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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Proximity Church – Charity number: 1146983

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A General Policy Statement

Proximity Church has a moral duty to ensure that it functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Throughout these policies and procedures, reference is made to “children and young people”. This term is used to mean children (i.e. those aged under 16), and young persons (i.e. those aged 16 to 18). The trustees recognise that some adults are also vulnerable to abuse, accordingly, the procedures may be applied (with appropriate adaptations) to allegations of abuse and the protection of vulnerable adults.

The trustees are committed to ensuring that the organisation:

- Provides a safe environment for children and young people
- Identifies children and young people who are suffering
- Takes appropriate action to see that such children and young people are kept safe from harm

In pursuit of this, the trustees will approve and aim to annually review policies and procedures with the aim of:

- Raising awareness of issues relating to the welfare of children and young people and the promotion of a safe environment for the children and young people.
- Providing procedures for reporting concerns
- Establishing clear procedures for reporting and dealing with allegations of abuse against trustees, Proximity Church members, Proximity Church Staff and volunteers
- The safe recruitment of trustees/Proximity Church Staff/volunteers

Proximity Church has family at its core. Children and young people who regularly attend church events or use the Prayer Room tend to be part of families that also attend Proximity Church. Church members are those approved by leaders. A list of current members is held by the leaders.

Children and young people who attend fall into two categories: those who are met through the schools work, and those who attend via existing friends and family members.

For children and young people who are met through the schools work:

Parents/guardians of all children and young people are invited and welcome at all church events, however children of primary school age (11 and under) attending a church event must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

When a child or young person first attends a church event, the contact number of parents/guardians will be taken if not already held. (Leaders will keep a record of relevant contact numbers.) Permission from their parents/guardians will be necessary each time the young person attends a church event, and transport arrangements will be confirmed with the parent/guardian.

For children and young people attending the Prayer Room, the same guidelines are applicable.

In all circumstances including church events, at the Prayer Room, or giving lifts in a car, a minimum of two adults are to be present. However, a Church member may meet a child or young person in a public place (e.g. coffee shop). In this case the time will be limited to 1.5 hours, and the Church member will contact a Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy if DSL is unavailable) at the beginning and end of the time.

Exceptions to the above rules may be made only at the joint agreement and discretion of the DSL.

For children and young people of Proximity Church members:

Children and young people of any age are welcome at the Prayer Room and all church events when accompanied by their parents/guardians. They can attend church events and the Prayer Room alone with the permission of their parents/guardians. At church events a Church member will have the necessary parent/guardian contact number and be responsible for them, as well as transport arrangements. Contact and meeting arrangements will be at the discretion of the parents/guardians.

Proximity Church Leadership teams will attend in-house Safeguarding Training annually Church and to have a DBS check (updated every three years).

Proximity Church has nominated **Charlotte Harman** as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) with special responsibility for child protection issues and has undertaken appropriate training and **Joyce Gjoni** is the Deputy.

Proximity Church Staff and volunteers working directly with children and young people in schools will receive annual safeguarding training to ensure they are aware of latest guidance, their responsibilities and the organisation's procedures and policies.

The policy will be reviewed annually, next date for review **December 2023.**

The trustees recognise the following as forms of abuse:

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse causes harm to a child's person. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning or suffocating. It may be done deliberately or recklessly, or be the result of a deliberate failure to prevent injury occurring.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent or severe failure to meet a child or young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs. It will result in serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves a child or young person being forced or coerced into participating in or watching sexual activity. It is not necessary for the child to be aware that the activity is sexual and the apparent consent of the child is irrelevant.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse occurs where there is persistent emotional ill treatment or rejection. It causes severe and adverse effects on the child's or young person's behaviour and emotional development, resulting in low self-worth. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all forms of abuse.

Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b)

for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact: it can also occur through the use of technology.

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse and can be a one-off occurrence or might happen over time. All children and young people, including 16-and-17-year-olds, can experience child sexual exploitation

Church members need to be aware of indicators which may signal children are at risk of or involved with serious crime. These may include: a change in friendship/relationships with older individuals or groups, signs of self harm or significant change in well-being, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs. Church members should be aware of the associated risks and understand measures in place to manage these.

Child criminal exploitation: county lines

Criminal exploitation of children is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines criminal activity: drug networks or gangs groom and exploit children and young people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns. Key to identifying potential involvement in county lines are missing episodes, when the victim may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs.

Domestic abuse

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. Domestic violence can be psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional. It can impact on children through seeing, hearing or experiencing the effects of domestic abuse and/or experiencing it through their own intimate relationships. Exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result. It is important to note that domestic abuse affecting young people can also occur within their personal relationships, in addition to the context of their home life.

So-called 'honour-based' violence

So-called ‘honour-based’ violence (HBV) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community. Abuse committed in the context of preserving “honour” often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. All forms of HBV are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such.

Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a girl being at risk of FGM, or already having suffered FGM.

If Proximity Church Staff or volunteers have a FGM concern over a child or young person they should activate local safeguarding procedures, using existing national and local protocols for multi-agency liaison with police and children’s social care. Where Proximity Church Staff or volunteers discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl who is aged under 18, there will be a statutory duty upon that individual to report it to the police.

Proximity Church Staff and volunteers must report to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out. Unless the member of Proximity Church Staff/volunteer has a good reason not to, they should still consider and discuss any such case with the designated safeguarding lead and involve children’s social care as appropriate.

Homelessness

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child’s welfare. The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should be aware of contact details and referral routes in to the Local Housing Authority so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest opportunity. Indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property. Whilst referrals and or discussion with the Local Housing Authority should be progressed as appropriate, and in accordance with local procedures, this does not, and should not, replace a referral into children’s social care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

Forced marriage

Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England and Wales. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). Nevertheless, some communities use religion and culture as a way to coerce a person into marriage.

Radicalisation

Children are vulnerable to extremist ideology and radicalisation. Similar to protecting children from other forms of harms and abuse. Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. This also includes calling for the death of members of the armed forces. Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups.

As an organisation we have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. This duty is known as the Prevent duty. This means being able to demonstrate both a general understanding of the risks affecting children and young people in the area and a specific understanding of how to identify individual children who may be at risk of radicalisation and what to do to support them.

The Prevent guidance refers to the importance of Prevent awareness training to equip church members to identify children at risk of being drawn into terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas. Charlotte Harman has undertaken Prevent training in October 2018.

Channel: Church members should understand when it is appropriate to make a referral to the Channel programme. Channel is a programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. It provides a mechanism for organisations to make referrals if they are concerned that an individual might be vulnerable to radicalisation. An individual’s engagement with the programme is entirely voluntary at all stages.

Following a referral the panel will assess the extent to which identified individuals are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism, and, where considered appropriate and necessary consent is obtained, arrange for support to be provided to those individuals.

Child-on-Child Abuse

Children can abuse other children. This is generally referred to as peer-on-peer abuse and can take many forms. This can include (but is not limited to) bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting and initiating/hazing type violence and rituals. Proximity Church has a zero-tolerance approach to child-on-child abuse.

Upskirting is now a criminal offence. 'Upskirting' typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.

All church members should understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviour between children and young people. Proximity Church Staff should also recognise that downplaying certain behaviours as "just banter" or "boys being boys" can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment for children and young people and a culture that normalises abuse. Church members should understand that even if there are no reports of peer-on-peer abuse in their context, this doesn't mean it is not happening. If any person have any concerns about peer-on-peer abuse, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or a deputy.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physical and verbal) and are never acceptable. It is important that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. Church members should be aware that some groups are potentially more at risk. Evidence shows girls, children with special education needs and LGBT children are at greater risk. Church members should be aware of the importance of:

- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up;
- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as "banter", "part of growing up", "just having a laugh" or "boys being boys"

Sharing of Nudes or Semi-Nudes

Sharing of nudes or semi-nudes is defined as the sending or posting of nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams online by young people under the age of 18. This could be via social media, gaming platforms, chat apps or forums. It could also involve sharing between devices via services like Apple's AirDrop which works offline. Alternative terms used by children and young people may include 'dick pics' or 'pics'.

The motivations for taking and sharing nude and semi-nude images, videos and live streams are not always sexually or criminally motivated.

This advice does not apply to adults sharing nudes or semi-nudes of under 18-year olds. This is a form of child sexual abuse and must be referred to the police as a matter of urgency.

What to do if an incident comes to your attention:

- **Never** view, copy, print, share, store or save the imagery yourself, or ask a child to share or download – **this is illegal**. If you have already viewed the imagery by accident (e.g. if a young person has showed it to you before you could ask them not to), report this to the DSL (or equivalent) and seek support.
- **Do not** delete the imagery or ask the young person to delete it.
- **Do not** ask the child/children or young person(s) who are involved in the incident to disclose information regarding the imagery. This is the responsibility of the DSL (or equivalent).
- **Do not** share information about the incident with other members of Proximity Church Staff, the young person(s) it involves or their, or other, parents and/or carers.
- **Do not** say or do anything to blame or shame any young people involved.
- **Do** explain to them that you need to report it and reassure them that they will receive support and help from the DSL (or equivalent).

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE: if any disclosures of sexual violence or assault has taken place the police are to be contacted immediately.

B Designated Proximity Church Staff with Responsibility for Child Protection

Person with Lead Responsibility

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for child protection issues is Charlotte Harman (Team Leader, Proximity Church). Contact number 07868559889. She has a key duty to take lead responsibility for raising awareness within the organisation of issues relating to the welfare of children and young people, and the promotion of a safe environment for the children and young people.

The Deputy Children Protection Officer (DDSL) is Joyce Gjoni (Director, Proximity Schools) who can be contacted on: 07825184904.

Together, they are responsible for ensuring that required questions are asked on relevant trustees, schools volunteers and future employees' application forms. Any applicants will be made aware of the following job role requirement:

This post meets the requirements in respect of exempted questions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, any applicants for this post who are offered employment or who become school volunteers for this organisation will require a Disclosure Barring Service check before the appointment is confirmed. This will include details of cautions, reprimands or final warnings as well as convictions. A criminal record will not automatically bar a person from successfully taking up this post.

Charlotte Harman has received appropriate training and should keep up to date with developments in child protection issues. They will all have responsibility for making new trustees, Proximity Church Staff and volunteers aware of the existing child protection policy.

Charlotte Harman will be the main contact point for Child Protection issues and will have contact details for relevant organisations available for trustees, Proximity Church members, Proximity Church Staff and volunteers. This list will usually include contact details of relevant individuals and provisions such as:

Thurrock MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub): 01375 652802

Local Police: 01375 391212

Thurrock LADO: 01375 652921 // Secure email - LADO@thurrock.gcsx.gov.uk

Thirty:one:Eighty Helpline: 0845 120 4550

Referrals to services regarding concerns about a child or family typically fall into the categories below:

Tier 1 Universal Services	Children with no additional needs. Children who made good overall progress in all areas of universal development and receive appropriate universal services
Tier 2 Children with additional needs	Children whose health and development may be adversely affected and who would benefit from extra help in order to make the best of their life chances.
Tier 3 Children with multiple needs	Children whose health and/or development is being impaired or there is a high risk of significant impairment.
Tier 4 Children in need of protection	Children who are experiencing significant harm or where there is a high likelihood of significant harm.

TIER 1 – THOSE REQUIRING UNIVERSAL SERVICES (CHILDREN WITH NO IDENTIFIED ADDITIONAL NEEDS)

The majority of children and families locally and nationally fall into Tier 1 where needs can largely be met by the provision of Universal Services. This means that there is a universal element – all children and young people (0-19) are entitled to these services. They include:- Mainstream Education, Child health promotion and surveillance, Immunisation programmes, Midwifery services, Health visiting, School Nursing.

These can be accessed by all parents and children living in Thurrock. In general children who only require universal provision are those ‘with no identified additional need’. The table in Appendix A provides a useful summary of indicators of children assessed as having no identified additional needs, based on the Framework for the Assessment of Children and their families.

TIER 2 – THOSE REQUIRING EARLY INTERVENTION/PREVENTION

Tier 2 needs are those where there are indicators that without the provision of additional services, they may escalate or circumstances deteriorate to the detriment of the children or families concerned. Services provided within Tier 2 are designed so that they can be activated as early as possible, sometimes even where need is predicted rather than presenting.

For example, there may be services and interventions that could assist parents where there are known to be specific vulnerabilities or risk factors. Within Tier 2, participation is most likely to be on a voluntary basis where parents assess appropriate services. If such needs are identified in the CAF referral received by MASH, they will usually recommend the involvement of the Prevention and

Support Services (PASS).

TIER 3&4 - CHILD IN NEED AND CHILD IN NEED OF PROTECTION Section 17 (S17) (Children Act 1989) referrals

The Children Act 1989 states that a child shall be considered "in need" if:

- s/he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by a local authority
- their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of such services
- s/he is disabled

This smaller group of children and young people require intensive help and support to meet their needs. This group includes those children who require an assessment to determine whether or not they are children in need and have suffered or who are at risk of significant harm. Such children fall into Tiers Three and Four. Their needs tend to be so complex that it is hard to distinguish the level of need without formal assessment (e.g. Child in Need as defined under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 or Child in Need of protection as defined under Section 47 – see details below).

Child in Need – Section 17

Children who are defined as being 'in need', under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, are those whose vulnerability is such that they are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services (Section 17(10) of the Children's Act 1989), plus those who are disabled. The critical factors to be taken into account in deciding whether a child is in need under the Children Act 1989 are:

- What will happen to a child's health or development without services being provided; and
- The likely effect the services will have on the child's standard of health and development

Local Authorities have a duty to safeguarding and promote the welfare of children identified as in need, however parents/carers need to be willing to undertake assessments and accept offers of services. They should be encouraged to do so as a means of avoiding the needs escalating to a higher

level which will likely lead to compulsory intervention.

Child protection - Section 47 (S47) (Children Act 1989) referrals

Some children are in need because they are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children, and gives Local Authorities a duty to make enquiries (under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989) to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child who is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. It is only when the Local Authority has reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm that compulsory intervention is justified. That intervention may take the form of a Section 47 investigation, a Child Protection Conference following by a Child Protection Plan or in more extreme cases, legal intervention.

A court may only make a Care Order or Supervision Order in respect of a child if it is satisfied that:

- o The child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, and
- o The harm or likelihood of harm is attributable to a lack of adequate care or control (Section 31)

Under Section 46 of the Children's Act 1989 Police have the power to remove children into Police Protection if they are at risk of significant harm.

C Dealing with Disclosure of Abuse and Procedure for Reporting Concerns

**It is important to note that if, at any point, there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child a referral should be made to the Police immediately. If the disclosure involves sexual abuse then the Police are to be immediately contacted. Anybody can make a referral. If the child's situation does not appear to be improving the Proximity Church Staff member/volunteer with concerns should press for reconsideration. Concerns should always lead to help for the child at some point.

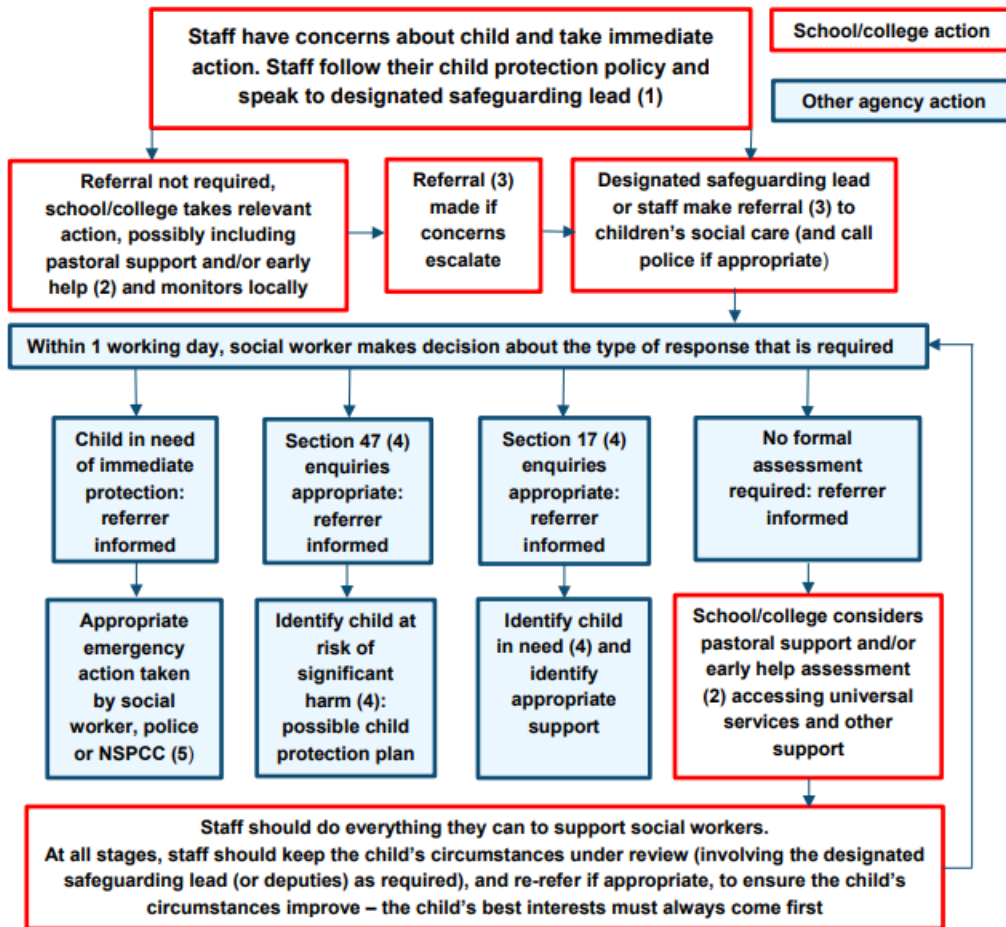
Children are not always ready or able to talk about their experiences of abuse and/or may not always recognise that they are being abused. If a child or young person informs a Proximity Staff or Church member/volunteer or a Proximity adult become aware that a child might be experiencing possible harm (that is not of immediate seriousness) then that individual should:

- Inform the child that you must pass the information on, but that only those who need to know about it will be told. Inform them who you will share the information with

- Listen carefully and stay calm
- Do not interview the child, but question normally and without pressure, to be sure that you understand what the child is telling you
- Do not put words into the child's mouth
- Reassure the child that by telling them, they have done the right thing
- Log onto Proximity Church Safeguarding Portal to record the concern, follow online instructions carefully
- Report to DSL team that a concern has been raised on the Safeguarding Portal

Trustees, Proximity Church members, Proximity Church Staff and volunteers should not investigate concerns or allegations themselves, but should report them immediately to the designated person, Charlotte Harman, or if unavailable the deputy Joyce Gjoni.

Actions where there are concerns about a child



This diagram illustrates what action should be taken and who should take it where there are concerns about a child. If, at any point, there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child a referral should be made to the Police immediately. **It is imperative to note that: anyone can make a referral.**

* Where a child and family would benefit from coordinated support from more than one agency (e.g. education, health, housing, police) there should be an inter-agency assessment [CAF]. These assessments should identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed via a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989.

** Where there are more complex needs, help may be provided under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (children in need). Where there are child protection concerns local authority services must make enquiries and decide if any action must be taken under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

D Reporting and Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Trustees, Proximity Church Staff, volunteers or Proximity Church members

Proximity Church's promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about all adults working with children are dealt with promptly and appropriately. Creating a culture in which all concerns about adults (including allegations that do not meet the harms threshold) are shared responsibly and with the right person, recorded and dealt with in appropriately, is critical.

If implemented correctly, this should encourage an open and transparent culture; enabling staff to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour early; minimise the risk of abuse; and ensure that trustees, Proximity Church members, Proximity Church staff and volunteers are clear about appropriate boundaries and act within these boundaries, and in accordance with the ethos and values of the church

These procedures apply to all trustees, Proximity Church members, Proximity Church Staff and volunteers:

- 1.1 In rare instances, Staff of organisations working with children and young people have been found responsible for child abuse. Due to their frequent contact with children and young people, Proximity Church Adults may have allegations of child abuse made against them. Proximity Church recognises that an allegation of child abuse made against a trustee, church member, Proximity Church Staff or volunteer may be made for a variety of reasons and that the facts of the allegation may or may not be true. It is imperative that those dealing with an allegation maintain an open mind and that investigations are thorough and not subject to delay.
- 1.2 Proximity Church recognises that the Children Act 1989 states that the welfare of the child is the paramount concern. It is also recognised that hasty or ill-informed decisions in connection with a Proximity Church adult can irreparably damage an individual's reputation, confidence and career. Therefore, those dealing with such allegations within the organisation will do so with sensitivity and will act in a careful, measured way.

Concerns or allegation about a Proximity adult should be recorded on the Proximity Church Safeguarding Portal and reported to the DSL. If the concern relates to the DSL reports should be made to the Chair of Trustees.

The threshold of harm for any concern or allegation is as follows:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

Any concerns should be reported to and recorded with the DSL. The DSL must contact the Thurrock LADO within 24 hours of any situation arising at **01375 652921**

In an emergency outside office hours contact the Emergency Duty Team on **01375 372468**. They will ensure that the matter is passed promptly to the Thurrock LADO, and assist in initiating any priority safeguarding activities.

Role of the Thurrock LADO

The Thurrock LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) promotes a safer children's workforce by providing effective guidance, advice and investigation oversight to cases.

Thurrock LADO may be able to offer advice and assist with communication in situations which sit outside the statutory criteria, albeit at the discretion of the LADO Officer and where the broader goals of a safer children's workforce are relevant.

Low Level concerns

A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that a Proximity adult may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the Staff Handbook, including inappropriate conduct outside of work;
and
- does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to: being over friendly with children, having favourites, taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door (without preventative measures being put in place e.g. glass door, letting another adult know where you are), using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse. It is crucial that any such concerns, including those which do not meet the harm threshold, are shared responsibly and with the right person, and recorded and dealt with appropriately. Ensuring they are dealt with effectively should also protect those working in or on behalf of Proximity Church from potential false allegations or misunderstandings.

Responding to low-level concerns

If the concern has been raised via a third party, the DSL should collect as much evidence as possible by speaking: directly to the person who raised the concern unless it has been raised anonymously, to the individual involved and any witnesses. The information collected will help to categorise the type of behaviour and determine what further action may need to be taken.

Recording concerns

All concerns and allegations should be recorded in on the Proximity Safeguarding Portal. Records should include the details of the concern, how the concern arose, the actions taken and the name of the person sharing their concerns. If the individual wishes to remain anonymous, this should be respected as far as possible. Records should be reviewed so that patterns of concerning behaviour can be recognised and appropriate action can be taken. Records will be kept on file for a minimum 10 years.

E Recruitment and Selection Procedures

Proximity Church have safe recruitment and selection procedures. These will be reviewed annually to ensure that they take account of the following:

- Procedures apply to Proximity Church Staff and volunteers who may work with children and young people
- The key selection criteria for the post or role is identified
- Obtain two professional or character references

- Take a DBS check (maintain sensitive and confidential use of the applicant's disclosure)
- Use a variety of selection techniques (e.g. qualifications, previous experience, interview, reference checks)

F Working with offenders

When someone attending Proximity Church is known to have abused children, the leaders will supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but in its commitment to the protection of children, set robust boundaries for that person which they will be expected to keep.

G Schools work

We are visitors in schools and operate under the permission of the CEO and Headteachers, and their authority. Proximity Church will work according to the schools safeguarding policy; when working on school sites.

Any offsite provision will come under the Service Level Agreement which outlines that Proximity Church Staff and volunteers will work according to Proximity Church's Safeguarding Policy. This involves gaining signed parent permission, keeping medical information and emergency contact details, all of which are stored securely.

The schools team will endeavour to:

- when working with a student one to one, work in an open and public space
- work appropriately, any contact with children and young people which is, or could be interpreted as being, inappropriate, sexual or violent (words, threats, jokes, actions) will be strictly avoided
- dress appropriately and fitting to the environment

All volunteers working in schools with Proximity Church should read and sign the Proximity: Schools Team Agreement.

Social Media and Mobile Phones

Trustees, Church Members, Proximity Church Staff and volunteers are to have no personal contact with children and young people who are met through the schools work; this includes via mobile phones, email and social media accounts. Proximity Church have work phones that can be used, with permission from parent/guardians, to contact children and young people concerning Proximity

Church or Schools activities. Personal social media contact includes via texts, calls or other messaging services.

Trips with Children and Young People

When taking children and young people on trips, written permission would be obtained. Information on medical conditions and allergies would be given. Emergency contact numbers would be electronically recorded and parents/guardians will have all the relevant information of timings of the day. Risk Assessments for all trips will be written and recorded.

Remote Mentoring

For children and young people not able to access school, or public spaces Proximity Church will offer remote mentoring so that all children and young people can be supported and reached.

Proximity Church Staff will set up remote mentoring only on the basis that parent permission is given (date/means of permission will be centrally recorded/stored by DSL). Mentors will agree a date/time to contact YP – this will be in “school hours” and via a parent device. Once a time is agreed, mentors will inform DSL. Mentoring will last up to 20 minutes; mentors will speak with parents before and after mentoring. Mentors will make notes of mentoring session and centrally record these. Mentoring can happen through Zoom, WhatsApp, Facetime or just through a phone call. It is essential that the mentor only makes contact with that child or young person at an agreed time, on a parent device and gained parent permission, as well as speaking to the parent before/after session. Arrangements for sessions are to be kept on a central Proximity Schools document and notes of sessions are to be kept via the Proximity Schools Intranet site.

H Performers College

Proximity Church offer a befriending service at Performers College. For all under 18 year olds, the same rules of working under the Child Protection Policy of the Educational establishment will apply. Volunteers will be asked to sign the Proximity Church Volunteers agreement and will adhere to all aspects of section G with the acceptance of Mobile Phones.

The befriending volunteers will have a Proximity Church work mobile phone, by which students can contact without parent permission. This is due to the fact that the College have students from aged 16 often on a residential basis.

I Record Keeping

All safeguarding concerns will be stored on the Proximity Church Safeguarding Portal.

Recording all concerns about a child or young person's welfare or safety is vital. This must be done regardless of whether the concerns are shared with the police or children's social care.

Via the Proximity Church safeguarding, the charity will keep an accurate record of:

- the date and time of the incident/disclosure
- the date and time of the report
- the name and role of the person to whom the concern was originally reported and their contact details
- the name and role of the person making the report (if this is different to the above) and their contact details
- the names of all parties who were involved in the incident, including any witnesses
- the name, age and any other relevant information about the child who is the subject of the concern (including information about their parents or carers and any siblings)
- what was said or done and by whom
- any action taken to look into the matter
- any further action taken (such as a referral being made)
- the reasons why the organisation chose not to refer the concern to statutory organisations – if relevant

Proximity Church Safeguarding Portal

All safeguarding concerns raised are to be kept confidential and stored securely on the Proximity Church Safeguarding Portal. Individual users will have access via a personal account that is password protected.

All information about child protection concerns and referrals are kept in a separate child protection file for each child. The child protection file should be started as soon as the DSL are made aware of any concerns. The DSL team have full access to all concerns and will use these individual logs as a single central record of any follow-up and active or closed cases.

You must keep clear and comprehensive records of all allegations made against adults working or volunteering with children, including: • what the allegations were • how the allegations were followed up

Storing records relating to adults

Records relating to concerns about an adult's behaviour are kept in the individual's confidential personnel file.

Retention periods: concerns about adults

If concerns have been raised about an adult's behaviour around children, records are to be kept in their personnel file until they reach their normal retirement age or for 10 years – whichever is longer. This applies to all church members, trustees, volunteers and paid staff. For example:

- if someone is 60 when the investigation into the allegation is concluded, records will be kept until their 70th birthday
- if someone is 30 when the investigation into the allegation is concluded, records will be kept until they are aged 65.

All records will be kept regardless of whether the allegations were unfounded. However, if it is found to be that the allegations are malicious records will be destroyed immediately.

Retention periods: concerns about children

Records relating to child protection should be kept for 7 years after Proximity Church's last contact with the child and their family. If that child is a member of Proximity Church, any records will be kept until that child reaches the age of 25.

If it is decided not to share concerns about a child's welfare with the police or social services, a record of the issues that were raised is still to be kept. In some cases, records can be kept for longer periods – see the 'Exceptions' section below for more information.

Exemptions: in some cases, records can be kept for longer periods of time.

For example, if the records provide information about a child's personal history, which they might want to access at a later date; if the records have been maintained for the purposes of research; if the information in the records is relevant to legal action that has been started but not finished; or if the records have been archived for historical purposes (for example if the records are relevant to legal proceedings involving the organisation).

Where there are legal proceedings, legal advice will be sought as to how long to retain records.

Some records are subject to statutory requirements and have a specific retention period. This includes records relating to: children who have been 'looked after' by the local authority (records to be kept for 25 years); adopted children; registered foster carers; residential children's homes.

When records are being kept for longer than the recommended period, files must be clearly marked with the reasons for the extension period.