



**WALLINGFORD**  
**BAPTIST CHURCH**

**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN**  
**POLICY**

(JUNE 2017 DUE FOR REVIEW 2020)

# Contact Details

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All those working with children should read the policy and must have an understanding of the information in Appendix 1 and 2.

This policy is based on information current in June 2017 including:  
Working Together 2015 and other current government guidance,  
Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and Baptists Together.

## **1. What we believe**

We believe the Bible is the means through which we discover how to experience salvation and shows us what it means to follow Jesus. This also means that we think the Bible is good news for everyone (including children) and want to respectfully and gently share this.

WBC is a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (and therefore Churches Together in Great Britain and Ireland) and we believe we are all equal before Jesus and therefore must all take our responsibility together to ensure we follow Jesus as a church. In practice this means it is the local congregation that decides and resources all that we do in following Jesus as a church.

(See Wallingford Baptist Church website: <https://wallingfordbaptist.co.uk>).

## **2. What is safeguarding?**

Although the Local Authority has a lead in safeguarding children, we all have a duty to safeguard children. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

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

(Department for Education, 2015, Working Together to Safeguard Children)

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.'

Child abuse is generally divided into four categories: neglect, emotional, sexual and physical abuse however it is common for more than one category to be present, and the categories overlap. While working for Wallingford Baptist Church it may be that a child speaks to you directly about abuse or, more likely, that you may make observations which cause you concern.

### **3. What does this mean for Wallingford Baptist Church?**

As a church body, we should protect, encourage and safeguard our children, praying for them, putting in place appropriate procedures and:

- Adopting good conduct for all in contact with children
- Having safe practices when working with children including reporting concerns appropriately
- Ensuring those working with children are recruited and trained appropriately
- Providing a safe environment

This policy covers all activities with children (0-18 years), within the church building or associated activities outside Wallingford Baptist Church, whether those coming into contact with children are in paid or voluntary roles on behalf of WBC.

## **4. Good Conduct**

Whatever the age of the child, we would expect all members and those attending the church to treat all children with respect and dignity, as creations of the Living God. This means:

- Using appropriate language and tone
- Allowing children privacy – for example when using the toilet or changing
- Not scapegoating, ridiculing or rejecting a child. No name calling, gossiping or spreading inappropriate information or mistruths

### **4.1. Physical contact**

Touching is an important part of relationships however we must be careful in regard to physical contact with children. Some basic guidelines are:

- Physical contact should be initiated by the child in most cases (i.e. a child to approach the adult for a hug)
- If physical touch occurs (such as a pat on the back, touch of an arm) and the child freezes, stiffens or reacts negatively, make sure you do not repeat your actions
- Try to ensure any contact is in public - never initiate touch if there are no others around unless it is a short touch on the arm if a child is distressed or in order to avoid an accident
- Make sure any physical contact is age appropriate
- Don't touch inappropriate parts of the body. Unless unavoidable on grounds of safety, do not touch buttocks, genital area, chest (for a female) or top of the legs. Be sensitive to cultural variations
- If applying sun screen or medical help, try to encourage the child to do this and support as appropriate
- Remember children are entitled to privacy and dignity
- Adults should be open to challenge or discussion around physical contact

### **4.2. Disabilities**

Children with disabilities and special educational needs are known to be at higher risk of abuse and so it is important that group leaders have an understanding of the child's specific needs and that all are more vigilant to signs of difficulty.

### **4.3. Discipline**

At times, there may be need to control or discipline a child. At no point should this be physical unless physical restraint is used as a last resort and when there is a real risk of injury to the child, worker or a third person. This should not involve shouting or use of insulting language. There should never be physical restraint if there is no other adult present.

It is always helpful to focus on positive attention rather than negative. If a parent is in the building, ask them to deal with any issues.

### **4.4. Social media/electronic communication**

Many young people will use social media to communicate. It would be expected that this is an appropriate way to communicate however it is important that private one to one messages should not be used and communication should be in a public forum. If there are specific times where direct communication with one child occurs, another leader should be included in this message so there is no exclusive communication one to one communication. If a message is sent by a child to one leader only, this leader should forward or show the reply to the second leader.

Communication with those of primary school age should not be made through electronic means (other than via the child's parents).

## 5. Safe practices

### 5.1. Safeguarding Officer

The church will appoint a Safeguarding Officer and a member of church leadership/minister with specific responsibility. The Safeguarding Officer may be assisted by a named deputy. The Safeguarding Officer and member of church leadership/minister with responsibility will be responsible for ensuring safeguarding policies are updated and fit for purpose.

Please see 'Appendix 2' for the specific duties in regard to reporting and at section 6 in regard to recruitment and training.

### 5.2. Reporting concerns

If there are any concerns about a child, there are three simple steps which all workers should follow:

- **Listen/look:** listen to what the child is saying, observe what is happening
- **Write:** as soon as possible, write down what has happened or what your concerns are. Make sure you write the date on the paper and be as descriptive as possible. Don't write down your opinion (unless this is clearly separate from the description)
- **Report:** contact the Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible, but within 24 hours. If you cannot contact the Safeguarding Officer, contact the designated member of church leadership/minister

If there is immediate danger, the worker should call the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) straight away on 0345 050 7666 or the police on 999.

Please see appendices 1 and 2 for further information.

### 5.3. Ratios

All work with children should have two adults present (at least one who has successfully been through the selection procedure). If it is unavoidable that only one adult is present, this person must have been successfully through the selection process. They must make sure that another leader knows the situation and they should not be in a building alone. If in a room alone, the door should be left open.

With older children, there may be occasions when a single adult takes a child in a car. This should be done with the knowledge of another leader and, for children under 16, with the permission of the parent. If dropping off a child, it is the responsibility of the adult to be sure that they know the child has entered their home.

Ratios are advised as the following being the minimum:

- For 0 to 2 years – one adult to every three children (1:3)
- For 2 to 3 years – one adult to every four children (1:4)
- For 3 to 8 years – one adult to every eight children (1:8)
- For over-8s – one for the first 8, then one for every additional 10 children.

#### **5.4. Overnight stays**

If an overnight event occurs, adults should sleep separately to children. There are two exceptions in this respect:

- If all children and adults are sleeping together in a church hall or similar, in which case adults should sleep next to each other and there must be at least two adults, preferably one male, one female.
- If a teenager reaches 18 and is friends with the other young people. In this scenario written parental consent will be needed from the parents of any child sharing sleeping accommodation with the 18/19 year old.

#### **5.5. Children with no parental consent to attend**

If a child (in school year 9 or below) turns up at an activity with no parental consent, details should be taken and contact should be made with the parent or guardian by the group leader. The leader should then ensure that any medical information and emergency contact details are taken. For school years 10 and above, emergency contacts and any details of any medical difficulties should be taken but the leader need not contact the child's parents/guardian afterwards.

#### **5.6. Use of young people as group leaders**

It is good to encourage our young people to participate in helping to run groups as this helps the groups and the young person. No helpers under the age of 18 should be in the position where they are in sole supervision of other children. All under 18 helpers should have written consent from their parent or person with parental responsibility. They should have no previous convictions or ongoing investigations of a criminal nature - if this is the case, a risk analysis will be carried out by the Safeguarding Officer and the designated member of church leadership and they will decide if sufficient support and safeguards can be put in place to allow the young person to help. Once the young person reaches 18, they should go through the selection procedure (see 6).

### **5.7. Photos**

Images and photos can only be used with the written consent of the parents/guardians and, if the child is able to consent, the child. Special care should be taking if using these photographs online or if the child is adopted or in the care of the Local Authority. Children should not be named in photographs in any publicity or on-line.

### **5.8. Ex-offenders**

Wallingford Baptist Church acknowledges that all have sinned and not lived up to the life that Christ would have us lead. With this in mind, we would want to welcome and support those who have criminal convictions including those where there have been offences against another (such as assault or sexual offences) who genuinely wish to change. Alongside this, it is important that we provide a safe environment for our children, young people and adults.

We would require any regular attender who has convictions against children to agree to an ex-offenders contract as set out by Baptists Together.

In this situation the minister as well as the Safeguarding Officer, would need to be aware of any concerns and it is recommended that the minister discuss this with the regional minister.

## **6. Ensuring appropriate recruitment, training and allegations**

All those having regular contact with children in an organised manner through the church, whether in paid or voluntary positions, must go through a recruitment process. If they have not gone through this process, they should not be left alone with children and should be encouraged to go through this process as soon as possible. If they are unwilling or unable to go through this process, they should be asked to step down from children's work in the church.

All those working with children in the church should be familiar with this safeguarding policy.

The recruitment procedure will involve:

- An application form with two references (with only one being from inside the church)
- An interview with the Safeguarding Officer (or another individual nominated by the Safeguarding Officer) and another leader
- An enhanced DBS check

All those working with children must agree to inform the church if they are subject to any investigations (criminal or conduct) or criminal convictions.

Should a prospective worker have any convictions, the Safeguarding Officer and /or allocated member of church leadership/minister must carry out a written risk assessment and consider if enough support and safeguarding measures can be put in place. Issues to consider will be:

- The nature of the offence(s)
- The time which has elapsed since the offence(s)
- The circumstances of the offence(s) if possible - if the candidate gives permission to request additional information
- The candidate's current understanding and response to the convictions

Any offences against a child will be likely to exclude a person from working with children even under supervision. If in doubt, advice can be sought from the Local Authority.

All workers and volunteers should commit to general training provided by WBC on an annual basis AND attend safeguarding training at least once every three years. This will be provided by the church, however appropriate safeguarding training from other sources such as the Local Children Safeguarding Board or schools is acceptable as long as the worker can provide a certificate to demonstrate they successfully completed the training

The Safeguarding Officer and designated member of church leadership/minister should have more advanced safeguarding training and knowledge. They might then deliver safeguarding training at WBC or request another qualified person to deliver training on their behalf.

DBS checks will be completed every three years.

If the worker hasn't joined the update service, we will accept a DBS requested by another organisation as long as the following are met:

- the applicant's criminal record or other relevant information has not changed since its issue and was issued within the last two years
- the level of that check is the same as that required, i.e. 'child'
- the original certificate is produced
- the police disclose information on an enhanced DBS certificate based on child or adult workforce, for which the criminal record check was originally applied
- the identity details on the certificate match those of the applicant

(The above points are guidance taken directly from Gov.uk)

If an individual has been at WBC for less than six months, we would expect a new DBS to be completed.

Should an individual be made subject to an investigation by the police, social services or their employer, they must disclose this to the Safeguarding Officer and/or designated member of church leadership/minister. They should then be suspended from involvement with no prejudice, while the investigation is concluded. The Safeguarding Officer should keep in contact with the organisation conducting the investigation.

All information concerning criminal convictions or investigations will be kept confidential and stored securely by the Safeguarding Officer or the designated member of church leadership/minister and not be shared with any other member unless this has been agreed with the person and it is necessary for safeguarding purposes.

If there is a concern raised about a worker/volunteer, the process above should be followed with the individual stepping aside while the Safeguarding Officer and minister/designated member of church leadership consider the situation and if necessary, contact the Local Authority. If the concern is about the Safeguarding Officer, the designated member of church leadership/minister should be contacted.

## **7. Providing a safe environment**

Wallingford Baptist Church will provide a safe environment and, while we cannot remove risk altogether, will try to ensure the safety of all children involved in church activities. This includes:

- Regular health and safety checks of the building and regular activities
- Ensuring accidents are treated and recorded appropriately
- Ensuring external trips are risk assessed
- Ensuring leaders have information in regard to any health issues such as allergies or medical conditions as needed
- Ensuring registers are kept

## **Appendix 1. When should we be concerned?**

It is important to acknowledge the rise in mental health difficulties amongst young people. These might not be due to abuse by adults or peers although some symptoms may be similar, and abuse often leads to mental health challenges. A 24/7 social media society and the pressure to achieve in examinations has put increasing stress on our young people. If you have concerns around a young person's mental health and are concerned that there are safeguarding concerns such as the child not being supported adequately, please speak to the Safeguarding Officer.

In most cases, abuse does not occur because of ill intent but because of stress, external pressures or past histories that impact on the situation. Jesus taught very clearly how we should protect our children without compromise, however he also modelled acceptance and forgiveness of the individual as well as requiring us to 'disciple' each other. In this context, this might mean helping parents/carers to parent their child.

It is important to have a basic knowledge of what to look for when children are not thriving or are experiencing abuse. The following table outlines the main types of abuse.

Neglect	<p>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.</p> <p>Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse, learning difficulties or very poor mental health.</p> <p>Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);</li> <li>• protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;</li> <li>• ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or</li> <li>• ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.</li> </ul> <p>It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.</p>
Physical abuse	<p>A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.</p> <p>Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.</p>

<p>Emotional abuse</p>	<p>The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.</p> <p>It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.</p> <p>Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it can occur on its own.</p>
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Sexual abuse	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.</p>
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(From Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015)

## **Appendix 2. Reporting concerns.**

Should you have any concerns about a child, the following process should be followed unless there is immediate danger, in which case the police should be called.

### **Listen/watch:**

- Let the child talk to you; don't ask them to speak to someone else
- If you think they are starting to tell you something of a safeguarding nature, make sure you tell the child that you will not be able to keep this information confidential
- Do not react negatively or appear shocked - try to listen and accept what the child says. It is rare that a child makes a false allegation but sometimes allegations may need to be unpicked
- Try to listen rather than speak, do not ask leading questions but if you don't understand, you can ask questions to help your understanding
- Do not make suggestions or put ideas forward (e.g. 'did he hit you?')
- Don't talk to anyone except the Safeguarding Officer about your concerns. The exception would be if you are with another adult and want them to witness something you have noticed.

### **Record:**

- As soon as possible, write down what has happened. Don't worry about spelling or neat pieces of paper, the important part is to write down exactly what you saw and heard. Do not add your personal opinion.
- At the end of your record, make sure you date it and write your name.

### **Report:**

- Speak to the Safeguarding Office as soon as possible. If you have problems getting hold of the Officer, contact the member of church leadership/minister responsible for safeguarding. Do this within 24 hours.
- Should there be immediate danger to the child, the volunteer/employee should call the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) immediately on 0345 050 7666 or the police on 999. The volunteer/employee should contact the designated safeguarding officer afterwards.

- If you have ANY concerns at all, please speak to the Safeguarding Officer. It does not matter how small your concerns are. Sometimes you might have one small piece of a jigsaw puzzle - the Safeguarding Officer may have more pieces! It may also be that the concerns are around a need for pastoral support rather than safeguarding and the Safeguarding Officer can speak to the minister.

Following the reporting of any concerns, the Safeguarding Officer will:

- Record the conversations and advice given to the employee/volunteer. This should be done as soon as possible and any decisions regarding the information recorded and relayed back to the employee/volunteer. A record to be kept as to why this decision was made.
- If necessary, make a 'No Names' consultation call to the Locality Community Support Service Tel: 0345 2412608. 'No Names' consultations provide the opportunity for professionals to discuss cases where there is anxiety or concern about how to progress an issue relating to a child and their family without making a formal referral to Children's Social Care. Parental consent is not required as discussion is done without disclosing the personal details of the child or their parents.

The consultation process should not replace Child Protection procedures.

OR

- If necessary, make a referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). If there are child protection issues the Safeguarding Officer will, as soon as possible on the day the allegations or concerns are raised, contact the MASH on Tel: 0845 050 7666 for discussion. If the child is known to social services, the MASH may direct the Safeguarding Officer to contact the child's social worker. The Safeguarding Officer may ask you to speak to the MASH if appropriate (thus avoiding third party misinformation).

**If a referral is made, this should be done after informing the child/children's parent/s unless telling the parent may mean that the child is placed at more risk or the child's parents cannot be located.**

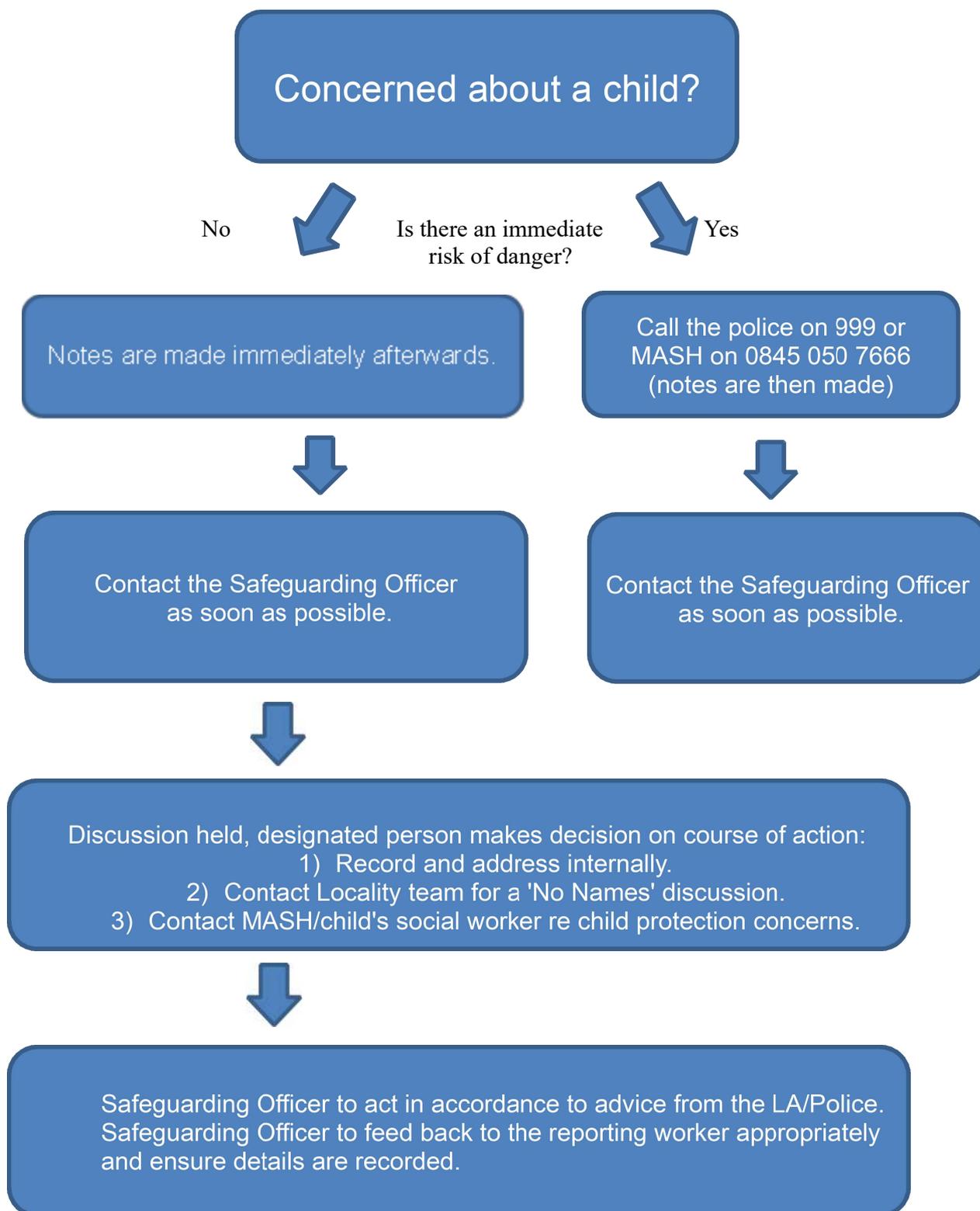
Further information can be found on:

[http://oxfordshirescb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p\\_locality\\_work.html](http://oxfordshirescb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_locality_work.html)

If the worker/volunteer disagrees with the Safeguarding Officer's decision, as a member of the public they can report serious matters to the MASH and should do so without hesitation.

The Safeguarding Officer/employees/volunteers should never attempt to carry out a child protection investigation but should always refer to the MASH.

The Safeguarding Officer is able to discuss concerns with the designated member of church leadership/minister with responsibility for safeguarding. This will be conducted to ensure the welfare of the child is paramount, otherwise confidentiality will be respected. Records of concerns and decisions should be kept in a confidential space.



Please see WBC Safeguarding Children Policy