

Supporting those who present a risk to others

This policy should be read in conjunction with the *Safeguarding Children* and *Safeguarding Adults at Risk* policies.

Context

Grace Church Manchester (GCM) is a place that is open to all people, regardless of background, culture, experience or history. We seek to live in community with each other, forming friendships and associating closely. GCM is also a place that seeks to treat others with the forgiveness and grace that we have experienced through Christ. Nevertheless, we are also taught to keep one another safe and to prevent each other from sinning. Therefore, GCM puts strategies in place to ensure that everyone is safe and no person poses a risk to others.

This policy is intended to guide the support and care of those in the church who pose a known risk to others. This includes those with a known history of sexual or violent offending. It is important to recognise that certain abusive behaviours have an addictive and persistent nature. Additionally, those who act in these ways may be motivated to seek out children or young people. Therefore, this policy outlines robust procedures to ensure safety, whilst allowing the individual to worship and be within the community.

Raising and responding to concerns

Anyone who has been found guilty of sexual offences against children since the Sex Offenders Act 1997 will be or will have been on the Sex Offenders' Register, and therefore known to the police.

You may be informed by a statutory agency — this may be your local Police Public Protection Team (Jigsaw Teams within the Metropolitan Police Service) or Probation Service — that a known sexual offender or any person who may present a potential known risk to children, young people or vulnerable adults wishes to join your church, or is already a member of your church.

It is anticipated and hoped that a person who poses a risk to others would disclose this in the first instance to leadership within the church. The *Safeguarding Children* and *Safeguarding Adults at Risk* policies outline the procedures for raising concerns that members of the church may have about others. Other procedures within these policies (e.g., Safer Recruitment, DBS) ensure that criminal backgrounds have been checked prior to a leadership role commencing.

Concerns that someone poses a risk should be taken to the Safeguarding Leads in a timely manner. As with other safeguarding concerns, they should be kept confidential.

Contracting

When a suspected or known person who poses a risk joins GCM, contracting allows them to be offered a welcome while also attaching conditions to their activity and level of involvement. This aims to maintain the safety of the whole church while assisting them to avoid temptation. Contracting should be undertaken regardless of expressions of remorse or someone accepting responsibility for their harmful behaviour. Given the severity of the risk, it must be assumed the temptation to succumb to opportunity or habit is still present.

Contracts should be used with:

- A person who has a conviction(s) of violence or sexual harm to children or adults.
- A person who has been accused of a violent or sexual offence. This is the case even if they deny the accusation, where there are reasonable grounds for concern.
- A person whose behaviour is of concern and has ignored advice.

Contracts are two-way. They should capture the limits to the individual's involvement and the expectations upon them, while also addressing the support and guidance available to them (see Appendix I). The contract should outline:

- Which services and activities the individual will attend. For example, which, if any, life group they may attend.
- Supervision arrangements.
- Pastoral care.
- Expectations around socialising and 1:1 contact.

The contract should be updated to account for unusual activities e.g., Church Away Days or other events.

Wherever possible, a copy of the statutory agency risk assessment should be obtained and used to draft the contract and to manage the risk that the individual's attendance at church presents.

Sometimes it will take a long time to gather the necessary information to inform the risk assessment. In this case, an interim contract should be developed and agreed, which is very robust and limited. It can be rewritten when the necessary information has been received e.g., disclosure from the police, communication from a previous church etc.

If the individual refuses to sign a contract or continually breaches it, they will need to be directed to worship elsewhere. Ideally, they would be supported to identify a setting where there are no children or young people. The other church should be contacted to inform them this person is joining their church and to advise them to contact the police / probation for further information. Breaches should be communicated to any statutory agencies in a timely manner.

If the individual refuses to disclose the nature of their offences and does not provide a contact with a statutory agency, the police should be contacted via 111. They should be informed that the named individual has joined the church but is not disclosing necessary information. The police can then disclose information as they deem appropriate. If they will not provide information, a rigorous contract should be put in place.

Support and Accountability Group

This group should be appointed as soon as a person who poses a risk joins the church. They should draw up the agreement and meet with them regularly to monitor and provide support. While groups may vary in size depending on the circumstances, they should include:

- Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Safeguarding Lead. They should act as chair and coordinator.
- Minister from the church. They should not lead on the meeting or supervision, given their wider pastoral responsibilities.
- Potentially someone with experience working with offenders.
- Someone independent of the church e.g., a Trustee.
- The individual who poses a risk.
- A representative from the involved statutory agency e.g., police, probation officer.

It is likely the police / probation officer would be unable to attend regularly, so the chair should maintain frequent contact to update any changes, raise any concerns and communicate any breaches.

The group will maintain confidentiality and share information on a 'need to know' basis. Any decisions to disclose would be discussed within the group. If this is not possible, they should be discussed with the chair, unless there is an imminent risk of serious harm.

The group would meet weekly for the first month then reduce frequency as appropriate. They should meet no less than bi-monthly unless the last incident of concern was a long time ago and the contract is working smoothly.

The following process is suggested:

Stage 1 – Call a meeting – The person of concern is invited to attend a meeting with the Support & Accountability Group.

Stage 2 – Church activities – A list is made of all activities the church is responsible for, including midweek groups.

Stage 3 – Risk assessment – The activities are reviewed and organised into those which the person can attend (such as a concert), cannot attend at all (tea and toddlers or a social group for adults with disabilities), or can attend with supervision (worship).

Stage 4 – The contract – Outlines the agreement regarding activities and the supervision arrangements. The contract must be signed by the person and all attendees.

Stage 5 – Review meeting – Discussion about how the terms of the contract have been adhered to, whether there have been any breaches (statutory authorities informed) and whether the terms of the contract need to be changed.

Record keeping

In this area, record keeping is crucial. Records should be kept of communication with statutory agencies (e.g., contacts with the police), discussions with the individual, concerns raised by church members, breaches, and group meetings, as well as any other related discussion or activity. Records should be detailed, precise and accurate. They should be kept securely and confidentially. Where appropriate and practical, minutes of meetings and discussions should be signed by all parties to indicate they are accurate. Any online or electronic communication should be saved in the same location (e.g., screenshots of text messages etc.).

Serving in the church

Service within GCM is an important part of belonging to the community. This should be risk assessed for each person. Nevertheless, there are some clear parameters:

- People who have committed sexual offences will not work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- People who have committed sexual offences will not be placed in positions of responsibility or trust. For example, door welcomer, reader, pastoral visitor etc.
- People who have committed violent offences will be risk assessed to ascertain their suitability for working with others or taking on roles of responsibility.

Communicating to the wider church

Church members should be aware of this policy, as they should all aspects of Safeguarding policy and procedure. However, the identity of the person posing a risk or of the group members will not be disclosed to the wider church. This includes not making routine disclosures to children's workers. Our *Safeguarding Children* policy prevents these individuals from accessing children and therefore it is not generally necessary for others to be aware. It may be necessary to inform others of boundaries agreed, but they do not need to be told of the reason behind these boundaries.

Appendix I: Clauses to consider in a contract for an individual presenting a sexual risk to others:

NB this list is NOT exhaustive. They are examples of what may need to be considered in the circumstances of the individual and organisation involved.

Boundaries:

- I will never allow myself to be in a situation where I am alone with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- I will attend meetings and activities as directed by the leadership.
- I will sit where directed at activities (e.g., religious meetings, social gatherings) and will not place myself near children, young people and vulnerable adults.

- I will not enter certain parts of the building designated by the leadership, nor any area where activities for children, young people and vulnerable adults are in progress.
- I will decline invitations of hospitality where there are children, young people or vulnerable adults in the home.
- I accept that "x" and "y" will sit with me during activities (e.g., religious meetings, social gatherings) and accompany me when I need to use other facilities. They will know I am a sex offender.
- I accept there are certain people who will need to be told of my circumstances in order for them to protect the children, young people or adults at risk for whom they care.
- I accept that contact will need to be made with my probation officer, who will meet with leaders as and when necessary (where appropriate).
- I accept that "z" will provide me with pastoral care.
- I understand that if I do not keep to these conditions, I may be barred from attending activities. In such circumstances the leadership may choose to inform the statutory agencies (e.g., police, probation, Adult Services, Children's Social Services), and any other relevant organisations, as well as members of the faith community or organisation.
- I understand that any other concerns will be taken seriously and reported.
- I understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly every 6 months and will remain for an indefinite period.

Pastoral care

As well as outlining the boundaries a sex offender would be expected to keep, it is also helpful to outline the types of pastoral care and support you are able to offer.

'X' and 'Y' and 'Z' have agreed to provide you with pastoral care and support; as part of that undertaking, they and the leadership of the organisation agree to:

- Support you in finding suitable employment opportunity which will not bring you into contact with children or vulnerable adults.
- Support you in seeking any specialist help e.g., attendance on any Sex Offender Treatment Programmes, drug or alcohol or psychiatric rehabilitation or any counselling appointments.
- Liaise with any previous Places of Worship you have attended, with the Prison Chaplaincy Team, or any other organisation you have worked with prior to joining us.
- Work closely as a place of worship / organisation with any statutory authorities with responsibility for you, such as your probation officer, police public protection team or children's social services, cooperating with them in helping and supporting you.
- Where appropriate, ask for any risk assessment to determine how best we can meet your needs while protecting children and vulnerable adults.
- Attempt to meet any practical needs you may have, including assisting with options for accommodation.
- Support you in joining Circles of Support or any other similar programme.
- Provide pastoral care and support to anyone with whom you are living with. We recognise that partners of known sex offenders need pastoral care, and 'space' to share without judgement.
- Be there for you and will support you.

Policy reviewed on [01/06/2026] by [Laura Likissa]