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OAC Ministries Safeguarding Policy

Reviewed by the Trustees 11/2/2025

Reviewed by Trustees 10th February 2026 (no amendments)

The incorporation of a digital policy was added in June 2021 (See Appendix D) and is reviewed annually along with this policy.

The incorporation of a chart and guide to DBS tiers was added in 2020 (See Appendix E) and is reviewed annually along with this policy.

OAC Ministries recognises the importance of its ministry to children, young people and adults at risk of harm and its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk of harm entrusted to its care.

It is necessary therefore to have application forms, references and DBS checks in place for all of our evangelists and schools workers who are also required to attend regular safeguarding training. Please refer to Appendix E regarding levels of DBS check.

As part of its mission, OAC Ministries is committed to:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting children, young people and adults at risk of harm as well as promoting their welfare and protection
- Safe recruitment, supervision and training for all its evangelists and schools workers
- Adopting a procedure for dealing with concerns about possible abuse
- Encouraging and supporting parents/carers
- Supporting those affected by abuse
- Maintaining good links with the statutory childcare authorities and other organisations

Definitions:

For the purpose of this policy and its procedures the following definitions will apply:

- A 'child' is any person under 18 years of age, and an adult is any person aged 18 years or above.
- OAC Ministries has contact with or information about children and vulnerable adults through-
i. School assemblies and after- school Bible clubs. ii. Church-based or community-based holiday clubs and special events iii. Open air preaching and outreach missions
- 'Evangelists' and 'Schools Workers' are all those who are appointed to minister through the outreach activities of OAC Ministries.
- The National Director is the person charged by the trustees with the responsibility of overseeing the operation of this policy and its procedures and ensuring that all evangelists and workers are familiar with its contents on their behalf
- The 'Designated Person for Safeguarding' is the person charged with the responsibility of evaluating the need for action following a report of concern or possible abuse (see Appendix B)



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- 'Abuse' is any physical, sexual or emotional harm, or neglect.
- A 'case' is an instance of known, alleged or disclosed abuse of a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- The term 'parent' will include legal guardians.

Policy:

The Trustees will ensure that:

1. Care for and protection of children, young persons and vulnerable adults is given the highest priority by OAC Ministries.
2. All those appointed as evangelists or schools workers are fit persons, carefully selected, and subject to DBS checks in respect of the work they will be doing, and that they are appropriately supervised.
3. A suitable and responsible person is appointed as Safeguarding Designated Person.
4. Individuals are protected from false accusations of abuse.
5. All evangelists and schools workers are aware of OAC's commitment to the duty of care, are conversant with the signs of possible abuse (see Appendix A), and have received instruction on this Policy and its implementation
6. All cases of child or vulnerable adult abuse are dealt with swiftly, appropriately, sensitively, and in compliance with legal requirements and guidance on best practice.
7. This policy is consistently and correctly implemented.
8. Good links are maintained with statutory child care authorities.

All OAC Evangelists, Trainees, Interns and Schools Workers ministering on behalf of OAC Ministries with children or adults at risk of harm will

1. be DBS checked on first appointment, renewable every three years .They should join the update service to enable annual checks via the online system.
2. have references taken up prior to first appointment
3. read and understand this document (training will be made available)
4. follow the good practice guidelines below in Appendix C
5. attend regular safeguarding training
6. agree that they may be subject to an online check (including social media) as part of the due diligence process prior to appointment

It is everyone's responsibility to **recognise, record, report and refer** in situations of abuse.

Responding if someone tells you about abuse:

Accept what is said, however unlikely the story may sound without passing judgement or looking shocked.

- Be aware that the child may have been threatened.
- Tell the child that they are not to blame.
- Keep calm, do not investigate or ask leading questions or push for information.
- Do not fill in words, finish sentences or make suggestions.



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- Make sure you have understood what they say.
- Do not promise to keep a secret.
- If there is immediate danger to the child, report to Social Services or Police.

Things to say:

Repeat the last few words in a questioning manner.

'I believe you'.

'I will help you'.

'I am glad that you told me'.

'You are not to blame'.

Things NOT to say:

'You should have told someone before'.

'I can't believe it, I'm shocked'.

'I won't tell anyone else'.

At the end

- Finish on a positive note; reassure the child that it was right to tell and assure them that they are not to blame for what they say has happened.
- Let them know what you are going to do next including that you will need to tell someone else i.e. **the OAC Designated Safeguarding Lead Helen Holmes Mobile: 07967 059 621**
- Immediately seek help from Helen Holmes.
- Make handwritten notes as soon as possible (within the hour is ideal), of what you and the child/young person said, and record all dates and times mentioned. Record as accurately as possible the words the child used.
- Do not speak to the parents/guardians/carers or any other person, apart from those designated in the line of contact.

Remember: listen and pass on – do not question or investigate

Action where there are concerns:

If abuse is suspected, discovered or disclosed, contact the OAC Ministries Safeguarding Designated Safeguarding Lead **Helen Holmes** helenholmes@hotmail.co.uk Mobile: 07967 059 621.

What happens once you have reported a concern? –see **Appendix B**

Where OAC Evangelists work in partnership with or under the auspices of third parties such as local churches, which are legally responsible for the work, there would normally be a local safeguarding policy and support, and it would therefore be more appropriate to use that.

However, where such policies or support are unclear, inadequate or ineffective, OAC Evangelists are encouraged to obtain the support that they need through one of the following:

- The Thirtyone:eight helpline **0303 003 1111** (formerly the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service)



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- The local Social Services, duty social worker for children and families.
- The local police station and speak to the Police Child Protection Team direct.

Useful Contact Numbers:

OAC Ministries Safeguarding Designated Safeguarding Lead

Helen Holmes

helenholmes@hotmail.co.uk

07967 059 621

thirtyone:eight Helpline

0303 003 11 11

NSPCC 24 hour Helpline:

0800 800 5000

Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline:

08000 121 700



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Appendix A:

Recognising Abuse

1) Types of Abuse

PHYSICAL: Where physical discomfort, pain or injury has been received by the child or young person by hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm; feigning symptoms of, or deliberately causing ill-health.

SEXUAL: Where children and young people are used by others for the sexual gratification; forcing or enticing them to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening, which may involve physical including penetrative or non-penetrative acts, looking at sexual activities, looking at or being involved in the production of pornographic material; encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate acts.

EMOTIONAL and/or PSYCHOLOGICAL: Persistent emotional ill treatment such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development by making the child frequently feel frightened, threats, taunting, constant lack of love and affection; conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person; it may involve age/developmentally inappropriate expectations, exploitation or corruption.

SPIRITUAL: A form of emotional and psychological abuse characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context.

NEGLECT: A lack of proper care and attention; persistent failure to meet the child's basic physical or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment to the child's health or development; it may involve not providing adequate food, shelter and clothing, protection from harm, access to appropriate medical care or treatment; neglect of or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs. For vulnerable adults self-neglect is also included.

DISCRIMINATORY ABUSE: Unequal treatment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation (known as protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.)

FINANCIAL OR MATERIAL ABUSE: the misuse or theft of a vulnerable person's money, property, or resources. It can also include preventing a person from accessing their own assets, benefits, or money.

MODERN SLAVERY: Human trafficking, Forced labour, Labour exploitation, Domestic servitude, Sexual exploitation, such as escort work, prostitution and pornography, Debt bondage – being forced to work to pay off debts that realistically they never will be able to repay. (There is a national government reporting mechanism for modern slavery).

It is important to be aware that abuse can take place in different settings including online (See Appendix D)



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2) INDICATORS OF POSSIBLE ABUSE

The following signs may be indicators of child or young person abuse, but they should not be taken in isolation.

Physical signs:

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them.
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc.
- Injuries which have not received medical attention.
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc which do not have an accidental explanation.
- Cutting/slashing/drug abuse.

Indicators of possible sexual abuse

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse.
- Child or young person with excessive pre-occupation with sexual matters, and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in inappropriate sexual play.
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing.
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home.
- Instances where children or young persons are kept away from group for no adequate reason.
- Reluctant to change or participate in games or swimming.

Emotional signs

- Changes or regression in mood and behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging; also depression/aggression.
- Nervousness/frozen watching.
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration.
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults.
- Attention seeking behaviour.
- Persistent tiredness.
- Running away / stealing /lying.
- Severe sleep disturbance with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations.

Whenever the above signs are observed in a child it is not to be concluded that abuse has occurred, but they may give rise to suspicion or concern when taken into consideration with all the other facts.

3) WHO ABUSES CHILDREN

- Very rarely a stranger
- Often someone who knows the child (e.g. parent, babysitter, sibling, relative or friend of the family)
- Sometimes someone who is in authority, such as a teacher, youth leader, children's worker, counsellor etc.



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- Sometimes paedophiles and others who set out to join organisations to obtain access to children
 - Child-on-child abuse- behaviour by an individual or group, intending to physically, sexually or emotionally harm others.
- 4) WHO ABUSES VULNERABLE ADULTS
- Very rarely a stranger
 - Often someone who knows the adult and has access to their home e.g. family members, friends, neighbours, paid carers, health or care professionals.
 - Work colleagues
 - Anyone who may see an opportunity for financial or material gain

Appendix B:

What happens once concerns about abuse have been reported?

The policy on confidentiality

GENERAL

Because of a desire to respect the privacy of individuals, information about them is generally kept confidential, but in cases of abuse OAC Ministries has a legal responsibility to report appropriately to statutory authorities.

EXPLAINING THE POLICY

The National Director is responsible for ensuring that evangelists and schools workers generally understand the Safeguarding Policy. In specific cases the person initially reporting will be told that the Designated Person for Safeguarding needs to be informed in order to be able to safeguard everyone, and the Designated Person for Safeguarding needs to explain what will happen.

EVALUATING THE NEED FOR ACTION

In all cases, the person with information on abuse or possible abuse must notify the Designated Person for Safeguarding who will complete a Safeguarding Report. However, there are different levels of concern, which then call for different levels of action.

We would distinguish between three levels of action.



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Level 1: the Designated Person for Safeguarding would not take any further action (although the person referring may do so independently) e.g. where there was no further risk to anyone.

Level 2: the Designated Person for Safeguarding will disclose to the authorities within 5 days.

Level 3: the Designated Person for Safeguarding will make immediate disclosure to the authorities, and will put other appropriate measures in place (e.g. suspension of worker).

The appropriate level of action is a matter of judgement, but would take into account (a) the paramount need to protect children and vulnerable adults, (b) the seriousness of the harm involved, (c) the degree of present risk of harm being done.

Appendix C: Good Practice guidelines:

- Treat everyone with respect
- Remember that someone else may misinterpret your actions, no matter how well-intentioned
- Respect people's right to personal privacy and set appropriate professional boundaries
- Encourage people to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes and behaviour they do not like
- Carry out health and safety risk assessments and check that what you propose to do is covered by insurance
- Act on any concerns you may have about the safety and welfare of children, young people and adults at risk of harm
- If in doubt, seek guidance
- Never smack or hit a child or young person



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- Never encourage a child or young person to sit on the knees or lap of a helper
- Be firm, consistent, persistent and patient
- Do not shout at or “put down” a child or young person
- Be prepared to walk away from a situation and seek help from others if you feel you are losing control or are unable to cope
- Never be alone with a child or young person and ensure that any discussion on a one-to-one basis takes place in a public area, within sight of other adults and/or children and young people
- Praying or counselling with children and young people should be done publicly and their parents/carers should be encouraged to be involved with this process.
- Do not leave children and young people or adults at risk of harm unattended.
- Reinforce and praise good behaviour and use those children and young people as role models.
- Take care over verbal communications, recognising that threatening, abusive or suggestive language or expressions are unacceptable. Sarcasm should be avoided and care taken over the tone of the voice. In the area of non-verbal communication, care must be taken with “personal space”, eye contact and gestures, to prevent yourself from being open to criticism.
- Any form of derogatory or sexualised language or behaviour among children or young people you are working with should be reported to the relevant Designated Person for Safeguarding. Be vigilant to sexualised/aggressive touching/grabbing. Any discriminatory behaviour must be challenged and children supported to know how to treat others with respect. Any such incidents should be recorded and reported.

Additionally, if you observe that a children’s/youth worker is acting in a way that is unsuitable or could be misinterpreted; either speak to them directly or to Helen Holmes.

Handling Inappropriate Behaviour:

This may occur, for example, if a child or young person kicks, bites, hits or is wildly running around, constantly in and out of doors, damaging property or equipment, shouting, swearing or using racial abuse. In such situations the following procedure may be followed.

Step 1. Verbal warning when incident occurs.

Step 2. Verbal warning taking child or young person aside and explaining the next step if s/he does not stop.

Step 3. Isolate the child or young person from the group, but keep them visible, re-introducing them when appropriate, but explaining the final step if the behaviour continues. Tell the child or young person that you will inform their parent(s).

Step 4. Hand over responsibility to the parent(s) ensuring that their child or young person’s behaviour has been mentioned. If appropriate the child or young person may be excluded from the group for a pre-determined period of time.



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Appendix D: Digital Safeguarding

OAC's commitment to digital safeguarding

OAC Ministries is committed to safeguarding our evangelists and volunteers and it is our policy to apply the same rigorous level of safeguarding protection online as we do in person.

We expect evangelists and volunteers to follow the same principles of conduct online as they would face to face. Additional safeguarding measures must be put in place to minimise specific online risk.

OAC's digital safeguarding principles

In order to uphold these principles our evangelists, interns, trainees and schools workers must:

- Ensure that social media accounts are set up appropriately.
- Make it clear on personal social media accounts using disclaimers that their views, thought and opinions are personal and not reflective of OAC Ministries policies, procedure or guidance.
- Make sure that technical solutions are in place to reduce access to inappropriate content on devices owned or used by OAC Ministries. These could be filtering or monitoring software, for example parental controls.
- Ensure the correct permissions are in place before taking and using photographs on mobile devices.
- Make sure that they have parental permissions before contacting any young person under the age of 18, even if they have contacted you first.
- Ensure you use BCC when sending emails to multiple recipients so that email addresses are not visible to all recipients to avoid a breach of data privacy.

We recognise that digital safeguarding is an important part of our ministry and we are committed to always delivering best practice.

We will:

- Ensure our missions, activities and programmes support all of our evangelists and volunteers to stay safe online.
- Use best practice digital safeguarding for technical solutions, processes and procedures.
- Take best practice action when a digital safeguarding incident occurs.
- Support and train as appropriate evangelists and volunteers in digital safeguarding.
- Have appropriate links with key organisations to raise awareness and refer and report incidents.
- Risk-assess all initiatives and programmes to make sure appropriate digital safeguards are in place.

Use of social media for under 18s and vulnerable people

Young and vulnerable people face risks when using social networking sites. They may be at risk of being bullied, publishing sensitive and personal information on their profiles, or from becoming targets for online grooming.

Where known, when communicating with young people under 18-years-old via social media, evangelists should ensure the online relationship with OAC Ministries follows the same rules as the offline 'real-life' relationship.

Online OAC training courses for under 18s and vulnerable people



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Where a young person under the age of 18 asks to join an OAC online training course, the permission of a parent/guardian will be required in writing (email is acceptable) before the start of the course. Care will be taken when arranging 'break out rooms' to place any young person in a group with at least one other adult of the same gender. The meeting host must ensure any private chat function between participants is disabled, so no one can directly contact a young person, during the online session. At the end of any training session the leader will ensure that the young person is not the last to leave the meeting.

Data privacy

Those joining OAC online courses will be informed as to how their contact details will be stored and used.

2023 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges summarises online safety into four areas of risk. All OAC evangelists and workers are expected to be aware of these categories so that they can protect themselves and those they are ministering to and with. Awareness of these risks will enable OAC personnel to identify, intervene in, and escalate any concerns where appropriate:

Content: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example: pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation, and extremism.

Contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.

Conduct: online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non- consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images and online bullying

Commerce: - risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams. If you feel anyone you know is at risk, please report it to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (apwg.org).



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Appendix E: Levels of DBS check required from 2020 onwards

Incorporated into the safeguarding policy in Spring 2023. Reviewed 2024 and 2025.

The government’s Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) system has a number of tiers of check which can only be applied for in line with the individual’s role. The ministry of each OAC Evangelist is unique and therefore there is not a ‘one size fits all’ when it comes to DBS checks.

The simplified chart below outlines which level of DBS check is pertinent depending on the activities the evangelist carries out. It is not possible to apply for a tier of check encompassing ministry that might be undertaken in the future, so if the individual’s ministry changes in a way that may affect the level of check required it is important that the OAC DBS Administrator and the National Director are notified immediately.

Ministry	DBS check	Role
Street ministry and preaching in churches only	Basic	Working with adults
Streets and Schools/Churches occasional children’s work Eg. assemblies/lessons/special church services and events when teacher/church worker is always present	Enhanced check for children (unregulated activity)	Working with adults and children
Streets, schools, regular kids	Enhanced check for children with	Working with adults and children



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clubs/holiday clubs/beach missions when one-to-one and small group work involved but not personal care	barred lists (regulated activity)	

It is unlikely that any OAC evangelist would be involved in regulated activity with adults eg home visits, personal care etc on behalf of OAC. This would require an enhanced check for adults and a training programme to ensure that person is capable to carry out the duties.

However if this applies to any individual he/she must discuss their situation with the OAC DBS Administrator and the National Director.