



**CHALMERS**  
CHURCH EDINBURGH

## **SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

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## **Safeguarding Co-ordinator**

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# Safeguarding at Chalmers

Chalmers Church Edinburgh ('Chalmers') aims to create a safe and nurturing environment for children and protected adults and for those who work or volunteer with them. This policy details the steps that Chalmers will take to keep children and protected adults safe from harm whilst attending its organised activities. The policy also details how staff and volunteers should respond if harm does occur or is suspected.

It is a legal requirement for anyone over the age of 16 who is working or volunteering with children or protected adults at Chalmers to be a member of the PVG scheme and have been approved by Chalmers. All those working or volunteering with children and protected adults at Chalmers should be aware of this policy.

## 1. Work with Children and Young People

A variety of work is undertaken with children and young people at Chalmers. Groups taking place on a Sunday morning during the church service are as follows:

*Crèche – care for 0-2 year olds*

*Little Stars – activities for 2 year olds*

*Sparklers – activities for children aged 3 – P1*

*Sunday Club – separate groups for P2-P4 and P5-P7*

*Youth Church – group for S1-S3*

The following activities take place regularly out with Sunday services:

*Chalmers Church Youth - a group for young people in S4-S6 which meets in the church.*

*IMPACT - a Youth Club for P7-S3 which meets on a Friday evening usually in the church.*

*SORTED - Bible study and discussion for S1-S6, including food and games*

*Chatterbox – a group for babies/toddlers and their parents/carers meets on a Tuesday morning in the church.*

*Childcare is also provided at the Ladies' Bible Study group which meets on alternate Fridays in the church*

*Big Afternoon – an event for primary age children which runs several times a year in the church*

*Easter holiday club – Holiday club for primary age children in the Easter holidays*

*Youth weekend away – Weekend away for secondary aged children once a year at an offsite venue*

Work with children and young people also occurs at other occasional church events.

## **2. Work with Protected Adults**

A number of individuals attending Chalmers will be protected adults, as defined in the Disclosure Scotland Act (2020) (see Safeguarding: Leaders & Volunteers: Section 3. The PVG Scheme).

Chalmers does not currently run any groups or activities specifically aimed at protected adults who would be covered by the protected adults PVG scheme.

## **3. Safeguarding Co-ordinator**

The Elders of Chalmers will be responsible for appointing a Safeguarding Co-ordinator. It is the responsibility of the Elders to ensure that the congregation knows who the Safeguarding Co-ordinator is and what their role is.

The main role of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator is:

- To ensure that relevant instructions, recommendations and legislation relating to safeguarding are implemented.
- To report regularly to the Elders about safeguarding matters. Safeguarding will be a standing item on the agenda of Elders' meetings at least once a term.
- To ensure that all those working or volunteering with children or protected adults at Chalmers are safely recruited and their names recorded on a congregational register.
- To manage membership of the PVG scheme within the church.
- To maintain accurate and confidential records of all staff and volunteers working with children and protected adult and ensure that these are securely stored.
- To promote and facilitate safe working practices.
- To be the principal person in the congregation to receive reports about witnessed, suspected or reported harm and abuse.
- To identify and promote training opportunities for those in the congregation who are working with children or protected adults.

## **4. Safeguarding group**

The Elders of Chalmers will appoint a group to manage safeguarding matters on its behalf. This group will consist of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, the Clerk to the Elders and the Senior Minister. This group will:

- Support the Safeguarding Co-ordinator in their role (safe recruitment, good working practices, training and record keeping)
- Manage a situation where an applicant is deemed unsuitable to work or volunteer with children or protected adults

- Make decisions about the recruitment of people with previous convictions
- Respond to and appropriately manage a safeguarding incident should one arise within the church
- Ensure arrangements are made for safely managing a person attending the church who has been convicted of a sexual offence against a child
- Make decisions about formal referrals to Disclosure Scotland.

The Safeguarding Group will meet as and when required. Confidential records should be kept of decisions reached, reasons for decisions, fact finding reports and notes of actions taken. These records should be stored securely and kept indefinitely. Due to data protection laws, individuals have the right to request information held about them, it is worth bearing this in mind when making records.

Members of the Safeguarding Group will undertake appropriate training to equip them for their role. The Safeguarding Group may consult with outside agencies for advice and support when necessary. Such agencies may include Volunteer Scotland, Disclosure Scotland, the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service, Police and Social Work.

# Safeguarding: Core Principles

## 1. Recognising and Responding to Harm or Abuse

Safeguarding is about preventing harm to children and protected adults and making a timely and appropriate response when harm is witnessed, suspected or reported. Although preventing harm or abuse is the starting point, when it does occur, it is important that those working or volunteering with children or protected adults at Chalmers can recognise it and know how to respond.

Training opportunities will be provided to equip staff and volunteers to:

1. Recognise different types of harm and abuse that children may experience
  - ✦ Physical Abuse
  - ✦ Emotional Abuse
  - ✦ Sexual Abuse
  - ✦ Neglect
  - ✦ Racism
  - ✦ Substance Abuse
  - ✦ Domestic Abuse
  - ✦ Bullying
  - ✦ Self-Harm
2. Listen and react appropriately to disclosures of harm or abuse
  - ✦ Stay calm
  - ✦ Listen to the individual without interrupting
  - ✦ Allow the individual to talk but don't ask leading questions or give your opinion
  - ✦ Re-assure the individual that they were right to tell and not to blame
  - ✦ Do not agree to keep secrets
  - ✦ Explain to the individual in a manner they will understand what you are going to do next
  - ✦ Assure the individual of ongoing support
3. Take appropriate action when harm or abuse is reported, suspected or witnessed.

### KEY SAFEGUARDING MESSAGE

**If a member of staff, volunteer or member of the congregation at Chalmers suspects or witnesses harm or abuse or it is reported to them, they must immediately report the concern to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator. They must not investigate the situation.**

The person should then detail the concern in writing on a Report of Concern form which should be passed to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator. If the form is not available, record the concerns as fully as possible using their actual words and sign and date the paper. The Safeguarding Co-ordinator will convene a meeting of the Safeguarding Group to determine how to respond to the safeguarding concern and if a referral should be made to police or social work.

If the individual is in immediate danger a staff member, volunteer or member of the congregation should immediately contact the police, social work or emergency services. Afterwards they should as soon as possible inform the Safeguarding Co-ordinator. They should then detail the safeguarding incident on a Report of Concern form and pass this to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator. The Safeguarding Co-ordinator will convene a meeting of the Safeguarding Group to determine how to respond to the safeguarding incident.

Child protection and the care of protected adults is everybody's responsibility and at any time any staff member, volunteer or member of the congregation at Chalmers may report a concern directly to police or social work.

## **2. Good Practice Guidelines for Staff, Volunteers and Group Leaders**

You should:

- Treat all individuals with respect and dignity
- Always aim to work with or within sight of another adult
- Support your colleagues and work as a team
- Use physical contact appropriately
- Adhere to the church's policies for working with children and protected adults
- Report any accidents or incidents to your Group Leader and complete the appropriate Accident/Incident form
- Report any concerns about harm or abuse to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator and complete a Report of Concern form
- Respond to immediate danger by contacting an appropriate agency (police, social work or the emergency services) prior to informing the Safeguarding Co-ordinator and completing a Report of Concern form

You should not:

- Touch a child, young person or protected adult inappropriately
- Invade an individual's privacy whilst toileting
- Play rough physical or sexually provocative games
- Use inappropriate language such as swearing or innuendo
- Engage in physically rough play or 'horse-play' (which includes pushing, shoving and wrestling)
- Use any form of physical punishment
- Be sexually suggestive about or to an individual

- Behave in a manner outside of your role which would bring into question your suitability to work with children and protected adults
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject an individual
- Permit abusive peer activities e.g. bullying
- Show favouritism to any one individual
- Allow an individual to involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly physical or sexual in nature
- Smoke tobacco, take drugs or drink alcohol when responsible for children or protected adults
- Invite a child, young person or protected adult to your home alone
- Allow adults who are not PVG approved by Chalmers access to the individuals you are responsible for
- Share sleeping accommodation with children or protected adults e.g. on a weekend away
- Befriend/follow any child or young person under 18 on a social networking site or accept their friend invitation, or equivalent. One to one texting, messaging or email communications should only be done with written parental consent.
- Arrange to meet one to one with any child or young person without written parental consent and without the awareness and agreement of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator. Any meetings must be in a public place.

In addition, Group Leaders should:

- Ensure health and safety requirements are adhered to
- Undertake risk assessments for activities
- Keep registration and consent forms up to date
- Keep photography and media consent forms up to date
- Have an awareness at all times of what is taking place and who is present
- Liaise with the Safeguarding Co-ordinator over good practice for safeguarding
- Have a contact number for the Safeguarding Co-ordinator should a child protection concern arise
- Create a supportive environment for those volunteering in the group

### **3. Health and Safety**

The following health and safety measures must be followed:

- The Group Leader should conduct a risk assessment of the physical environment prior to children or protected adults arriving for their activity. For example, in the crèche, are there any hazards such as hot radiators, curtain pull cords, small items on the floor which may pose a choking risk and uncovered electrical sockets?
- Rooms should be warm, well-lit and well ventilated
- Toilets, hand basins and hygienic drying facilities should be easily available
- If food is being prepared, those preparing it should possess the appropriate Food Hygiene certificate
- The Group Leader should have access to a telephone, for example, in case a child or protected adult is injured and emergency help is required
- The Group Leader should have a contact number for the Safeguarding Co-ordinator in the event of a safeguarding concern arising
- The Group Leader should be aware of the Fire Procedure and should brief the other leaders in the group
- A First Aid kit should be available on the premises. The Group Leader should know where the First Aid kit is and should brief other leaders in the group
- All accidents/incidents should be recorded on the appropriate Accident/Incident form and reported to the Group Leader. The Group Leader is responsible for informing parents if a child has an accident or is involved in an incident
- The Group Leader should be aware of any children or protected adults in the group who have medical or personal care needs. Registration and consent forms containing this information should be kept up to date
- When parents or carers do not remain on the premises whilst children and protected adults attend their activity, leaders should have clarity on who will collect them or if they will leave on their own.

### **4. Risk Assessment**

It is not possible to eliminate all risk when working with children and protected adults. Chalmers will, however, undertake a risk assessment of all its activities for children and protected adults. A risk assessment will:

- Identify risk
- Identify which safeguards are currently in place or require to be put in place to address and minimise the risk

- Record who is responsible for ensuring that the safeguard is in place with a timeframe for doing so and the date achieved.

This task will be undertaken by the Group Leader. A Risk Assessment form will be completed for each group with a date set for review. A copy of the risk assessment form will be sent to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator for storage. The Co-ordinator can provide a template form.

**Group Leaders are responsible for risk assessing the physical environment each session, prior to children arriving for their activity. If they will not be in attendance they are responsible for delegating this task to another leader.**

A separate risk assessment will be undertaken for any activity out with the usual meeting of a group - for example, a social outing or a weekend away.

## 5. Accidents and Incidents

In the event of an accident or an incident taking place the following procedure should be followed. An accident could be an individual falling over, cutting themselves and requiring first aid. An incident could be individuals fighting or having a heated argument.

In all cases, an Accident/Incident form should be completed, recording the details of the accident or incident and any action taken. The form should be signed by the Group Leader in charge who will be responsible for whether the parent or carer needs informed. If so, the parent or carer should also sign the form to show they have been informed. Accident/Incident forms should be stored securely on church premises.

## 6. First Aid

The group registration forms will notify parents or carers that First Aid or emergency treatment may be administered to their child in the unlikely event of an accident.

Parents or carers will be asked to provide details of relevant medical conditions or allergies (for example, an individual may be allergic to plasters). This will be sought in the registration forms completed by the parents or carers when the child or protected adult begins in the group.

The Group Leader is responsible for knowing the location of the First Aid kit.

If the child or protected adult has had an accident and First Aid is administered an Accident/Incident form should be completed and signed by the Group Leader.

The Group Leader is responsible for considering whether the parent or carer needs informed of the incident. This will be dependent on the age of the individual and the severity of the accident. If there is any uncertainty, the parent or carer should be informed.

Particular care is required for head injuries and any such incidents should normally be notified to the parent or carer.

In the event of a serious accident during a church service, a leader will inform an Elder on duty who will quickly identify a nurse or doctor to assist the individual. If an individual requires the assistance of emergency services, however, they should be contacted first.

Group Leaders should also be aware of contact numbers for accessing medical advice and assistance:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Non-emergency: Dial 111</b> <b>Emergency: Dial 999</b></p>
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## **7. Handling Personal Information**

Chalmers will comply fully with the data protection laws in respect of handling personal information about children and protected adults. All volunteers, staff and group leaders are required to follow the church's data protection policy. A copy of this is available from the church office.

Parents and carers have the right to see all information Chalmers holds about their child or protected adult. It is therefore important that anything recorded about an individual by a staff member or volunteer, for example on an incident form, is written in clear, objective and non-emotive language.

# Safeguarding: Working with under 18s

The following principles apply to all staff, volunteers and group leaders working with children and young people in Chalmers under the age of 18, in addition to the Core Principles outlined in the previous section.

## 1. Physical Contact and Touch

It is often perfectly acceptable and indeed necessary to use touch and physical contact when working with children and young people - for example, to comfort a young child who is not settling into their group. Making leaders frightened of physical contact with a child or young person is not an effective way of reducing abuse. It is important, however, to always use touch appropriately. The following guidelines are helpful in deciding what an appropriate use of touch is:

- Touch should meet the needs of the child, not those of the adult
- Physical contact should always take place in public, in view of other adults
- Touch should be appropriate to the age of the child
- Leaders should not engage in physically rough play or 'horse-play' (which includes pushing, shoving and wrestling) with children and young people

All leaders should speak out if they see inappropriate physical contact or touch between an adult and a child or young person by reporting it to the Safeguarding Coordinator.

## 2. Toileting and Nappy Changing

Activities are provided at Chalmers for babies and young children who may require either nappy changing or help with toileting.

It is important to have a policy which both protects our youngest and most vulnerable children from possible abuse and protects our leaders from false allegation when involved in accompanying children to the toilet or giving personal care. A leader is under no obligation to assist with changing nappies or personal care should they not wish to.

Our policy takes into consideration the following principles of good practice:

- The importance of protecting the dignity and privacy of the child. Leaders must never invade a child's privacy when toileting
- Leaders should avoid being on his or her own with a child or young person and should aim to work with or within sight of another adult
- Leaders should not allow unknown adults access to the children or young people in their care.

Parents and carers will be asked to give their written consent for nappy changing and assisting a child with toileting.

The following procedures will be followed:

#### Nappy changing

Crèche leaders (where willing) will carry out nappy changing in the toilet to maintain the child's dignity and privacy. A changing mat will be provided for this purpose. If a parent or carer prefers to change their own child's nappy, they will be contacted during the church service.

It is not the responsibility of leaders in the Little Stars and Sparklers groups to change nappies and they will contact parents if a child needs their nappy changed.

#### Toileting

When a child does not require help with toileting:

- The child or young person must be given privacy and left to toilet themselves.
- If toilets are not for the exclusive use of children attending Chalmers' activities a leader should escort the child to the toilet area. The leader will assess the safety of the toilets before waiting outside the toilet area whilst the child uses the toilet. The leader will then escort the child back to their group.

When a child requires help with toileting (remember a young child who can independently toilet may still need assistance with opening a heavy door, reaching hand-basins, avoiding scalding themselves with hot water etc):

- The child should be asked if they are happy for a leader to assist them.
- If they are not happy, a parent or carer should be informed and the child taken to meet the parent or carer at the toilet entrance.
- If they are happy, one leader will accompany the child to the toilet area; a welcome team member or another adult will hold the door open to support the leader. The child should be encouraged to be as independent as possible. You should not do anything for a child which, with encouragement, they can do for themselves.

### **3. Managing a private conversation with a child**

As a general principle of good practice, leaders should always aim to work with or within sight of another adult. Sometimes, however, a child or young person may wish to talk to a leader privately about something which is concerning them. They may have spent considerable time thinking about who they are going to talk to.

If a child or young person asks to speak with you about something that you sense could be deeply personal, you should be sensitive to their needs. If you feel that they need a quiet place to talk, you should tell a fellow leader where you are going and why. You should ask that person to come and 'check on you' after about 10 minutes.

If a child or young person discloses harm or abuse you should be careful not to promise confidentiality. If they have been subjected to harm or are at risk of harm you have a responsibility to take action (see Safeguarding: Core Principles).

#### **4. Ratios**

In order to supervise activities safely it is necessary to have sufficient adult leaders.

Chalmers is not required to register its activities with the Care Inspectorate, but the following adult child ratios are considered to be good practice and should be followed:

Under 6mths	1 adult to 2 children
Under 2s	1 adult to 3 children
Aged 2	1 adult to 5 children
Aged 3 to 7	1 adult to 8 children
Aged 8 and over	1 adult to 10 children

Each group should have at least two adults and it is recommended that there should be both male and female leaders.

Group Leaders should consider if they have enough leaders to meet the behavioural and emotional needs of the children and young people in the group. Where there is a child or young person with additional support needs, the Group Leader should ensure there are enough helpers to purposefully engage this individual in the group activities.

Young people who help in groups for younger children should not be included in the required number of adults.

#### **5. Registration and Consent**

A Registration and Consent form should be completed for every child who attends groups or activities at Chalmers. A template form is available from the church office.

Registration Forms should request the following information:

- Name and address
- Date of birth
- Parent or carer details
- Emergency contact details
- Relevant medical information and known allergies
- Support needs and disabilities

Consent should be sought for:

- Nappy changing
- Assisting a child with toileting
- Storing data in line with the data protection policy

A register should be completed at the start of each group. Sign in sheets may be more appropriate for some groups, such as the crèche.

Separate consent should be sought from parents or carers for activities and outings separate from the normal meeting times of the group, for example, a social evening or weekend away.

Registration and consent forms should be kept up to date and securely stored. Some information should be kept with the weekly register, e.g. allergies in settings where snacks are provided.

## **6. Photography and Digital Media Consent**

Chalmers is committed to following best practice when it comes to taking, using and storing digital media for all activities involving children and young people. The church's data protection policy must be followed.

Permission will be sought from the child (if aged 13 or over) and the child's parent or carer for:

- Taking images (digital photographs) or making recordings (audio or visual) of their child
- Using images (digital photographs) or recordings (audio or visual) within church premises (e.g. wall displays) in printed materials (e.g. newsletters) or on the internet (e.g. the church's website)

If a child, parent or carer does not wish to give consent to either of the above this will not impact on the child being able to fully participate in church activities.

Where photographs are used, no names or personal information will be displayed alongside them.

Images and recordings will be securely stored. They will only be accessed and used by those authorised to do so.

## **7. Discipline**

Organisations function best when there are clear guidelines and structures. It is helpful to have a Code of Conduct for children and young people attending church activities. A Code of Conduct will help to create a safe, secure environment and an atmosphere where children feel they can relate to leaders. It may be appropriate for some groups to involve children and young people in drawing up a Code of Conduct. It can be easier to enforce boundaries if young people are involved in deciding what those boundaries should be.

The following can help to promote good behaviour in groups:

- Planning sessions well
- Ensuring equipment is available and works
- Well established routines
- Establishing positive, caring relationships with the children and young people
- Avoiding lengthy re-caps
- Providing a suitable pace to the activity or learning
- Ensuring activities are suitable to the age and particular needs of the children and young people.

If a child or young person breaks the agreed rules, sanctions need to be put in place and carried out to ensure a safe and secure environment for all. When disciplining children the following guidelines need to be adhered to:

#### Don't

- Use force or physical punishment
- Discipline out of anger
- Use a put down
- Humiliate a child
- Reject the child
- Allow some children to take up all time/energy
- Compare children with one another

#### Do

- Use your relationship with the child to challenge their behaviour and identify why they might be behaving as they are
- Work on a child's positive characteristics
- Be a good role model and set a good example
- Take care to give quieter, well-behaved children attention
- Be consistent and work as a team
- Ensure other leaders know what you have said – this avoids leaders being played off against one another.

If a child's behaviour is particularly disruptive the Group Leader may need to sensitively pass on this information to the child's parents or carers along with any agreed sanction for the child. Serious incidents such as fighting, verbal abuse and bullying should be brought to the attention of the Group Leader and recorded on an Incident form. They should also be brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Coordinator, if appropriate.

## **8. Anti-Bullying Policy**

Chalmers Church Edinburgh seeks to be a safe and welcoming place for children and young people and as such takes any bullying very seriously. Bullying is defined as 'deliberate hurtful behaviour over a period of time'. This can include, for example, name calling, teasing, physical assaults, leaving people out, ignoring people and abusing people by messaging. It can also increasingly involve the use of social media.

It is vital to address bullying because:

- It hurts children
- The person bullying needs to learn how to stop

Preventative measures:

- Having a Code of Conduct for the group
- Leaders should encourage children and young people to befriend others who are alone in a group
- Bullying should be openly discussed in the group
- There should be opportunities for children and young people to talk to someone about things that are worrying them.

If bullying is taking place in a group:

- Any bullying should be reported to the Group Leader and recorded on an Incident form
- Reports of bullying should be investigated and dealt with quickly
- The Group Leader should inform the parent or carer about the incident(s) and actions taken
- It may be useful to attempt reconciliation and to encourage the two parties to talk to one another. This may be enough to resolve the situation
- If bullying persists the Group Leader should give consideration to meeting with the child who is being bullied and their parent or carer to discuss the bullying. The Group Leader should also give consideration to meeting with the child who is bullying and their parent or carer to discuss the bullying
- Group leaders can seek advice from the Safeguarding Coordinator

- There should be appropriate consequences for the child who is bullying and these should be carried through
- An apology should be encouraged to be given by the child who has bullied another
- The child who has bullied should be offered help to address his/her behaviour
- The Group Leader should keep the situation under review
- The Group Leader should consider if the Safeguarding Co-ordinator requires to be informed about the situation
- If it is thought that an offence has been committed, consideration should be given to contacting police.

## **9. Transporting, hosting and catering for children**

### Transporting

Occasionally leaders may be responsible for transporting children as part of a Chalmers activity. When transporting children, the following procedures should be adhered to:

- Children and young people should not be transported in a private car without the prior consent of the parent or carer
- A leader's car should be insured for both private use and, where the leader is a paid staff member, business use.
- The car should be in roadworthy condition
- Children must wear an appropriate seatbelt restraint

Good practice is that there should be two adults in a car when transporting children. However, there may be situations when an adult would drive a number of children back from an activity. In these occasions, they should be taken to a central location (ie church) so that adult is never alone with a child in the car.

There may be emergency situations where an adult is alone with a child in the car. In this case the parents or another leader should be notified and the child should sit in the rear seat.

These procedures do not apply to private arrangements between parents within the church.

### Hosting

Any individuals hosting children or young people in their homes as part of a church ministry must be a member of the Chalmers PVG scheme.

### Catering

Any individuals providing catering for children or youth ministries, and who will interact with the children and young people, must be a member of the Chalmers PVG scheme. This does not apply if the parent or carer of the children are present (e.g. Chatterbox).

# Safeguarding: Leaders and volunteers

## 1. Recruitment

It is necessary to have a robust recruitment policy to ensure that only suitable people are permitted to work or volunteer with our children and/or protected adults. It is important to ensure that everyone participates in a selection procedure - even if they are well known to the church. The following recruitment process will be followed at Chalmers Church Edinburgh before working with children:

- Anyone wishing to volunteer with children or protected adults at Chalmers will be a member and regularly attending the church for at least a period of 6 months before being considered for the role. There may be exceptional circumstances where a non-member is allowed to work with children and protected adults.
- A role description will be provided for prospective leaders.
- Those wishing to work or volunteer with children or protected adults will be asked to complete an application form. They will also be asked to complete a self-declaration concerning previous convictions, cautions and relevant non-conviction information
- Applicants will be asked to provide two references which will be followed up.
- Applicants will have an informal interview by at least 2 people who are either the group leader, members of the safeguarding team or Elders.
- Everyone who works with children or protected adults at Chalmers is required to be a member of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme as set out in the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007.

Those approved to work or volunteer with children or protected adults in the church will be provided with a summary document called 'Safeguarding – Key Information' and will be clear about expected behaviour and appropriate boundaries between themselves and the children or protected adults they are working with. Furthermore, they will be provided with appropriate safeguarding training.

Safeguarding training is mandatory for all those working with children and ideally within the first 6 months of their role commencing.

Once a person has been appointed the information related to their recruitment should be kept in line with the data protection policy.

## 2. Young people serving

Young people who are still attending school may wish to serve in the church in various capacities. Particular care is required in these situations and advice and agreement of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator must be sought prior to the young person commencing service.

### Serving in children's groups during a service

Young people over the age of 16 who wish to help in a children's ministry must be a member of the PVG scheme and must have regularly attended church for at least 6 months.

Young people aged from 14 to 16, who have regularly attended church for at least 6 months, can also help in children's ministry. Written parent or carer consent is required alongside the specific agreement of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator. Each time a young person is serving, a named leader must be aware that they are supervising the young person.

The following applies to all young people serving in children's groups:

- They can serve in Sparklers, Little Stars and Creche
- The young person cannot be counted as an adult in the Adult Child ratios for the group
- They cannot have unsupervised contact with children and must not undertake any caring responsibilities for children, e.g. nappy changes, toilet trips or bottle feeding
- They can only serve in non-teaching roles in children's groups

### Other serving

In many cases of young people serving generally in the church, this will be in non-regulated roles and therefore outside of the PVG scheme. For those young people aged under 16, parent or carer supervision is required during any serving in the church. With the specific agreement of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, parents or carers may delegate supervision to another responsible adult who is a member of the PVG scheme with Chalmers.

For those aged 16 and 17, parent or carer supervision is not required if informed written parent or carer consent is obtained.

In all circumstances, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator must be satisfied that proportional arrangements have been put in place to address any safeguarding risks to the young person.

## **3. The PVG Scheme**

The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 introduced the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG Scheme). The PVG Scheme ensures that those in regulated roles with vulnerable groups do not have a history of inappropriate behaviour. It excludes people who are known to be unsuitable, based upon their past behaviour, from working with vulnerable groups and detects those who become unsuitable whilst in their post. The PVG Scheme is managed by Disclosure Scotland.

It is a legal requirement for anyone working with children or protected adults to have a PVG.

It is important to remember that the PVG Scheme is only one part of a selection process and should complement, not replace, good recruitment practice.

### **3.1. Definition of a child in the PVG Scheme**

A child in the PVG Scheme is a person under the age of 18.

### **3.2. Definition of a protected adult in the PVG Scheme**

A protected adult is defined in the Disclosure Scotland Act (2020) as an individual aged 18 or over who, by reason of physical or mental disability, illness, infirmity or ageing has:

- an impaired ability to protect themselves from physical or psychological harm,
- requires assistance with the activities of daily living.

Additionally, those who are homeless or those who have experienced, are experiencing or are at risk of domestic abuse are considered protected adults.

Note: PVGs for children and protected adults are not the same. If you have a PVG to work with children you cannot automatically undertake a regulated role with protected adults, and vice versa. You will need to reapply for the additional PVG type.

### **3.3. What is a regulated role?**

A person is considered to be in a regulated role relating to children if, as part of their normal duties, they carry out one or more of the following activities:

- Caring for children
- Teaching, instruction, training or supervising children
- Being in sole charge of children
- Unsupervised contact with children
- Providing advice or guidance to a child or particular which relates to physical or emotional wellbeing, education or training
- Providing religious activities or services for children

A person is considered to be in a regulated role relating to protected adults if, as part of their normal duties, they carry out one or more of the following activities:

- Teaching, instruction, training or supervising protected adults
- Providing social, cultural, leisure and recreational activities for protected adults.
- Providing religious activities or services for protected adults

As individuals who oversee church activities, elders and staff at Chalmers Church are also considered to be in a regulated role.

If there is any doubt about which volunteers or paid members of staff should be members of the PVG Scheme, advice should be sought from the Safeguarding Coordinator

### **3.4. Role of Volunteer Scotland**

Chalmers can only access PVG records through a registered body.

Chalmers will enrol with Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Services for this purpose. Volunteer Scotland will process PVG applications on our behalf and can also provide training, guidance and support relevant to the PVG Scheme. This is a free service for those volunteering at Chalmers. Chalmers will be responsible for paying the fee for paid members of staff to join the PVG scheme.

By enrolling with Volunteer Scotland, Chalmers agrees to:

- Appoint a lead person responsible for accessing and receiving PVG records. This person will be the Safeguarding Co-ordinator.
- Adhere to Disclosure Scotland's Code of Practice. This can be found at: <https://www.mygov.scot/disclosure-code-of-practice/>
- Have a written policy on the handling of disclosure information.

### **3.5. PVG Scheme and Young People**

Young people at Chalmers can help out with groups for younger children, as outlined in Section 2: Young People Serving. A person aged 16 or over is required to join the PVG Scheme if they are working in a regulated role. If in doubt about whether or not a young person is in a regulated role and requires being a member of the PVG Scheme, advice should be sought from Volunteer Scotland or Disclosure Scotland.

### **3.6. PVG Scheme Referrals**

For the PVG Scheme to work effectively it is necessary for organisations to pass on information regarding people who become unsuitable for a regulated role to Disclosure Scotland. This process is called making a referral. Chalmers has a legal responsibility to pass information to Disclosure Scotland when a person who has been in a regulated role meets both of the following criteria:

1. The individual has done something to harm a child or protected adult. This includes behaviour which occurs outwith the person's work or volunteering at Chalmers.

This can be any of the following:

- Harms a child or protected adult
- Places a child or protected adult at risk of harm
- Engages in inappropriate conduct involving pornography
- Engages in inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature involving a child or protected adult
- Gives inappropriate medical treatment to a child or protected adult.

2. The impact is so serious that the individual is removed from the regulated role or would have been removed had they not left of their own accord.

If a person is removed from a regulated role at Chalmers the Safeguarding Group will consider if grounds for referral to Disclosure Scotland are met. When it is clear that grounds have been met, a referral will be made to Disclosure Scotland within 3 months of the person being removed from their role. A failure to refer is an offence. In some cases, a person's behaviour may only come to light after they have left their regulated role. In such cases, a referral must be made to Disclosure Scotland if the Safeguarding Group considers that this would have been the course of action had the information been known whilst the person was carrying out a regulated role.

The appropriate referral form can be downloaded from the Disclosure Scotland website.

### **3.7. Data Protection**

PVG information will be kept in line with the church's data protection policy.

Chalmers will use PVG information only for the purpose for which it was requested and provided. We will not share PVG information with a third party unless required to by law or the subject has given their written informed consent. PVG information is only shared with those authorised to see it in the course of their duties at Chalmers.

# Safeguarding: Previous Criminal Convictions

## 1. Recruitment of People with Previous Convictions

A previous criminal conviction will not necessarily bar a person from working or volunteering with children or protected adults at Chalmers.

Chalmers will ensure that individuals have the opportunity to disclose, in a confidential way, any convictions or relevant non-conviction information by asking them to complete a self-declaration form. This form should be returned to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, under separate confidential cover. We guarantee that this information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the decision-making process.

Anyone wishing to work or volunteer with children or protected adults at Chalmers will be made aware that the position will be subject to a Disclosure Scotland check and that the nature of the work entitles us to ask about spent and unspent convictions.

Chalmers undertakes to ensure an open and measured discussion with a person on the subject of any convictions or relevant non-conviction information they disclose and any matter revealed in a PVG certificate, before a decision is made about appointing them. We will not be able to discuss any information which may have been sent under separate cover by a police force.

It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Group to assess the relevance of disclosed information to the role applied for. Members of the Safeguarding Group will undertake training in this area. The Safeguarding Group may consult with other agencies such as Volunteer Scotland or the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service for advice and guidance in their decision-making.

A member of the Safeguarding Group will meet with the individual to communicate the recruitment decision. A confidential written record of the decision and reasons for the decision will be kept securely.

It is an offence for an individual who is barred under the PVG scheme to undertake the type of regulated work from which they are barred.

It is an offence for Chalmers to offer a regulated role to someone who is barred under the PVG scheme or fail to remove a person from a regulated role if they have been notified that they are barred.

## 2. Managing those who pose a risk to others in the congregation

Chalmers would seek to safely include in its congregation a person who had been convicted of a sexual offence against an individual, recognising that the protection and safety of children and young people attending the church is of paramount importance.

When it is reported, known or suspected that there is a person who has been convicted of a sexual offence against a child attending Chalmers the following procedure will be followed.

Such information may come to light, for example, by self-disclosure to the Minister or a member of the congregation or by contact from criminal justice agencies.

- The Safeguarding Co-ordinator should be informed immediately of any report. They will convene a meeting of the Safeguarding Group to discuss the report and agree on how to proceed.
- Two members of the Safeguarding Group will attempt to meet with the person to discuss the report and explain how the church will proceed.
- A member of the Safeguarding Group will make contact with police or criminal justice, social work services to share information. The person's consent for the sharing of information is not required as the safety of children and young people is the over-riding concern.
- If criminal justice agencies confirm that the person has been convicted of a sexual offence against a child and that risk management is necessary then joint working will be initiated.
- The church will work with criminal justice agencies to assess if the person can safely be part of the congregation.
- If it is agreed with criminal justice agencies that the person can be safely managed in the church we will work with them to formulate an agreement between the person and the church. The agreement will concern their responsibilities and boundaries around their movement and behaviour in the context of attending Chalmers.
- There will be continued co-operation between members of the Safeguarding Group and criminal justice agencies to monitor compliance with the agreement and to report any non-compliance or concerns about the person's behaviour.
- The church will seek to provide the person with pastoral care and supportive adult relationships to whom they can be accountable in order to help the person maintain an offence free life.

No member of Chalmers is expected to be involved in this process should they feel unable to do so.

# Useful Contacts

## Chalmers' Safeguarding Group

Ali Wiffen Safeguarding co-ordinator and chair	ali@chalmerschurch.org 07752 024402
Alan MacKenzie Elder	alan@chalmerschurch.org 07825 771325
Bruce Foley Elder	brucefoley9@yahoo.co.uk 07471 780178

## Other useful contacts

Police (non-emergency)	101
Emergency services	999
Social Care Direct (Children and families)	0131 220 2327
Social Care Direct (Adults)	0131 220 2324
Emergency Out of Hours Social Work	0800 731 6969