



Oxford Churches Debt Centre Safeguarding Children Policy

Approved by Trustees September 2026

Due for review: September 2027 or if any significant new legislation is introduced.

Oxford Churches Debt Centre

Safeguarding Children Policy.

OCDL 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. OCDL is therefore committed to its responsibilities for the safeguarding of all children and young people under the age of 18 (regardless of gender, ethnicity or ability) as set out in The Children Act 1989 and 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2014).

1. What does Safeguarding mean?

Safeguarding children means:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances.

(Taken from: Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Government, 2014
<http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/>)

Within Oxford, the city works to a 'threshold of needs' which can be found at [http://www.oscb.org.uk/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/Threshold%20of%20Needs%20Matrix.pdf#search="threshold"](http://www.oscb.org.uk/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/Threshold%20of%20Needs%20Matrix.pdf#search=\) This document outlines which services may be relevant to each child including young carers. Each family and individual should be treated with respect. OCDL will work with the Local Authority as appropriate to aim for positive change where there are issues of concern.

While OCDL will always designate a trustee for Safeguarding, it is acknowledged that we all have a responsibility to safeguard children.

2. What is abuse?

Child abuse is generally divided into four categories: neglect, emotional, sexual and physical abuse. It is common for more than one category to be present and the categories overlap. Within these categories there may be Child Sexual Exploitation, where a child is groomed into believing they are in a loving relationship with their abuser, witnessing or experiencing domestic abuse, bullying and cyber-bullying, on-line abuse and sexual images. While working for Oxford CAP it may be that a child speaks to you directly about abuse or, more likely, that you may make observations which cause you concern.

Working Together states 'Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.'

While all children could be seen as 'vulnerable', disabled children are more likely to need safeguarding as they are at higher risk of abuse.

See Appendix 2 for further information on signs of abuse.

3. What to do if there are concerns about a child.

If an employee or volunteer member of ODC has concerns about a child, they should contact the Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible to discuss their concerns. If the employee or volunteer considers the child is in immediate danger of harm, they should call the police. Further details of how to navigate the conversation are given below.

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.
- 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 child, 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 child and the reason they are concerned.
2. Immediately contact the Local Authority Designated Officer and take advice, then act on this advice.
3. Advise the Safeguarding Trustee that action has been taken. The Safeguarding Trustee will inform the Trustee group.

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

See Appendix 1 for Flowchart.

4. 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 information about them including names, will be required to undergo a DBS check. 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, 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. Anyone who declines a DBS check is automatically barred from working or volunteering 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 children b) any support needed by the employee/volunteer, c) appropriate roles which may be undertaken.

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, the Designated Trustee and the Centre Manager (if s/he is not the Safeguarding Officer) unless the information poses a risk to other individuals.

5. 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 Level 3 training. In addition, the centre manager will undertake S2 (safe recruitment) training.

Employees and volunteers will undertake Level 2 training

6. 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 organisations.

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.

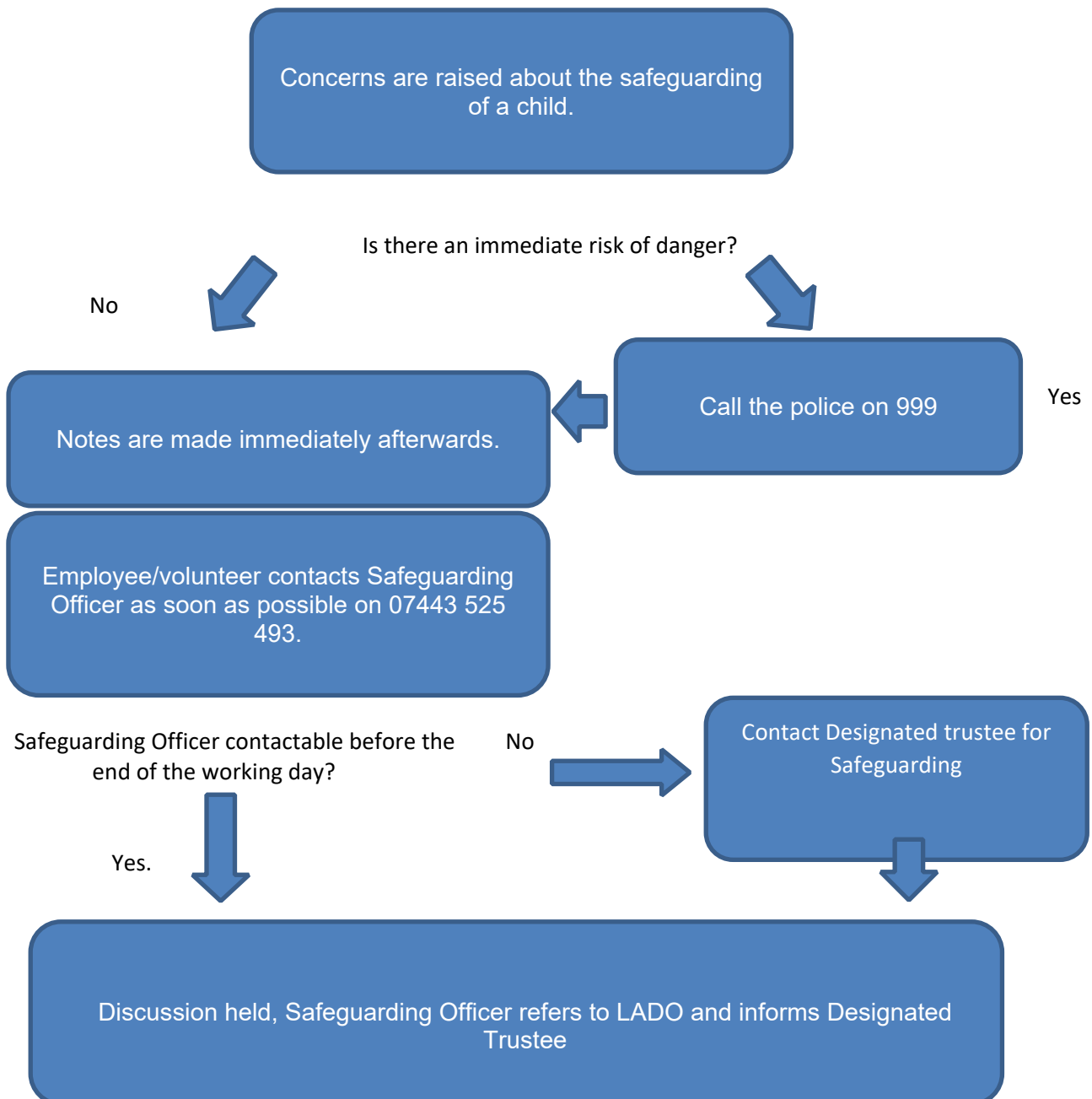
7. Contacts within OCDC

The Safeguarding Officer is Andrew Johnson.

The Designated Trustee for Safeguarding is Jenni Williams

Appendix 1.

FLOW CHART.





Appendix 2.

Signs of abuse.

Neglect	The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: ▪ provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); ▪ protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ▪ ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ▪ ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.
Physical abuse	A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.
Emotional abuse	The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. 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 include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it alone.

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.

Sexual abuse	Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.
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(From Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2014.

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

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

- Always reassure the child that they have been right in speaking to you.
- Reassure the child that it is not their fault.
- Do not ask questions other than asking the child 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 child asks you not to tell anyone.
- Be honest with the child and let them know you will have to speak to someone else.
- Don't look surprised or shocked.
- Do not tell the child 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 adult - the child 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 child has said as accurately as possible, identify if the words are directly from the child 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 child after they have told you their worries. This gives you the chance for the child to clarify what they are saying and also show them you are taking their comments seriously. Ask the child 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.