these are shown to the CAP centre manager on a regular basis. This will help the manager determines levels of support needed for volunteers.

The Safeguarding Officer and Designated Trustee will undertake L3 training. In addition, the centre manager will undertake S2 (safe recruitment) training.

Employees and volunteers will undertake L2 training

8. Support for employees and volunteers.

Dealing with abuse towards children or adults can be difficult for workers who are involved. OCDC will support employees and volunteers in this situation by providing opportunities to discuss any issues and by giving employees and volunteers' time to talk about their own emotional responses and how the issue has impacted upon them. This may be especially difficult if the worker/volunteer has experienced abuse themselves. The Safeguarding Officer or Centre Manager will offer to meet with any OCDC workers to provide support and, if appropriate, signpost to supporting organizations.

Should there be an allegation made against an employee/volunteer/trustee in regard to safeguarding, they will be required to suspend their involvement while an investigation is carried out (see disciplinary policy). They should be kept informed about the progress of this investigation and pointed to areas of support.

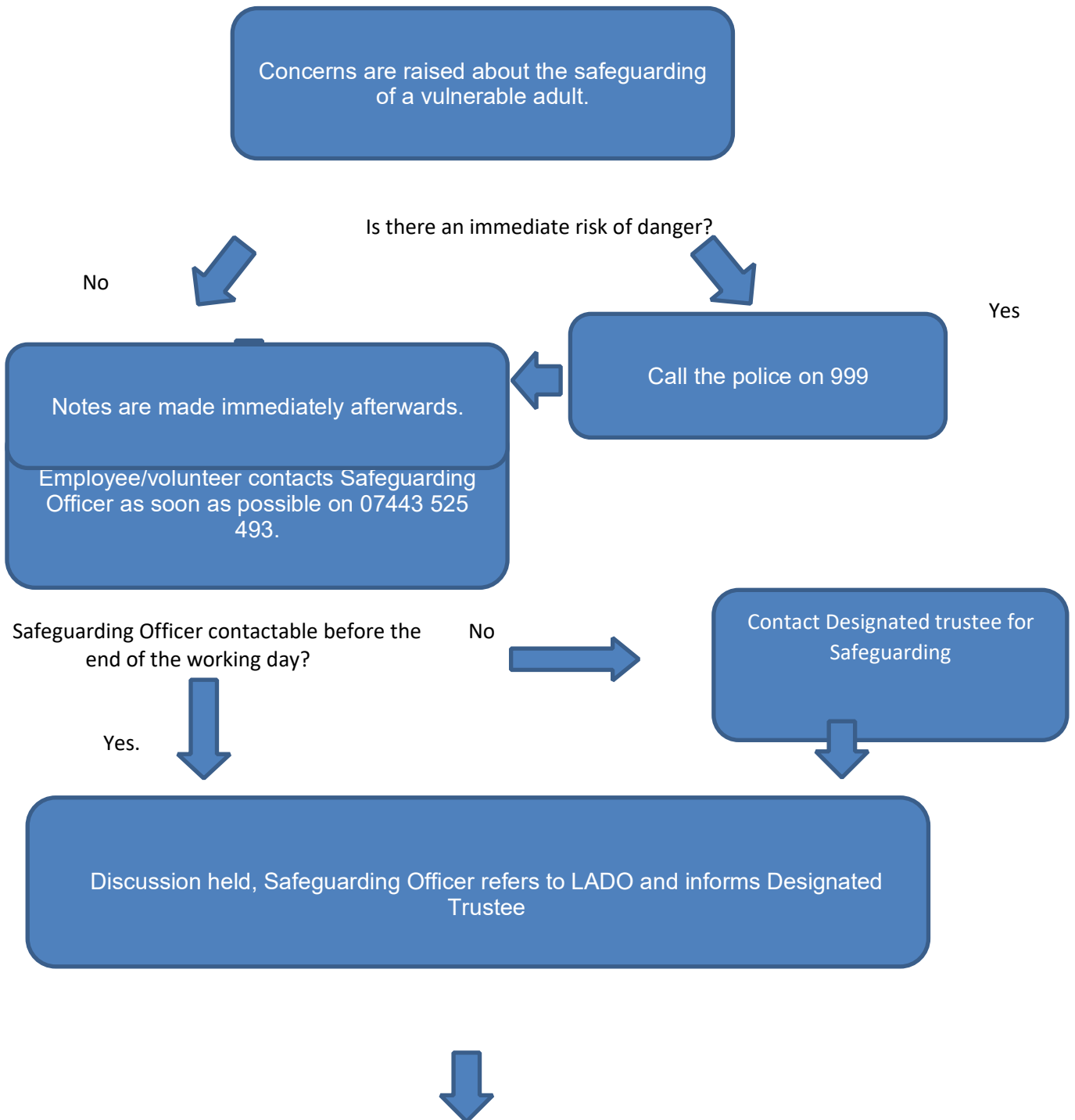
9. Contacts within OCDC

The Safeguarding Officer is Andrew Johnson.

The Designated Trustee for Safeguarding is Jenni Williams

Appendix 1.

FLOW CHART.



Appendix 2.

CAP to act in accordance to advice from the LA/Police. Safeguarding Officer to feed back to Centre Manager and reporting worker appropriately and ensure details are recorded. Designated Trustee reports back to Trustees.

What to do if a Vulnerable Adult tells you they are being abused.

It is possible that a vulnerable adult will now directly disclose to you that they are being abused and instead that you may notice possible signs of abuse. However, if a vulnerable adult does disclose that they have been abused, please follow the guidelines below:

- Always reassure the vulnerable adult that they have been right in speaking to you.
- Reassure the vulnerable adult that it is not their fault.
- Do not ask questions other than asking the vulnerable adult to explain further if you do not understand.
- Do not make suggestions or promises.
- Spend time listening rather than talking.
- Never promise confidentiality even if the vulnerable adult asks you not to tell anyone.
- Be honest with the vulnerable adult and let them know you will have to speak to someone else.
- Don't look surprised or shocked.
- Do not tell the vulnerable adult that their situation reminds you of your own or other's situation - each individual is unique.
- Don't ask if you can call in another personal - the vulnerable adult has chosen you to speak to and this might put them off.
- Contact the Safeguarding Officer, or if unavailable the Safeguarding Trustee, at the earliest convenience but no longer than 24hours.

As soon as possible after the conversation, make notes. Record what the vulnerable adult has said as accurately as possible, identify if the words are directly from the vulnerable adult or convey your recollection. Make sure you date and sign the notes; add the time of the conversation and the time of your recording.

It may be relevant to write notes with the vulnerable adult after they have told you their worries. This gives you the chance for the vulnerable adult to clarify what they are saying and also show them you are taking their comments seriously. Ask the vulnerable adult if it is OK for you to make notes and go with their answer. You can add further notes later but make sure this is as factual as possible rather than your view.