



# Freedom Church Network

## Safeguarding Policy

### Registered Address:

Acorn House, The Kingswood Estate,  
Britannia Road, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 8DB

KEY CONTACT DETAILS	Charity Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Michaela Willcox <i>Mobile: 07889679115</i>	
<b>Freedom Church Bristol</b>	<b>Freedom Church Wiltshire</b>	<b>Freedom Church S Lincs</b>
<b>DSL: Michaela Willcox</b> <i>Mobile: 07889679115</i>	<b>Deputy DSL: Lou Ashford</b> <i>Mobile: 07548 371982</i>	<b>Deputy DSL:</b> <b>Christine Rowbottom</b> <i>Tel: 07518 707113</i>
<b>ART (Access and Referral Team)</b> <b>if resident in South Glos:</b> <i>Tel: 01454 866000</i> <i>Out of hours: 01454 615165</i>	<b>Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)</b> <i>Tel: 0300 456 0108</i> <i>Out of hours: 0300 456 0100</i>	<b>Children's safeguarding</b> <i>Tel: 01522 782111</i> <i>Out of hours: 01522 782333</i>
<b>FR (First Response)</b> <b>if resident in Bristol:</b> <i>Tel: 0117 903 6444</i> <i>Out of Hours: 01454 615 165</i>		
<b>THIRTYONE:EIGHT: 0303 003 11 11</b>		

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## Safeguarding Policy Statement (Summary)

We recognise the importance of Safeguarding all children, young people and vulnerable adults and of prioritising good working practices. Therefore, the church ensures that everyone working with children, young people or vulnerable adults:

- has undergone a Disclosure and Barring Service [DBS] check, at enhanced level where appropriate
- is adequately trained and supervised
- understands and follows the Safeguarding Policy and procedures
- is committed to supporting parents and families
- is committed to the nurturing, protection and safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults
- recognises that the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults is everybody's responsibility
- is committed to following agreed procedures and following statutory, denominational and specialist guidelines
- reviews this policy statement annually

### ***Freedom Church:***

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- is committed to the nurturing, protection and safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults
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### ***Safeguarding Policy agreed by the Trustees:***

Signed: 	Name: Rev Dr David Hull, Chair	Date: 14 January 2026
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If you have any concerns for an individual or in relation to any safeguarding matter, speak to the Deputy DSL for your location, or the Charity DSL.

A full copy of the policy is available on request from a member of the Church Leadership Team.

KEY CONTACT DETAILS	Charity Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Michaela Willcox Mobile: 07889 679115	
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### **Safeguarding Statement**

**Safeguarding Policy Statement (Summary)** [A copy to be displayed at each place of operation]

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## **Appendices:**

A: Recruitment Checklist

B: Accident and Incident Logsheet

### **Maintained and stored separately:**

Filming and Photographic Consent Form

Worker's Action Sheet when responding to Disclosure of Abuse

Skin Maps

Concerned Flow Chart

Activities and Day Visits Consent Form Swimming

Consent Form

## ***Persons responsible for keeping everyone safe and secure***

### ***For Freedom Church Network:***

Chair of Trustees: **Rev Dr David Hull**  
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): **Michaela Willcox**

### ***For Freedom Church Bristol***

Lead Pastor: **Rev Dr David Hull**  
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): **Michaela Willcox**

### ***For Freedom Church Wiltshire***

Pastor: **Rev. Derek Balsdon**  
Deputy DSL: **Lou Ashford**

### ***For Freedom Church S Lincs:***

Pastor in Mission: **Rev. Keith Rowbottom**  
Deputy DSL: **Christine Rowbottom**

Freedom Church Network takes safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults seriously. All policies, practices and procedures are reviewed annually. An annual reminder is presented in each of the churches on 'Safeguarding Sunday' underlining that we are all responsible for keeping everyone safe and secure. The video "Kids are Safe Here"

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8n0-O4dg28c>) or similar is shown in the church service on Safeguarding Sunday.

**Abbreviations:** Young People: YP, Vulnerable Adults: VAs, Church Leadership Team: CLT, Access and Referral Team: ART OR First Response: FR

## ***Registered Charity Number: 1195962***

**A member of the Free Methodist Church UK**

**A member of ThirtyOne:Eight:** Membership Number 15291

**Insurance Company:** Ansvar Insurance

This policy covers all aspects of work within the charity Freedom Church Network. This includes but is not exclusive to the activities of the churches both on Sunday and mid-week, all community events and all pastoral ministry. Any person or organisation that uses the 24/7 Prayer Room on the Kingswood Estate is required to comply with this safeguarding policy

## **Safeguarding Statement**

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Freedom Church Network, hereafter referred to as Freedom Church, recognises the importance of its ministry to children, young people and vulnerable adults and its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults entrusted to the church's care.

"Free Methodists openly rebuke anything in law, persons, or institutions which violate the dignity of persons created in the image of God." Book of Discipline p5 2019

As part of its mission, Freedom Church is committed to valuing, listening to and respecting children, young people and vulnerable adults as well as promoting their welfare and protection. This is expressed in:

- The safe recruitment, supervision and training for all the children's, youth and vulnerable adult workers within the church
- Adopting a procedure for dealing with concerns about possible abuse
- Encouraging and supporting parents/carers
- Supporting those affected by abuse

## **CHURCH POLICY**

The Freedom Church Trustees, hereafter referred to as the Trustees, recognise the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults. They also acknowledge that children, young people and vulnerable adults can be the victims of physical, sexual, emotional and spiritual abuse, and neglect.

The Trustees have therefore adopted the practices and procedures set out in this document in accordance with statutory guidance. The policy and attached practice guidelines are based on the ten Safe and Secure safeguarding standards published by THIRTYONE:EIGHT and we acknowledge the valuable part THIRTYONE:EIGHT have played in helping Freedom Church to produce this policy.

## **RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE**

Under no circumstances should a church worker carry out their own investigation into the allegation or suspicion of abuse. The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse will do the following:

- Concerns must be reported as soon as possible to the DSL/DSL or to a deputy who is nominated by the Trustees to act on their behalf in dealing with the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including referring the matter on to the statutory authorities. This may entail asking the person in receipt of an allegation to contact agencies directly themselves. Contact details for each location are listed on p. 7 of this policy.
- The DSL or Deputy will inform the designated Trustee with responsibility for safeguarding, and, where necessary, the church insurers, giving a brief outline of the action taken.
- Where necessary, the nominated Trustees' Lay Representative will inform the National Leader of The Free Methodist Church UK and give a brief outline of the action taken to deal with the incident.
- In the absence of the Co-ordinator, or if the suspicions in any way involve the Co-ordinator, then the report should be made to a Deputy Officer. If the suspicions implicate both the Co-ordinator and the Deputy Officer, then the report should be made in the first instance to the THIRTYONE:EIGHT - Tel: 0303 003 11 11
- Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. A true copy of the disclosure as a written record of the concerns should be made in accordance with church procedures and kept in a locked secure place.
- Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Co-ordinator, the

absence of the Co-ordinator or the Deputy should not delay a referral to the Police, or to the relevant Local Authority.

- The Trustees will support the Co-ordinator and Deputies in their roles and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need-to-know basis.
- It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make a direct referral to the child protection agencies or seek advice from THIRTYONE:EIGHT, although the Trustees hope that members of the church will use the procedure outlined in this policy. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Co-ordinator and Deputy has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Co-ordinator and Deputy as to the appropriateness of a referral, they are free to contact an outside agency direct. By making this statement the Trustees demonstrate the commitment of the church to effective safeguarding.

The role of the Co-ordinator and Deputies is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information on to the Police or the relevant Local Authority.

## **ALLEGATIONS OF PHYSICAL INJURY OR NEGLECT**

If a child has a physical injury or symptom of neglect, the Co-ordinator or Deputy will:

- Contact the Police, the relevant Local Authority or THIRTYONE:EIGHT for advice in cases of deliberate injury, if concerned about a child's safety, or if a child is afraid to return home.
- Inform the parents or carers unless the allegation is against the child's parent/carer or were advised not to do so having contacted the Police, the relevant Local Authority or THIRTYONE:EIGHT.
- Seek medical help if needed urgently, informing the doctor of any suspicions.
- For lesser concerns, (e.g. poor parenting), encourage parent/carer to seek help, but not if this places the child at risk of injury.
- Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, offer to accompany them. In cases of real concern, if they still fail to act, contact THIRTYONE:EIGHT direct for advice.
- Seek and follow advice given by THIRTYONE:EIGHT (who will confirm their advice in writing) if anyone is unsure whether or not to refer a case to the relevant Local Authority.

## **ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE**

- In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Co-ordinator/Deputy will: Contact the Police or the relevant Local Authority.
- Inform the parents or carers unless the allegation is against the child's parent/carer or were advised not to do so having contacted the Police, the relevant Local Authority or THIRTYONE:EIGHT.
- Seek and follow the advice given by THIRTYONE:EIGHT if, for any reason, they are unsure whether or not to contact the Police or the relevant Local Authority

## **APPOINTMENT, SUPPORT, SUPERVISION & TRAINING OF LEADERS & WORKERS**

The Trustees will ensure all workers irrespective of being paid or working as a volunteer, will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with the principles set out in government guidelines, THIRTYONE:EIGHT guidance, The Charity Commissioners' and Church practice guidelines.

## **SUPPORT TO THOSE AFFECTED BY ABUSE**

The Trustees are committed to offering pastoral care, working with statutory agencies as appropriate, and supporting those attending the church that have been affected by abuse.

## **WORKING WITH OFFENDERS**

When someone attending the church is known to have abused children, young people or vulnerable adults, the Trustees will appoint a team to supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but in its commitment to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults, set boundaries for that person which they will be expected to keep, and, where necessary, put this in writing as a contract agreed to and signed by the Lead Pastor, the individual and their supervising team.

**Safeguarding Policy agreed by the Trustees:**

Name:  Signed: Rev Dr David Hull, Chair Date: 14 January 2026

## The Policy

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### 1. Safe Recruitment of Staff both Paid and Voluntary

Freedom Church wishes to ensure the safe recruitment of staff, both paid and voluntary. Anyone recruiting staff will follow this procedure:

- All prospective workers will be invited to attend up to 2 sessions to see a group/ministry in action. This will always be accompanied.
- All prospective workers whether paid or voluntary will be given a role description, an application form, and disclosure forms. Applicants will be asked to sign to confirm that they have read the Safeguarding Policy.

**DISCLOSURE FORMS:** All applicants should complete the disclosure form detailing any previous spent or unspent convictions and also any other information that may be relevant to the post e.g. disciplinary action taken by a former employer relating to Safeguarding or childcare concerns. Disclosure forms are to be given directly to the DSL or the Deputy.

When all the applications for a post are completed and returned, due consideration will be taken to match the most suitable applicants to the job description. These then will be invited to attend an interview. Anyone with convictions that would stop them working with children/YPs and VAs will receive a written explanation why they have not been called for an interview.

Interviewers/panels may at this point consider reading disclosure forms to allow them to ask questions re: disciplinary action, safeguarding, childcare issues.

Once a suitable applicant is found 2 references will be requested. An appointment can proceed once acceptable references have been received.

For those working with children, young people or vulnerable adults, before the confirmation of an appointment takes place, a role description will be issued, and all workers whether paid or voluntary will undergo a DBS check where appropriate.

At any time during the application process if there is a Safeguarding Workshop held at Freedom Church the applicants will be expected to attend. Otherwise, the successful applicant must attend a Safeguarding Workshop/watch the refresher video within their first 6 months in the role.

All applicants will be informed after interviews whether they have been given the role, and those who were unsuccessful, if they ask, will be told of the reasons why the decision was made not to appoint.

The Trustees wish to encourage young people [16/17 yrs] to participate in the life and work of the church, therefore the Trustees will define the groups that the YP can support and they will be under the authority of the group leader at all times. They will not take a supervisory or lead role for the group as they will be counted in the number of children until they are 18 yrs old. They must be recruited in the same way as above including a DBS check.

The need for additional helpers/leaders can be found under **Supervision and Ratios**.

*An Application Checklist Form can be found in the Appendices (Appendix A)*

#### 1a. Safe Recruitment of Young Helpers

Freedom Church actively encourages young people to grow in faith and service. Young helpers will normally be 16 years and above, known by the church, have consent from their own parent/ guardian and be approved by the CLT at a meeting, or by email.

Young helpers for Crèche/Freedom Kids will be considered from the age of 12 years and above, will be known by the church, have consent from their own parent/guardian and be approved by the CLT. Any exception should be clearly recorded by the CLT with its reasoning clearly defined.

To ensure the safe recruitment of young helpers, they will be given a role description and application form. When the application is completed, they will be interviewed and after a successful interview will be put on the register as an authorised young helper.

Ministry Team Leads will be responsible for outlining to the young helper/s safe working procedures and practices within the group.

*For example:*

Working within crèche/Freedom Kids, Young Helpers must not pick up a baby/toddler/child or carry them; however, they can sit with the baby/toddler/child allowing the situation to be led by the baby/toddler/child. e.g. If the toddler wants to sit on the YH's lap for a cuddle, this is toddler led.

It's difficult not to show favouritism to one baby/toddler/child if they are a sibling or a friend's baby/toddler/child, but to work in a professional manner we all need to be inclusive and show equality to all.

All young helpers must agree to be guided by the leader/adult helper in the group. For example, young helpers can help prepare the room, encourage toddler/child in group activities and play with a baby/toddler/child when sitting on the floor.

Ministry Team Leads and Leaders to be aware that anyone under the age of 18 years is legally counted as a child, therefore:

- They count in the numbers [ratio of adults to children] and should never be allowed to exceed the numbers so that another adult is needed for the group.
- They must never under any circumstances be left on their own with baby/toddler/children.
- Young Helpers should be put on a separate rota to the adult workers and not more than once a month.
- At age 16 years and above a DBS check will be required and they will also be required to attend Safeguarding Training if they wish to continue in this service.

## **1b. Employing Workers from Abroad**

The DBS does provide a limited service to assist with checks on workers from overseas. The entitlement of everyone planned to be employed in the UK must be checked with the utmost thoroughness. Failure to do so may result in a civil penalty or criminal conviction. Advice should be sought from ThirtyOne:Eight if unsure.

## **2. Equal Opportunities Statement**

Freedom Church is a Christian organisation committed to social justice and resolutely opposed to discrimination in society. We are committed to providing services on a fair and equitable basis, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, lifestyle, sex, sexuality, physical/mental disability, offending background or any other factor. No person requiring services from Freedom Church will be treated less favourably than any other person on any grounds.

In employment we actively seek to recruit with the right mix of talent, skills and potential, promoting equality for all and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates. We select all candidates for interview based on skills, qualifications, experience and commitment to the values and purposes of Freedom Church.

As an organisation seeking to deliver services within a Christian context, some posts can only be filled by Christians. These posts are specified by the Trustees and kept under review. The nature of these posts or the context in which they are carried out, and their link to the ethos of the organisation, give rise to a genuine occupational requirement [GOR] for the post-holders to be Christians. All staff in these posts are required to demonstrate a clear personal commitment to the Christian faith.

As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service [DBS] to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, Freedom Church undertakes to comply fully with the DBS Code of Practice and to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed.

A Disclosure is only requested after a thorough risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For those positions where a disclosure is required, all application forms, role adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that a Disclosure will be requested in the event of the individual being offered a position.

Where a Disclosure is to form part of the recruitment process, we encourage all applicants called to interview to provide details of any criminal record at an early stage in the application process. We request that this information is sent under a separate, confidential cover to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Deputy within the organisation and we guarantee that this information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process.

Unless the nature of the position allows Freedom Church to ask questions about an applicant's entire criminal record, we will ask only about "unspent" convictions as defined in the Rehabilitations of Offenders Act 1974.

At interview or in a separate discussion, we will ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is relevant to the position sought could lead to the withdrawal of an offer of employment or voluntary work.

We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a disclosure with the person seeking a position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar a person from working with Freedom Church, it will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offence.

### **3. Staff Records**

All documents relating to a person's application for a position whether paid or voluntary with Freedom Church must be kept in a personal folder, in a locked and secure place, including those who were unsuccessful.

These records must be kept for an indefinite period and these should include:

Application Form

References

Photocopies of ID documents used for DBS checks

**NOTE:** The disclosure of convictions document should be destroyed within 6 months, unless there is a dispute, exceptional circumstances or where a DBS agreement is secured. No photocopies are to be made of this form or held by any other person/s other than the Pastor and the safeguarding team.

Should the Disclosure Form be kept this information should not be shared with the applicant.

**Written reprimands** or notes of oral reprimands [see below for disciplinary procedure]

Notes on why a person leaves a position are important especially if they leave due to misconduct.

## ***Disciplinary procedure***

If the problem is not resolved informally with the line manager or MINISTRY TEAM LEAD:

- A disciplinary procedure will be put in writing and will state what work or behaviour has led to this action.
- Should allegations, concerns or suspicions lead to further investigations, a thorough and robust disciplinary investigation will be undertaken to establish 'on balance of probabilities' what occurred and how this may impact the suitability of the worker to remain or return to post.

Once all enquiries have been exhausted there needs to be consideration whether contact should be made to the local authority and or the police. Robust conclusions must be obtained prior to the reinstatement of any worker who has been suspended in such situations.

## ***Grievance procedure***

If the problem is not resolved informally with the line manager or MINISTRY TEAM LEAD:

- Any grievance from any staff paid or voluntary will be taken seriously and should be put in writing by the person concerned.
- This should be passed to the Pastor and if he is unable to resolve this issue,
- The Pastor will then take the matter to the Trustees of the church as in a court of law they are responsible when dealing with a grievance.

## ***Papers relating to a failed application***

No paperwork should be destroyed as this could form a part of the jigsaw re: a person trying to gain access to children/YP/VAs and maybe used as evidence in a court of law.

### **THIRTYONE:EIGHT Blemished Disclosures Advice**

*Confidentiality in places of worship - Ordinarily where a candidate is unsuccessful in obtaining a position in an organisation that is the end of the involvement between the two parties. Where places of worship are concerned the individual may remain part of it. Occasionally this can create a dilemma where information revealed on a Disclosure check indicates an individual could be a danger to vulnerable people, which was not known about beforehand. A Disclosure check can only be used for the purpose of the suitability for appointment. It is illegal to reveal information obtained through a Disclosure check. A place of worship may then have concerns that the individual is coming into contact with vulnerable people but are unable to place any restrictions and boundaries on them, due to the source of the information. THIRTYONE:EIGHT can offer advice in such situations.*

All workers who need a DBS check must sign a statement to say they have read the safeguarding policy and this to be kept in their file.

These files are not for general view and should only be available to the Pastors and the DSL when there is a safeguarding issue.

We will recheck all DBS registered workers after 1 year via the update service or 3 years by reapplication.

## ***4. Staff Training***

Anyone taking a position with Freedom Church whether paid or voluntary will be offered Safeguarding induction training, even if the position is not working directly within any of these groups.

It is mandatory for all Trustees, Pastors, leaders and workers working with children, young people and vulnerable adults to attend Freedom Churches Safeguarding induction training within 6 months of their application and DBS check. You will then be asked to attend Safeguarding refresher training annually. This may be by video.

It is everyone's responsibility to safeguard everyone who comes to Freedom Church therefore anyone whatever their role in church whether paid or voluntary, in roles not needing DBS checks will be encouraged to attend Safeguarding training.

Further training/courses will be offered where necessary.

## **5. Data Protection, Website, Social Networking**

Best practice applies to paper records as well as computerised information and any activity at Freedom Church must comply with The Data Protection Act 2018.

Information sharing should not in any way put children/YPs or VAs at risk and should be appropriate for the purpose and only to the extent necessary to achieve that purpose. If a child/YP or VA is at risk or there are concerns that they are at risk the information can be shared to the appropriate people. E.g. DSL, the relevant Local Authority, THIRTYONE:EIGHT.

### **5a. Church Websites and Social Networking**

Freedom Church recognises the important role that social networking websites play in the ways in which young people communicate and the effectiveness of these groups within youth ministry. However Freedom Church also recognises the potential safeguarding issues social networking brings therefore it is strongly recommended that all team members:

- Use a separate, designated Facebook/Twitter/Instagram (and any other social media) account for the purposes of all youth ministry groups. This account may be examined by any of the Trustees and should be used for Freedom Church purposes only and not as a worker's personal account.
- Any communication using the afore-mentioned accounts should be kept public or kept logged. Messages should be saved and kept (both incoming and outgoing) and instant chat must not be used at any time to communicate with young people.
- All contact with young people using Facebook should be kept appropriate and not use abbreviations/language that could be misunderstood by a parent or guardian (e.g. LOL and emojis).
- It is recommended that staff do not use this account after 10pm in order to maintain a safe boundary between work and personal life.
- It is strongly recommended that no Freedom Church employee/volunteer has as a friend or follower any young person on their own personal social media accounts and does not seek to add or follow any young person

### **General Usage Guidelines:**

- Make clear what is available to copy and what is not.
- Get permission to mention other sites.
- Get permission before using a picture of an adult. If it's a child/YP or VA get written permission. It's always best to use a group shot rather than one of an individual.

No personal information: don't show pictures that could identify anyone by name or location. The Trustees will appoint moderators to oversee usage and postings. If there is anything that contravenes the ethos of Freedom Church, it will be removed and the person removed from the list of those able to access these sites.

All postings on the sites should be in line with the ethos of Freedom Church and should be encouraging and informative. Group activities that have their own sites should follow these guidelines and also make the moderators aware of these sites.

## ***General Guidelines For Using Social Networking With Young People***

- If young people want you to hold their mobile telephone numbers, e-mail addresses or similar, and communicate with them this way, make sure that their parents know and have agreed.
- If a private message is required in responding to a young person make sure that another authorised adult is copied into all private message correspondence. If you are in any doubt then contact the appointed safeguarding person.
- Generally, and where possible, maintain good and open relationships with parents and carers regarding communication with them and their children.
- Only give personal contact details to young people that are within the public domain of the church, including your mobile telephone number.

## ***Use of Messages & Communication With Individual Young People***

- All social networking sites have the potential to allow workers to communicate with young people on a one to one basis however we would strongly advise that any one to one communication using a social networking site is kept in the public eye to safeguard both young people and workers.
- On Facebook/twitter/instagram this communication can be done using the wall function and it is recommended that this is used for communicating with young people individually on Facebook/twitter/instagram and for replying to private messages which young people may have sent to workers.
- In the case of group messages (messages sent to multiple young people perhaps for an event) it is advisable that another adult is also copied into this message or alternatively make sure these messages are logged and not removed.
- In all communication with young people using social networking sites it is advisable to not use abbreviations (for example: lol) as these can often be misinterpreted by parents.
- The use of instant chat on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram is inadvisable as it provides no log of conversations and could potentially leave a worker open to allegations.
- If a public wall post is not appropriate for responding to a young person then a worker should arrange a public one to one meeting, phone the young person or seek further advice from the Safeguarding Officer depending on the level of information a young person has disclosed using a social networking site.
- If a private message is required in responding to a young person we strongly advise the parents/guardians permission being sought (where possible/appropriate) and make sure that another authorised adult is copied into all private message correspondence. If you are in any doubt then contact the appointed safeguarding person.

## ***5b. Information Communication Technology and e-Safety***

Any Zoom calls (or similar) with children, YP or VAs should always include two identified leaders. Permission must be sought from all participants before any session is recorded.

Group members will be told the correct method to communicate with those responsible for the group. Youth groups should have a dedicated mobile phone, Facebook page or similar exclusively for the

group. The number/information should be given to all group workers and members and to member's parents/guardians. The contact information for the group is to be logged with the Freedom Church Moderator.

Should there be an inappropriate message from a member of the group immediately alert the group MINISTRY TEAM LEAD, print/record it if possible. A log sheet should be completed.

## **5c. Filming and Photographs**

Due to Data Protection anyone taking images of children/YP or VAs should be doing so with the full permission of the parent/guardian and all permission slips must be kept on file.

Ensure that if images that are going to be used for publicity purposes the parent/guardian is made aware of this beforehand so that they can give an informed consent or not.

If a parent/guardian will not be attending an event where images may be taken MINISTRY TEAM LEADS should ensure that the parent/guardian is fully aware of this.

If a parent/guardian has an objection to images being taken then it will be clearly marked on the register for that activity and is the responsibility of the MINISTRY TEAM LEAD to ensure that this is abided by.

The Freedom Church Trustees will be made aware of any official photos/filming that will take place under their authority and therefore will be able to verbally request that other persons refrain from taking images if in their opinion it is inappropriate.

## **6. Information for leaders and workers**

### **TOP TIPS**

1. Read Freedom Churches' Safeguarding Policy – follow it!
2. Read your group behaviour/guidelines for workers and users. Ministry Team Leads - Keep it up to date.
3. Follow Good Practice Guidelines regardless of your own views.
4. Understand that there are no 'one size fits all'. For example, you may need to comfort a young child by putting your arm around them – for an older child/teenager this may be inappropriate – maybe sitting them down and making eye contact would be better. LOG IT.
5. Don't have favourites. All children and young people are special.
6. Consider team meetings. An important way of keeping up to date, discussing issues, concerns, training and praying for those in your group.
7. **Don't be afraid to 'whistle blow' if you become aware of bad practice or behaviour by a colleague.**
8. Use the Log Sheet to record any concerns, discipline issues and complaints.
9. Inform the DSL or Deputy if you are worried that a child is at risk.
10. Be seen – be transparent – work safely.
11. Protect the child - keep yourself safe – work safely to keep all at Freedom Church Safe and Secure.

## **6a. Taking Care of Touching**

1. Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
2. Touch should relate to a child's needs, not a worker's.
3. Touch should be age appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the worker. Avoid any physical activity that is, or may be thought to be, sexually stimulating to the adult or the child.

4. Children are entitled to privacy to ensure personal dignity.
5. Children have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in exceptional circumstances when they need medical attention.
6. When giving First Aid, encourage the child to do what they can manage themselves but consider the child's best interests and give appropriate help where necessary.
7. Team members should monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They should be free to help each other by constructively challenging anything which could be misunderstood or misconstrued. If worried, talk to the DSL or a Deputy.
8. Concerns about abuse should always be reported to the DSL or a Deputy.

## ***6b. Levels of Personal Care***

Toileting, nappy changing, and special needs help should always be age related. Always make the other adult worker in the group aware of what you are doing.

Nappy changing: only do this if a parent has signed the registration form agreeing to this or call the parent to change their child.

Toileting is age related. Some children will need help, some will need to be escorted. No child in the under 5s group should be left to go to the toilet on their own unless the toilet is off the room being used.

## ***6c. Discipline and practical hints for dealing with bad behaviour***

We all need help in learning discipline and children and young people are no different.

- Be a good role model.
- Don't shout, never smack.
- Remind the children/YP of the behaviour expected in the group on a regular basis.
- Separate children who are liable to be disruptive.
- Try a one-to-one approach for a lesson/session.
- If you're finding a child/YP's behaviour difficult to manage, ask for help, don't think you're failing.
- It may be better if another worker handles the child/YP for a while or ask the parent/carer how you can help this child/YP.
- Catch a child/YP being good and praise them, this often stops a gradual decline in behaviour.
- Don't reprimand a child/YP in front of others unless necessary.

Ask yourself 'Why is the child/YP behaving like this? Is it a change of behaviour? Is there anything in the activity/group Log Book?' It's not always a Safeguarding issue, but if you are still concerned speak to the DSL or a Deputy, don't leave it.

If a child/YPs behaviour is constantly disruptive seek advice from your MINISTRY TEAM LEAD/Parent. Before you ban a child for a time [1 week, etc] speak to the MINISTRY TEAM LEAD and the other adult worker at the time. It may be time to involve the Pastor.

### **Team Meetings**

Team meetings should be held on a regular basis or at least quarterly to promote a mutually supportive working environment where ideas and issues can be aired and where concerns can be expressed, and feedback given.

## 6d. Log Sheets/Registration

A register should be kept of all those attending the group as well as the leaders/workers present and any others entering or leaving the building e.g. caretaker. If an allegation of abuse is made or even suggested, this should be briefly recorded in the logbook in the normal way along the lines of 'Sarah wanted to talk about something that was worrying her. I've given a detailed note of our conversation to the child DSL or Deputy'.

*A sample Log Sheet can be found in the Appendices (Appendix A).*

## 6e. Definitions of Abuse

"The abuse of power by a person developmentally older/stronger than another, resulting in distress, harm or neglect of necessary attention for the victim".

### What is abuse and neglect?

The main forms of abuse all of which cause long term damage include: physical abuse, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, neglect and sexual abuse. Bullying and domestic violence are also forms of abuse.

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a person by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. A person may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

**Physical abuse** may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induced illness.

**Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on their emotional development. It may involve that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's development capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying causing the person frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of someone. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment, though it may occur alone.

**Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving a person in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Child Sexual Abuse in the Family Environment - Intra-familial child sexual abuse refers to child sexual abuse that occurs within a family environment. Around two-thirds of all child sexual abuse reported to the police is perpetrated by a family member or someone close to the child. Sexual abuse which takes place within family environments often remains hidden and is the most secretive and difficult type of abuse for children and young people to disclose. Therefore, the workers must be able to spot the signs of possible sexual abuse and take the appropriate action. The Centre of Expertise on child sexual abuse have produced resources to support workers, including the 'signs and indicators' template for identifying and responding to concerns of child sexual abuse.  
(<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/knowledge-in-practice/practice-improvement/supporting-practice-in-tackling-child-sexual-abuse/>).

**Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of material substance abuse. Neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to protect someone from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to basic emotional needs.

**Spiritual Abuse** may include the misuse of faith practices, or faith-related teaching, for selfish, or ideological ends, where a person in authority misuses that position to the harm of an individual and/or their own gratification.

Using the acronym **BADIS** [Oakley and Kinmond 2013] some or all may be present:

**Blame:** for any issues or problems they identify, unable to raise issues or ask questions without being accused of either threatening unity or causing trouble, feel pressurized to be silent and not raise concerns.

**Accountability:** forced or coerced to share personal details or to include another person in your decision making.

**Damage:** to the individual, through manipulation, fear and shame.

**Inability to work with others:** A spiritually abusive individual may find it difficult to work with others. There is often absence of team decision-making.

**Scripture:** used out of context to pressurise individuals to behave in a particular way or make a particular decision. A warning sign of spiritual abuse is when scripture is used to support an individual's personal agenda.

## ***6f. Steps and Hints when listening to a disclosure***

1. Listen to the person. Hear what they are saying, not what you think.
2. Keep calm. Do not appear shocked. Be aware of your body posture and voice tone.
3. Look at the person directly.
4. Avoid cross examination. E.g Who? What? When? Why didn't you say something before?
5. Do not silence the person.
6. Let them use their own language. Avoid jargon when talking to them.
7. Don't promise to keep this confidential, let them know you have to tell someone.
8. If they ask a question, answer them honestly, if you don't know the answer say so.
9. Be reassuring as possible and help them to see they are not to blame.

**Helpful things to say:** I believe you. I'm glad you told me. It's not your fault. I will try to help.

**What to do now.** Is the person safe? If **yes**, speak to the DSL or Deputy. If the answer is **no** and you can't get to the DSL or Deputy phone ART: 01454 866 000 or out of hours 01454 615 165, FIRST RESPONSE: 0117 903 6444 or out of hours 01454 615 165 or call the Police directly.

**Make written notes immediately.** Names are important, words used, with home contact details. Take a copy for yourself to be kept securely. Even if abuse is no longer happening it is still important to report the matter as the perpetrator may be abusing others.

***You are an important part of the jigsaw; you could be saving lives.***

## ***7. Safe Supervision and Ratios in all Group Activities***

Best practice [not always possible] would be one person from each sex for each session.

Occasionally a leader may request that the MINISTRY TEAM LEAD find additional help. This could be due to different reasons e.g. behaviour issues in a group, the activity taking place or additional numbers of children in the group. Due to the ratios of adults to children needed to fulfill the legal requirements the Ministry Team Leads can ask for additional staff from the pool of DBS checked people that are on the Freedom Church register.

Occasionally, and only where groups are working in close proximity, one leader per group is permissible as long as the activities are within sight of another fully staffed activity. Where possible, parents should be made aware that this is the case.

**The Transfer of Staff.** If a person shows interest in becoming a regular worker with a group and has already gone through the Safe Recruitment Procedure for another activity at Freedom Church, they should still have an interview with the MINISTRY TEAM LEAD and then be given a signed role description for the new activity.

**Visitors to Groups.** Freedom Church encourages parents/guardians to settle their children into groups. The visitor's name must be put on the register for the day. However, should a parent/guardian offer to be a helper they should only be allowed to do this twice before going through the full recruitment process.

Never leave a person who has not been through the full recruitment process on their own with children.

## *Ratios for leaders/workers to children:*

1: 10 aged 13-18

1:8 aged 9-12

1:8 aged 4-8yrs

1:4 aged 2-3yrs

1:3 aged 0-2yrs

## *8. Group Behaviour and Safe Working*

Each activity/group should have written values and guidelines for leaders, workers and those attending the activity. A copy to be kept in the group register and given to each new group worker before they start work and read regularly to the group attending the activity.

Ministry Team Leads are responsible for ensuring that the activity's register is kept on the premises in a locked and secure place, as this holds personal information.

Each group should have a clear understanding that Freedom Church does not tolerate favouritism to be shown to any child, YP or VA, or worker in the respect of gifts and rewards. [Be sensible re birthdays and special celebrations.]

Ministry Team Leads to carry out a risk assessment for their activity in the room/area being used and any notes for workers clearly explained and kept in the register to include any fire risk directions and a list of appropriately qualified First Aiders.

**NOTE:** This should be done annually and when there are changes to the room or venue and a record kept on file.

Ministry Team Leads to ensure that all staff are adequately supervised, and that Team Meetings are scheduled on a regular basis throughout the year.

Ministry Team Leads to understand:

- The need to remove a leader/worker if there is an allegation against them.
- That the priority to safeguard children/YP/VAs is paramount.
- The accused is being supported [not necessarily by them].
- Show that appropriate action has been taken, record it.

## **9. Outings, Residential Holidays and Camps**

### **Important points to consider when organising an outing:**

Risk assess the venue before you go, paying particular attention to:

- potential dangers posed by strangers (adults and children)
- a child's eye view of the outing in terms of possible dangers
- risks that may occur as a result of a special activity
- additional help required for a particular activity (e.g. lifeguard for swimming)

Remember, all children under 18 are by law children and therefore are under your supervision.

- Ensure Parent/carer signs consent and medical forms to include emergency contact number/s before major outings.
- Parents/carers are informed of the itinerary.
- Supervision ratios are adequate for the size of the group.
- Children/YPs/VAs are supervised so that none can get lost and there is no unauthorised access to them.
- Records are kept of the vehicles used to transport children, with named drivers and appropriate insurance cover.
- If a minibus is used for transport, ensure that it is roadworthy.
- If a coach is hired for the outing, ensure the coach company has appropriate public liability insurance and is willing to work to safeguarding standards.
  - the coach driver is suitable.
  - the coach has appropriate seatbelts fitted and that children/young people wear them for the duration of the journey.
  - gangways, aisles and emergency exits are kept clear.

## **Swimming Trips**

- Adult to child ratios should be increased.
- Swimming ability of the child/YP/VA established.
- A swimming consent form for each person to be completed and taken with the group by the leader, a copy retained in the group register.

Before any visit to a swimming pool check:

- there will be a qualified lifeguard present at all times.
- first aid/rescue equipment is readily available, and this would preferably include a poolside telephone/alarm.
- If appropriate to your party, check that the pool caters for children with disabilities.
- There should be adequate signs indicating the depth of the pool and depending on the age of the group you are taking, it is advisable to make sure that the shallow end is shallow enough! If the maximum depth of the pool is less than 1.5 metres, diving should not be permitted.
- Checks should be made that the changing rooms are safe and hygienic and there is a changing room for each sex. They should be supervised while children are in there by at least two leaders per changing room. They should be of the same gender as the children, but supervised in such a way that the leaders do not watch the children actually getting changed. Children and children's workers should follow the rules of the pool. It is important children and young people know how to behave and take their lead from workers' own behaviour. Group leaders should supervise behaviour at all times and there should be a minimum of two leaders present

while the children are in the pool.

- Whilst the pool's lifeguard will be on duty to supervise swimmers this does not reduce the duty of care of leaders and workers, including being able to account for the whereabouts of all those participating in the event.
- Swimming in the sea or other natural waters is a potentially dangerous activity and should only be allowed as a supervised activity after a risk assessment. Sensible precautions should be taken and swimming should always be in a recognised bathing area with a lifeguard present. Checks should be made with our insurance company.

## **Residential Holidays, Camps & Retreats**

If using an established residential centre, checks should be made that it operates a safeguarding policy and carries out Disclosure checks on workers. Organisations providing residential holidays, camps or retreats should also carry out full risk and health & safety assessments.

Consent Forms should be taken with the worker on the activity or visit. A photocopy should be kept securely with a base contact.

## **10. Transporting Children/YP/VAs**

**Transporting children in a car:**

- Drivers should hold a current full driving licence.
- Insurance covers voluntary work (domestic, pleasure and business) and insurance company has been informed.
- Parental agreement obtained.
- Pick-up and drop-off times arranged.
- Agreement as to how many adults in the car. Where possible, it is recommended to have two adults.
- Agreement as to where children are seated – (front or rear of car, only transport for the recommended number of passengers).
- Seatbelts used.
- Risk assessment completed if journey is part of an organised trip.
- Correct child seat restraints used for under 12s or children under the height of 135cm.

*The exception is when a child or young person is left at the end of a session, and with parent's permission obtained, a worker can transport that person home.*

### **Transporting children in a minibus:**

- Driver has current full driving licence and is entitled to drive a minibus.
- Driver is over 25 yrs [unless prior agreement by the Trustees, lower age being 21yrs] and entitled to drive a minibus (check their driving licence).
- Driver has completed any approved training e.g MIDAS (may be a condition of hire from Local Authorities).
- Minibus logbook is available to record the journey.
- At least one passenger escort is accompanying the driver.
- Passenger list completed.
- If possible, no children sitting in the front.
- All passengers using seatbelts.
- Every passenger has access to two emergency exits.
- All luggage stowed away securely without blocking any gangways or exits or luggage transported separately.
- Mobile phone available for emergency contact.

- Any defects or incidents recorded.

## **11. Procedure for working with those who pose a possible risk**

Sex offenders are often manipulative and may not have developed an understanding of the importance of personal boundaries or accept what they have done is wrong.

A contract should be drawn up with the involvement of the person's partner and other members of the family who may be involved with Freedom Church as they may need to be kept informed.

Each contract will be made personal to the individual concerned, to include pastoral support and care offered, showing the circumstances and the risk they may pose to others.

Arrange a frank discussion between the Pastor/Trustee, the person concerned, the supervising officer (police or probation) or other agencies involved. There should be ongoing communication with statutory and voluntary agencies involved. Establish clear boundaries of behaviour for the ongoing contract.

The contract should be between the leadership and the offender and signed and dated by them, and witnessed by their supervising officer.

### ***Clauses to consider when writing a contract for sex offenders***

1. Never to be allowed to be in a situation alone with children, YP and VAs.
2. Only attend meetings/activities agreed with Pastor/Trustee/Volunteer named in contract.
3. Sit where directed [agree not near children, YP and VAs].
4. Not to enter parts of the building where activities for these groups are in progress.
5. Decline hospitality invites where children, YP and VAs are present in a home.

*There will be a need for a small group of people to be available to accompany the offender during services/activities. It is recommended that 4 persons are appointed in readiness should the situation happen. 4 persons will allow for sickness and holidays.*

1. Accept that certain people [Safeguarding team, Ministry Team Leads, etc] will be told of the person's circumstances to protect those under their care.
2. Accept that the contract will be made with the support officer's knowledge.
3. Named persons will provide pastoral care [these can be from the team].
4. Failing to keep to the contract will automatically exclude the offender from Freedom Church and we will inform their officer and possibly other relevant organisations.
5. Any other concerns will be taken seriously and be reported.
6. The contract to be reviewed regularly and will remain in place for an indefinite period.
7. Freedom Church will outline the sort of pastoral care that will be offered

Where these forms are provided by a third party, we are happy to use their forms.

## **12. Food and Hygiene Management**

Food that is made and/or consumed at Freedom Church Centres must meet food safety regulations. Therefore, the person responsible for Food and Hygiene Management will ensure all areas such as

food preparation, handling, storage, disposal of waste, etc. will comply with the Food Hygiene Regulations 2013.

If food and drink are provided during an activity, the following should be considered:

- Workers should follow good personal hygiene.
- Basic health and hygiene regulations should be adhered to.
- All food and drink stored appropriately.

Hot drinks should not be placed within the reach of young children.

- Snacks and mealtimes are appropriately supervised.
- Fresh drinking water is available at all times.
- Systems should be in place to ensure that children, young people or vulnerable adults do not have access to food/drinks to which they are allergic.

Should meals be prepared on the premises then a person holding a Basic Food and Hygiene Certificate or equivalent will be appointed to support and advise.

Although these regulations do not apply to activities like shared suppers when food is brought from members' homes to be shared on the premises it does however remain important that basic standards of food hygiene be adhered to, and shared food should be accurately labeled in terms of its ingredients.

## **13. Procedure for letting Freedom Church Bristol's 24/7 Prayer Room**

### **Letting out of Premises to other Individuals or Groups**

External groups hiring our premises will be given a summary of our safeguarding statement and must agree to abide by it.

There is a joint responsibility to ensure that any activities involving vulnerable people are covered by a safeguarding policy. The host is ultimately responsible for the activities that take place in their facilities, and it is therefore our responsibility to assure ourselves of the existence of policies, training and good practice for the visiting organisation. Failure to uphold such arrangements may result in harm to vulnerable people and implications for any subsequent insurance claims that may be made against the visitors or the host.

## **14. Working with Young People in Foster and Full Time Care**

Whilst Freedom Church acknowledges that all young people require special and individual care, we make special provision for the care of young people who are either in full time care or being fostered. As a Church we recognise that young people in these circumstances are potentially more vulnerable than others and that there are often more unknown areas of their life that makes working with them more sensitive.

At the same time, we acknowledge the dangers and potential risks that these circumstances can pose to both young people and youth workers. We believe that they need love and support and acknowledge the need for this to be tailored to meet and fully respond to their situation.

Therefore, as a church any youth worker/volunteer/church member engaging with any young person who is either in fulltime care or foster care must abide by the following additional guidelines to safeguard both workers and young people involved:

- A young person's Information Form is to be filled out and signed by the carer or foster parent
- Any engagement is to be recorded using the appropriate form and passed back to the youth worker immediately or as close to but not exceeding a 24 hour period
- A file is to be created for each young person and a paper trail of all interaction to be kept securely
- Contact is to be made with the carer/foster parent and details exchanged. It's advised that following engagement with the young person a summary is communicated back to the carer/foster parent, whilst respecting confidentiality as necessary, alongside regular engagement with the carer/foster parent regarding their young person

## A: Recruitment Checklist

Please note: applicants cannot start work until the recruitment process is complete.

*Role pack to include: Role specification, person specification, safeguarding statement, application and disclosure form.*

<b>Applicant's name</b>	
<b>Position applied for</b>	
<b>Advert/application end date</b>	
<b>Date when role pack sent/given</b>	
<b>Completed application return date</b>	
<b>Disclosure form date returned to Charity</b> <b>DSL/Deputy</b>	
<b>Interview date</b>  <i>Interview to include safeguarding questions</i>	
<b>Qualifications check date if appropriate</b>	
<b>References request date/s 1</b>  <i>Copies to be taken of ID documentation.</i>	
<b>Reference 1 Return Date</b>	
<b>Reference 2 Return Date</b>	
<b>DBS check date</b>	
<b>DBS check date complete</b>	
<b>Confirmation issued</b>	
<b>6 months probationary end date</b>	
<b>Safeguarding Induction training completion date</b>	
<b>Further comments</b>	

## B: Accident and Incident Logsheet

**Examples of Logsheet Entries**

**1. Youth Group**

Date	Logsheets Report	Signed and time
15.9.2006	Funny atmosphere at club tonight. Kids were coming and going continuously. I caught Tim Hudson and his mate Jez Martin smoking in the toilets. They weren't happy about me asking them to stop. Later they picked a fight with Rob Curtis and when I tried to pull them off, Jez landed a punch on my cheek and threatened to get me. I asked Peter and Amy to escort Jez and Tim off the premises while I phoned their parents to let them know what happened.	Tony Haddon 8.45pm
15.9.2006	I saw Tony go to speak to Jez Martin about kicking Rob – Jez kicked Rob at least four times. Tony asked me to come and help him because when he put his hand on Jez's arm, Jez thumped him in the face. Amy and I took Jez and Tim who was swearing like mad outside. Amy helped me walk them off the premises.	Peter Baker 9.30pm
13.10.2006	I found Karen and two other girls, didn't get their names, drinking alcopops in a corner of the hall. Karen seemed very drunk and I asked them all to leave. Karen collapsed on the way out so Tony called an ambulance and phoned her parents.	Amy Davis 9.15pm

**2. Toddler Group**

Date	Logsheets	Signed and time
20.6.2006	I noticed that Shaz's son Toby had some difficulty walking today. When I mentioned this to Shaz she said he'd fallen down the stairs again. I advised her to take him to the doctors. I think we should keep an eye on him.	Tanya Clarke 10.45am