Fount Church

ISLE OF WIGHT

Our safeguarding policy

Fount Church, Newport, Isle of Wight

Adopted by the trustees on 28 September 2026. To be reviewed by 28 September 2027.

This policy should be read alongside our Code of Conduct and our Cause for Concern form. Practice guidelines for children's and youth work will be added before those groups begin.

Section 1: Details of the organisation

Name of organisation: Fount Church

Correspondence: hello@fount.church

Registered address: held on file with the Charity Commission

Pastor: Dave Cornes, hello@fount.church, 07523 897751

Safeguarding Lead: Zoe Randall, safeguarding@fount.church, 07969 936681

Safeguarding Trustee: Dan Bell, danielmarkbell1@gmail.com, 07828 337771. Dan is also the alternative contact when the Safeguarding Lead is unavailable.

Pastoral and wellbeing support: Dave Cornes, hello@fount.church, 07523 897751

Denomination or network: Fount Church is an independent church. We are a member of Thirtyone:eight.

Regulator: the Charity Commission for England and Wales

Charity number: application pending

Insurer: Ansvar, policy number CFW 2471243

What we do: Fount Church is a church plant in Newport, Isle of Wight. From January 2027 we gather weekly on a Sunday morning, initially in a private home and from March 2027 in a hired venue. We run midweek groups in homes. From March 2027 we run groups for children and young people on a Sunday morning. We work with children, young people and adults, including adults who may be at risk of harm.

Section 2: Governance and culture

Our commitment

We are committed to providing a safe and caring place for children, young people and adults.

We know that people can experience harm, abuse and neglect, including in churches.

We believe everyone should be treated fairly and with respect. Every person is made in the image of God and carries a dignity that does not depend on anything they have done or anything done to them. We support the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which says that every child should be safe, protected from harm and supported to reach their full potential.

This is why Fount Church follows the safeguarding procedures set out in this policy, in line with law and guidance, and works with statutory and voluntary agencies to help keep children, young people and adults safe.

This policy is based on the ten safeguarding standards published by Thirtyone:eight.

Governance

Fount Church is governed by a board of trustees, which holds legal responsibility for the church. The trustees have overall responsibility for safeguarding. This includes making sure that:

- safeguarding is taken seriously
- people know how to report concerns
- workers are trained
- policies are followed
- risks are managed
- legal duties are met
- serious incidents are reported to the Charity Commission when required

One trustee holds a specific safeguarding brief. That trustee is named in Section 1. Safeguarding is a standing item at every trustees' meeting.

We do not currently have a Deputy Safeguarding Lead. Until one is appointed, the Safeguarding Trustee is the alternative contact whenever the Safeguarding Lead is unavailable. The trustees will appoint a Deputy before children's and youth groups begin in March 2027, and if no suitable person has been identified by then the matter is reviewed at every trustees' meeting until one is.

The trustees also shape the culture of the church. This policy is designed to help create an environment where:

- leaders set a good example
- safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
- workers and volunteers are recruited safely
- workers receive the training they need
- people are accountable for their actions
- workers follow the Code of Conduct
- people feel able to speak openly about concerns

We are a new and small church. That brings a particular risk, which is that everybody knows everybody and it feels unnecessary to follow a process with people we trust. We have written this policy on the understanding that trust is not a substitute for process, and that the process protects the people we trust as much as it protects everyone else.

Section 3: Awareness and prevention

Understanding harm, abuse and neglect

Safeguarding means taking steps to prevent and respond to harm, abuse and neglect.

Anyone can experience harm or abuse. It can happen at home, in the community, in schools and churches, online, and in places where people live or receive care. It can be caused by a family member, a friend, a carer, a stranger, another child or adult, or someone in a position of trust.

For the purposes of this policy, a child is anyone under 18 years old.

An adult at risk is a person aged 18 or over who has needs for care and support, whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs, who is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and who as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it. This is the definition in section 42 of the Care Act 2014.

This policy follows the safeguarding law and statutory guidance that applies in England, including:

- the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, current edition
- the Care Act 2014
- the Sexual Offences Act 2003, as amended by the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, which extended the law on positions of trust to faith settings
- the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975
- the Modern Slavery Act 2015
- the Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR

Information about the types, signs and indicators of harm and abuse is covered in the safeguarding training every worker receives, and is published by Thirtyone:eight.

Organisational awareness

We want everyone who comes into contact with Fount Church to know that safeguarding matters here and to know how to raise a concern. We will:

- publish this policy on our website
- discuss safeguarding at trustees' meetings and at team meetings
- remind workers and volunteers how to report concerns
- make sure children, young people and adults at risk know where to get help if they are worried about abuse, harm, neglect, bullying, discrimination, exploitation or anything else affecting their safety

Safeguarding training

All workers and volunteers receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role, including induction training when they start and refresher training every three years.

Training covers what safeguarding is, how to recognise signs of harm, abuse and neglect, how to respond to and report concerns, and each person's role in keeping people safe.

Refresher training is required every three years for trustees, the Safeguarding Lead, the Pastor, children's and youth workers, and workers who support adults at risk. Other workers and volunteers receive refresher training where their role requires it. The Safeguarding Lead and the Safeguarding Trustee both complete leadership-level safeguarding training, because either of them may need to handle a live concern.

The church keeps records of who has completed which training and when.

Safer recruitment

We follow safer recruitment practice for everyone who works or volunteers with children, young people or adults at risk. Before someone starts, we make sure that:

- there is a written description of the role
- the applicant completes an application form
- suitable applicants are interviewed
- safeguarding is discussed as part of that conversation
- references are obtained and checked
- an enhanced DBS check, with a barred list check where the role is eligible, is completed and seen
- a suitable induction and training programme is provided
- the worker or volunteer receives a copy of this policy and the Code of Conduct, and knows how to report a concern

Nobody works with children, young people or adults at risk before all of the above is complete. In a small church there is real pressure to let a willing volunteer start straight away. We will not do it.

We also require a person to have been part of Fount Church for at least six months before serving with children, young people or adults at risk. Where someone has served in a comparable role in another church or organisation, that service can count towards the six months, provided we obtain a reference from that organisation's leader or safeguarding lead.

When carrying out criminal records checks we follow the DBS Code of Practice and handle the information fairly, securely and lawfully.

Managing those who may pose a risk

Sometimes a person who attends the church may be known to pose a risk to children or adults at risk. When that happens, the trustees, together with the Safeguarding Lead, will:

- carry out a written risk assessment
- seek advice from statutory agencies and from Thirtyone:eight
- put safeguarding measures in place
- agree a written agreement with the person setting out clear boundaries
- monitor the situation and review the agreement
- offer pastoral care where appropriate

This decision is never taken by one person alone. Any boundaries are based on the risk assessment, the needs of those who may be at risk, and the advice of external agencies. Our priority is to protect children and adults at risk while treating everyone fairly and with dignity.

Section 4: Management of workers

Practice guidelines

Good practice keeps people safe, helps activities run well, and reduces the risk both of harm and of unfounded allegations.

We use risk assessments for the activities we run, and consent forms where an activity requires them. Practice guidelines for children's and youth work will be adopted before those groups begin, and all workers are expected to follow the guidelines that apply to their role.

Code of conduct

All workers and volunteers receive our Code of Conduct, which sets out the standards of behaviour expected when working with children, young people and adults at risk. Everyone is expected to follow it, to treat people with dignity and respect, to follow church policies, and to seek advice when unsure.

The Code of Conduct applies during church activities and, where relevant, outside them, when a person's behaviour could affect their role or the safety of others.

Positions of trust

Every adult who works with children, young people or adults at risk is in a position of trust. People place trust in them because of their role.

Workers and volunteers must maintain appropriate boundaries, treat people with dignity and respect, avoid behaviour that could be misunderstood, and never misuse their position, influence or authority. Any behaviour that exploits, manipulates or harms another person is unacceptable and may result in safeguarding action.

It is a criminal offence for a person in a position of trust within a faith setting to engage in sexual activity with a 16 or 17 year old who is under their care or supervision. This applies to our context. We expect to have sixth formers in our young adults' ministry, and everyone leading in that setting needs to understand that the law does not change because someone is over the age of consent.

Online safety

Most people will meet Fount Church on a screen before they meet us in a room, and much of our contact with people will happen online. The same standards apply there as anywhere else.

- Contact with under-18s is through church accounts and group channels, not through a worker's personal social media or personal phone number.
- One-to-one private messaging between an adult worker and a young person is not permitted. Where a conversation needs to happen, another leader is included or the parent is copied in.
- Workers do not friend or follow young people from personal accounts.
- Photographs and video of children and young people are only taken and used with the written consent of a parent or carer, and are stored on church systems rather than personal devices.
- Where we livestream or record a gathering, we make that clear in advance and take care over what is in shot.
- Access to the church's social media and website accounts is held by named people and reviewed annually.
- Concerns about online behaviour are reported in exactly the same way as any other concern.

Transport

- Lifts for children and young people are arranged with the knowledge and consent of a parent or carer.
- A worker should avoid transporting a child or young person alone. Where it is unavoidable, the young person sits in the back, another leader knows about the journey, and the parent is told when it starts and ends.
- Anyone giving lifts must have a valid licence, insurance covering the journey, and a roadworthy vehicle.

Activities in private homes

Until March 2027 our Sunday gatherings and our midweek groups take place in private homes. This makes ordinary supervision harder, because there are rooms, stairs and doors that a hired venue would not have.

- Children remain the responsibility of their parent or carer, who stays present throughout. We are not running children's groups during this period.
- The use of the property is governed by a written agreement between the church and the owners, approved by the trustees who have no interest in it.
- Workers avoid being alone with a child in a part of the house away from everyone else.
- Where a child needs to use the bathroom, the parent takes them.
- The person hosting is responsible for making sure the space is safe, including any pets, medicines, tools and stairs.
- Anything that would be a safeguarding concern in a hired venue is a safeguarding concern in a home, and is reported in the same way.

Raising a concern

We want people to feel safe speaking up. Workers, volunteers and anybody else should report anything that may put a person at risk or that goes against our values, including where safeguarding procedures are not being followed, where there has been misconduct or poor practice, or where something simply does not feel right.

People who raise a concern in good faith will be supported and will not be treated unfairly for having raised it. Every concern is taken seriously and considered carefully.

If someone feels unable to raise a concern within the church, or believes a concern has not been handled properly, they can contact Thirtyone:eight directly, or the relevant statutory agency, using the contact details in Section 6.

Section 5: Partnership working and hired venues

We know that safeguarding practice varies between organisations, so when we work in partnership with others we discuss safeguarding arrangements, share our expectations, and agree how concerns will be reported and managed.

From March 2027 we hire a venue for our Sunday gatherings rather than owning premises. Before entering into a hire agreement we will:

- ask the venue for its own safeguarding policy and its expectations of hirers
- confirm what public liability cover the venue requires and make sure ours meets it
- agree who is responsible for what during our hire, including fire safety, first aid and the security of the rooms we use

- check the suitability of the rooms we intend to use for children's and youth work, including sight lines and access

Should we ever hold premises of our own, any organisation using them must have a safeguarding policy meeting our standards, as part of the letting agreement.

Section 6: Responding to concerns

Never investigate a safeguarding concern yourself. If someone tells you about harm, abuse or neglect, your job is to listen, record and report.

All concerns are recorded on our Cause for Concern form and passed to the Safeguarding Lead without delay, or to the Safeguarding Trustee if the Safeguarding Lead is unavailable.

Safeguarding Lead Zoe Randall, 07969 936681, safeguarding@fount.church

Safeguarding Trustee If the Safeguarding Lead is unavailable, or the concern involves the Safeguarding Lead or the Pastor, contact Dan Bell, 07828 337771, danielmarkbell1@gmail.com

Thirtyone:eight safeguarding helpline 0303 003 1111, option 2

Isle of Wight children's services (MASH) 01983 823435, or 01983 823436 for professionals Out of hours 0300 555 1373, mash@iow.gov.uk

Isle of Wight adult safeguarding 01983 823340, safeguardingconcerns@iow.gov.uk

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) 01983 823723, initial enquiry form on the Isle of Wight Council website

Police 999 in an emergency, 101 otherwise

Concerns involving the Pastor

The Pastor holds no safeguarding role and takes no part in handling safeguarding concerns about himself. Any concern involving the Pastor goes directly to the Safeguarding Trustee, who will take advice from Thirtyone:eight and from the statutory agencies as needed, and will inform the other trustees. The Pastor will not be told the identity of the person raising the concern unless that person wishes it.

Recording concerns

The worker or volunteer should:

1. listen carefully
2. take the concern seriously
3. record the information accurately, in the words used, without leading questions or investigation
4. complete the Cause for Concern form
5. pass it to the Safeguarding Lead, or the Safeguarding Trustee, as soon as possible

Concerns are shared only with those who need to know, and all records are stored securely.

Getting advice and making referrals

The Safeguarding Lead or Safeguarding Trustee may need to seek advice or share information. Depending on the concern this may include the chair of trustees, the Safeguarding Trustee, our insurer, the Charity Commission, Thirtyone:eight, Isle of Wight children's or adult services, the LADO, or the police.

The trustees are responsible for reporting serious incidents to the Charity Commission.

If the Safeguarding Lead is unavailable

Contact the Safeguarding Trustee. The absence of either must never delay action to protect someone from harm. If there is an immediate risk, contact the emergency services or the relevant statutory service without delay.

Making a referral yourself

Anyone can make a referral to a safeguarding agency as a citizen. We ask workers and volunteers to follow this policy wherever possible, but if someone believes a concern has not been handled appropriately, they may contact an external agency directly.

The role of the Safeguarding Lead

The Safeguarding Lead does not investigate concerns. The role is to gather information, make sure it is recorded properly, seek advice, share information with the relevant agencies, make referrals when appropriate and support safe decision-making. Statutory agencies hold the legal responsibility for investigating.

Concerns about a child

Where there are concerns that a child may have experienced physical injury, neglect or emotional abuse, the Safeguarding Lead will make sure the concern is recorded, consider the child's immediate safety, seek advice from children's services or Thirtyone:eight, and make a referral where required. If the child needs urgent medical help, emergency services are contacted straight away and told about the safeguarding concern.

Where the concern involves a parent or carer, they should not be informed unless safeguarding professionals advise that it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Where there is a disclosure, allegation or concern about sexual abuse, the Safeguarding Lead acts without delay, contacting children's services and the police as appropriate, and seeking advice from Thirtyone:eight. The child's safety and wellbeing is always the priority.

Where there is uncertainty about whether a referral is needed, advice is sought rather than the matter being left.

Concerns about an adult at risk

Concerns may involve physical, sexual, financial, discriminatory or organisational abuse, neglect, self-neglect, exploitation, forced marriage, modern slavery, domestic abuse or other forms of harm. If a person is in immediate danger or has been seriously injured, call 999.

Wherever possible the adult should be involved in decisions about their own situation, and their views, wishes and consent considered before a referral is made. A referral may still be made without consent where the person cannot understand the risk, cannot protect themselves, where others may also be at risk, or where there is a legal duty to share information.

Domestic abuse

Where domestic abuse is disclosed or suspected, the person's safety comes first. We will listen, believe, and help the person get specialist support. We will not pressure anyone to stay in, return to, or reconcile a relationship in which they are being abused. Where children are in the household, this is a child safeguarding concern and is reported as one.

Spiritual abuse

Where there is a concern about spiritual abuse, including the misuse of scripture, position or spiritual authority to control, coerce or silence someone, the Safeguarding Lead will make sure the concern is recorded, identify appropriate support for the person affected, seek advice from Thirtyone:eight, and consider what safeguarding action is needed.

Allegations against workers

If a concern involves a worker or volunteer who works with children or young people, the Safeguarding Lead will refer to the LADO within one working day, share information with safeguarding agencies as required, contact the police where appropriate, and consider whether a referral should be made to the DBS. Where the concern involves a worker with adults at risk, the Safeguarding Lead will liaise with adult services, follow the advice received, consider a DBS referral and share information with the police where appropriate.

The church will cooperate fully with any investigation. Investigations are the responsibility of the statutory agencies, not of the church.

Allegations of non-recent abuse

If an adult discloses non-recent abuse, the Safeguarding Lead will listen carefully, take the disclosure seriously, offer support, explain the person's options and offer the opportunity to report the matter to the police.

If the person does not wish to report it, information about the alleged perpetrator may still be shared where there are safeguarding concerns, while protecting the identity of the person who disclosed wherever possible. If the alleged perpetrator currently works with children or adults at risk, the Safeguarding Lead will contact the relevant agencies and seek advice.

Section 7: Supporting those affected by harm and abuse

We are committed to supporting people who have experienced harm, abuse or neglect, and we recognise that abuse has a lasting impact on people and on those around them. We will treat everyone affected with dignity, respect, compassion and fairness.

Where appropriate we will listen and take concerns seriously, provide pastoral care, help people access specialist support services, work alongside statutory agencies, and support people through safeguarding processes.

Every person's experience is different, and support will be offered in a way that respects their wishes and circumstances. Our support never replaces the work of safeguarding agencies, healthcare professionals or specialist services.

The person responsible for pastoral and wellbeing support is named in Section 1. Where a concern involves that person, this responsibility passes to the Safeguarding Trustee.

Section 8: Records and data protection

Safeguarding records contain special category personal data and are handled accordingly.

- Records are kept in a restricted folder on the church's Google Workspace, not on personal drives or devices.
- Access is limited to the Safeguarding Lead and the Safeguarding Trustee.
- Two-factor authentication is required on every account with access.
- Records are factual, dated and signed, and are not altered after the event. Anything added later is dated separately.
- Records of safeguarding concerns and allegations are retained for a minimum of 25 years. Records relating to allegations of child sexual abuse are retained for 75 years, following the recommendation of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.
- Information is shared only with those who need it, and the fact of any sharing is recorded.

Adoption of the policy

This policy has been adopted by the trustees of Fount Church. It will be reviewed every year, to make sure it remains up to date, reflects current guidance and legislation, and continues to meet the needs of the church. Safeguarding is a standing item at every trustees' meeting.

Date adopted:

Review date:

Signed: ..... **Position:** .....

Signed: ..... **Position:** .....

This policy is published on our website.