

## G. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

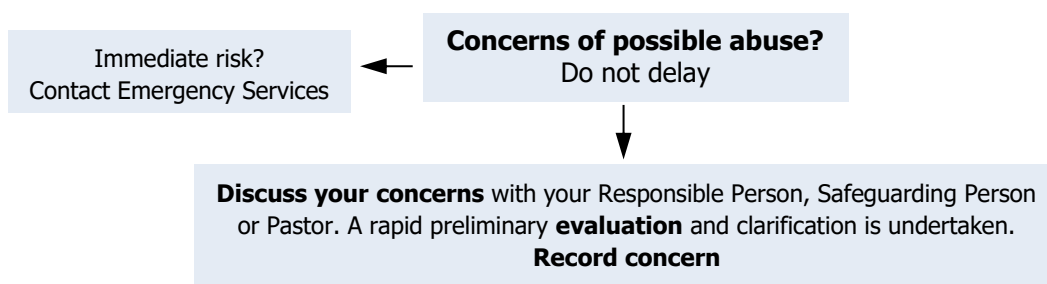
Life circumstances as well as illness can contribute to placing an adult at risk of harm. In those situations, the Church is committed to working together across its departments and with external organisations, to support and protect adults who are unable to safeguard themselves, their property and their rights. Similarly, children rely on adults for their protection and well-being. Their age and developmental stage can make them dependent and therefore vulnerable to forms of treatment that are abusive or neglectful. The Church is committed to early action in the recognition and response to concerns where individuals may be at risk of, or experiencing, any form of maltreatment.

The church is not an investigative agency and therefore employees/volunteers must understand their role when working in child or adult-centred programmes of the church. **Under no circumstances should any person attempt to carry out any 'investigation' into the allegation or suspicions of abuse.** This is the responsibility of local statutory services, whose task it is to investigate the matter, under specific legislation and statutory guidance. Our role is to recognise concerns; undertake a rapid preliminary evaluation solely for the purpose of clarification and refer child or adult protection matters to our local statutory agencies.

### What can the church do to safeguard children and adults at risk?

By 'safeguarding' and 'protection' we simply mean acting to keep our church family safe and this is a responsibility we all share. To meet this means each of us must undertake our roles to the highest standards of Christian conduct. Within our mission there already exist the commands to care for those in need. We must make ourselves aware of the protection procedures so we know how to respond and where to turn for advice or guidance where there are safeguarding concerns. We should then report any concerns without delay so that the appropriate support or protection is made available. Early help and support can prevent situations becoming or continuing to be harmful or exploitative. Details of how to respond in line with your national legislation and local procedures are located in the accompanying procedures for your nation. Please see Part III: Country Procedures, p.33.

Always remember that the welfare of the child or adult must be your paramount concern. Adults may need support to take actions to protect themselves and others from abusive situations. In all situations, informed and timely action should be taken. Do not delay; follow your country procedures and the flowchart therein on how to respond to concerns.



The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) with the pastor will evaluate all concerns and refer these on where needed. The above process should also be used for the reporting of complaints and grievances. Where the allegation or concern involves the DSL or the pastor the person who is the subject of the allegation will be excluded from the evaluation process. Under no circumstances should the person who is the subject of the allegation be informed until after any allegation has been discussed and agreement reached with the statutory authorities. Further action will be decided in discussion and agreement with the statutory agencies.

### Allegations against children and young people

Children and young people have always been curious about the opposite sex and/or experimented sexually. However, where a child in a position of power has responsibility over another child (as in a babysitting arrangement) and abuses that trust through engaging in sexual activity, this is likely to be regarded as abusive. The same applies where one child introduces another child to age-inappropriate sexual activity or forces

themselves onto a child. This is not mutual exploration. Such situations should be taken as seriously as if an adult were involved, because the effects on the child victim can be as great.

## **Whistleblowing**

Whistleblowing is a disclosure made to someone in authority by an employee alleging corruption, malpractice, or wrongdoing. The act of blowing the whistle is 'making a disclosure in the public interest.'

Types of activity or behaviour that give rise to whistleblowing may include:

- Bullying or harassment
- Decision-making for personal gain
- Any criminal activity
- Abuse of position
- Fraud and deceit
- Serious breaches of procedure, which may advantage a particular party or any actions
- Behaviour likely to bring the reputation of the Church into question.

If a BUC staff member (lay employees and all ministers who serve in appointments under the control of the BUC) becomes aware of activities which give cause for concern in the context of safeguarding, the BUC allows concerns to be raised in confidence and, to allow for a thorough and appropriate investigation of the matter.

Any individual who makes a disclosure of wrongdoing or malpractice will be treated with respect and will be protected against victimisation. Anyone who victimises a whistleblower will be subject to the BUC's disciplinary procedure.

In the context of protecting children and adults at risk of harm, whistleblowing is not a substitute for following the safeguarding protocols outlined in these procedures. Government guidance on the process of whistleblowing can be found at [www.gov.uk/whistleblowing](http://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing).

[It is in violation of the whistleblowing policy for anyone to make a knowingly false complaint of wrongdoing or to provide knowingly false information about a complaint. This will result in disciplinary action when possible.](#)