

The Gate Hall – Safeguarding Policy, Introduction

Taking it Seriously

We acknowledge children's and adults right to protection from abuse, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. We consider that the welfare of children is paramount. We will follow legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice in order to protect vulnerable people who use our facilities.

We will seek to establish an environment in which there is an informed vigilance about the dangers of abuse.

We will implement, maintain and regularly review the procedures outlined in this policy, which are designed to prevent and to be alert to abuse.

We will appoint a Safeguarding Coordinator and Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator, who will have specific responsibilities for safeguarding, although we recognise that safeguarding is a responsibility that should be adopted by all. The Safeguarding Coordinator is the person to whom all concerns or allegations should be addressed. In the absence of the Safeguarding Coordinator, the Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator should be contacted. Their contact details can be found on the contacts page.

We will organise activities in such a way as to promote a safe environment and minimise the risk of harm to children and adults.

We will follow a safer recruitment process for the selection and appointment of people to work with children or adults at risk, whether voluntary or paid.

We are committed to providing support, supervision, resources and training to those who work with children and adults.

We will use rigorous and careful supervision to protect people from the risks associated with known offenders within the congregation, including implementing contracts with known offenders and those who have been assessed as posing a risk.

We believe that domestic abuse in all its forms is unacceptable and inconsistent with a Christian way of living and recognise that it can affect both adults and children.

All concerns and allegations of abuse will be responded to appropriately, including referring to the statutory authorities if necessary.

We will co-operate with the statutory authorities in any investigation, will follow multi-agency decisions and will maintain confidentiality of any investigations to those directly involved.

We will refer concerns about any person that meet the relevant criteria to the Local Authority Designated Officer

Aim and purpose of this policy

The aim of this policy is to provide procedures for promoting safeguarding, preventing abuse and protecting children, adults at risk and staff. This includes clear procedures for taking appropriate action when safeguarding concerns are raised involving children and adults within our organisation, or those who attend our activities and events.

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Who this policy applies to

This policy is approved and endorsed by the Committee and applies to:

- All those who use our facilities
- Our trustees and committee members
- Organisations or persons who hire our building with the agreement to operate under the Gate Hall safeguarding policy

The policy and procedures should be interpreted in the light of the most recent URC good practice guidance. Children and parents will be informed of this policy and our procedures.

The term 'children' refers to those under the age of 18 years.

Duty of care and confidentiality

We have a duty of care to all users of The gate Hall, whether adults or children. We will maintain confidentiality at all times, except in circumstances where to do so would place the individual or another individual at risk of harm.

Preventing abuse

The Gate Hall Committee will appoint Safeguarding and Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator(s) for safeguarding children and adults.

Activities will be organised in accordance with URC good practice guidelines so as to promote a safe environment and healthy relationships, whilst minimising opportunities for harm, misunderstanding or false accusation. For each event, risk assessments will be carried out, appropriate consent forms will be used (for children's activities), appropriate records will be kept and adequate insurance will be in place.

We are committed to safer recruitment and selection of all paid staff and volunteers and will ensure that these procedures are followed, which include:

- asking applicants to complete an application form
- providing workers with job descriptions and person specifications
- completion of self declaration forms
- obtaining Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) / Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme (PVG) checks wherever legally entitled to do so
- taking up two references (not from family members)
- interviewing candidates

Safeguarding training will be provided and volunteers and paid staff will be given support and supervision in their role.

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All trustees, paid staff and volunteers will work within a code of conduct (code for workers, attached as Appendix 3) and understand that there may be action taken if this code is not followed, possibly involving suspension or termination of working with us.

If we become aware of someone within our congregation known to have harmed children or adults in the past, we will inform the Gate Hall Safeguarding Officer and co-operate with them and the relevant statutory authorities to put in place a plan to minimise the risk of harm to children and adults.

Organisations wishing to hire our building for activities with children or adults must confirm in writing that they will follow the principles of this safeguarding policy as a condition of the letting agreement. If they have their own safeguarding policy, they will be asked to provide a copy. If they do not have their own safeguarding policy, the Gate Hall will encourage them to adopt one before agreeing to the hire, or may agree that they can follow the Gate Hall safeguarding policy and procedures.

What are we protecting people from?

The definitions of abuse differ between children and adults. A copy of the definitions relating to children and adults can be found in the main Safeguarding Policy Document

How to recognise abuse

It is important to be aware of the possible signs and symptoms of abuse. Please see our main Safeguarding Policy Document for those relating to children adults at risk.

Some signs could be indicators of a number of different categories of abuse.

It is essential to note that these are **only indicators of possible abuse**. There may be other, innocent, reasons for these signs and/or behaviour. They will, however, be a guide to assist in assessing whether abuse of one form or another is a possible explanation for a child or adult's behaviour.

What to do if there is a disclosure or allegation of abuse

If a child, young person or adult makes a disclosure that they are being abused and / or an allegation of abuse against someone, it is important that the person being told:

- stays calm and listens carefully
- reassures them that they have done the right thing in telling
- does not investigate or ask leading questions
- explains that they will need to tell someone else if anyone is at risk of harm, in order to help them
- does not promise to keep secret what they have been told

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- informs the Gate Hall Safeguarding Coordinator as soon as possible (if they are implicated in the allegation, informs the Deputy Safeguarding Officer)
- makes a written record of the allegation, disclosure or incident and signs and dates this record. This should be given to the Gate Hall Safeguarding Coordinator and stored securely in a locked filing cabinet.

Procedure in the event of a concern of abuse

If there is an immediate threat of harm, the Police should be contacted without delay.

Where it is judged that there is no immediate threat of harm, the following will occur:

- The concern should be discussed with the Gate Hall Safeguarding Coordinator and a decision made as to whether the concern warrants a referral to the statutory authorities
- A confidential record will be made of the conversation and the circumstances surrounding it. This record will be kept securely and a copy passed to statutory authorities if a referral is made.
- The person about whom the allegation is made must not be informed by anyone in the Gate Hall if it is judged that to do so could place a child or adult at increased risk. If the statutory authorities are involved, they should be consulted beforehand.
- The Gate Hall Safeguarding Officer should be kept informed of any serious concerns.

If someone in the Gate Hall is alleged or known to have harmed children or adults

We will inform the Gate Hall Safeguarding Officer so that they can offer advice and support, and we will contact the relevant statutory authority.

If the allegation concerns a Gate Hall trustee or committee member

For any concerns relating to children, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or the equivalent in Scotland and Wales will be contacted. The timing and method of any action to be taken will be discussed and agreed with the LADO. This will cover communication with the worker, suspension, investigation and possible strategy meetings. A decision will be taken by the LADO about when to inform the worker and the Gate Hall will follow this advice.

For concerns relating to adults, Adult Social Care will be contacted.

In accordance with the law, a referral will be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) / Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme (PVG) if the Gate Hall withdraws permission for an individual to engage in work with children / adults at risk OR would have done so had that individual not resigned, retired, been made redundant or been transferred to a different position because the employer believes that the individual has engaged in relevant conduct, satisfied the harm test, or committed an offence that would lead to automatic inclusion on a barred list.

