

Safeguarding Policy

Alness Baptist Church SCIO



Date of Issue:01-01-2026

Review Date: 01-01-2027

Alness Baptist Church SCIO – Safeguarding Policy

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1. Policy Statement

Alness Baptist Church SCIO (“the Church”) is committed to the safeguarding of children, young people, and adults at risk. We believe that every person is created in the image of God and deserves to be treated with dignity, respect, and care. The Church recognises its responsibility to provide a safe environment in which all people can encounter God, grow in faith, and participate fully in the life of the Church.

We affirm that the welfare of children and adults at risk is paramount and that safeguarding is the responsibility of the whole Church community. This policy sets out the standards, procedures, and commitments by which the Church seeks to prevent abuse, protect those who may be at risk, and respond appropriately to concerns.

This policy has been developed in line with the legal requirements of Scottish law, including the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, and the guidance of the Scottish Government National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021).

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

All trustees, members, employees, volunteers, and office holders of the Church.

All activities and ministries of the Church, whether on Church premises, in members’ homes, or in the community.

All children under 18 and all adults who may be at risk of harm.

The policy also applies to visiting speakers, contractors, or external groups using Church premises, who are expected to adhere to equivalent safeguarding standards.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

Child: A person under the age of 18, as defined by the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

Young Person: A child aged 16 or 17 who may be transitioning into adulthood but remains under safeguarding protections.

Adult at Risk: A person aged 16 or over who is unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights, or other interests due to disability, illness, mental disorder, or other vulnerability, and who may therefore be at risk of harm.

Harm: All forms of abuse, neglect, or exploitation that may cause physical, emotional, psychological, or spiritual damage.

Safeguarding: The proactive actions taken to promote the welfare of children and adults at risk, protect them from harm, prevent impairment of health or development, and ensure safe and effective care.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Trustees

Hold ultimate responsibility for safeguarding within Alness Baptist Church SCIO.

Ensure this Safeguarding Policy is adopted, resourced, and implemented across all activities.

Monitor compliance and receive regular safeguarding reports from the Coordinator.

Review the policy annually (or sooner if required by law or guidance).

4.2 Safeguarding Coordinator

Acts as the first point of contact for any safeguarding concern or disclosure.

Ensures concerns are properly recorded and stored securely.

Decides, in consultation if necessary, when to refer to statutory authorities.

Provides advice, support, and training for volunteers and leaders.

Reports safeguarding matters to the Trustees regularly and urgently when required.

4.3 Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator

Supports the Safeguarding Coordinator in their duties.

Acts as the contact person if the Coordinator is unavailable.

Provides continuity of safeguarding leadership.

4.4 Ministers, Leaders, and Facilitators

Ensure all activities they run comply with this Safeguarding Policy.

Promote a safe culture and model good safeguarding practice.

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Supervise volunteers, ensuring safeguarding standards are upheld.

Report any safeguarding concern immediately to the Coordinator or Deputy.

4.5 Volunteers

Commit to following the Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct.

Attend safeguarding induction and refresher training.

Remain alert to signs of abuse or harm and report concerns immediately.

Never promise confidentiality to a child, young person, or adult at risk.

4.6 All Church Members

Share responsibility for creating a culture of care and protection.

Encourage transparency and accountability in all church activities.

Report any safeguarding concerns to the Coordinator, Deputy, or Trustees.

5. Safer Recruitment

The Church recognises that robust recruitment procedures are essential to safeguarding. To this end:

All those undertaking regulated work with children or protected adults must be members of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme.

All applicants for volunteer or staff roles must complete an application form, provide two written references, and attend an interview or discussion.

No person will be permitted to begin regulated work until a satisfactory PVG disclosure has been received.

Volunteers must sign the Code of Conduct (Appendix A) before commencing duties.

Recruitment records will be kept securely and in compliance with data protection law.

6. Training and Awareness

The Church is committed to equipping all those who serve with the knowledge and skills necessary to safeguard others.

All new staff and volunteers will receive safeguarding induction training before commencing their roles.

Annual refresher training will be provided for all those working with children and adults at risk.

Specialist training will be provided where roles require it (e.g., pastoral carers, youth leaders).

Records of all safeguarding training will be maintained by the Coordinator.

7. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

The Church recognises the importance of confidentiality while also acknowledging that safeguarding concerns must be reported and shared appropriately.

7.1 General Principles

Safeguarding information must be treated with the highest level of confidentiality.

Confidentiality is not absolute: if someone is at risk of harm, information must be shared.

Volunteers must never promise secrecy to a child, young person, or adult at risk.

7.2 Sharing Information

Safeguarding concerns must be reported to the Safeguarding Coordinator (or Deputy).

The Coordinator may share information with statutory agencies, such as:

Police Scotland

Social Work / Local Authority Children and Families Services

Adult Support and Protection teams

Information is shared only on a “need-to-know” basis.

7.3 Record-Keeping

Written safeguarding records will be stored securely by the Safeguarding Coordinator.

Records will include dates, times, observations, and actions taken.

Electronic and paper records will be protected in line with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

7.4 Communication with Families

Parents, carers, or guardians may be informed of concerns unless this would put the child or adult at greater risk.

The decision to inform families will be taken by the Safeguarding Coordinator in consultation with statutory agencies where necessary.

7.5 Secure Handling of Data

Safeguarding information will not be discussed in open meetings or with individuals who are not directly involved.

Access to safeguarding records is restricted to the Safeguarding Coordinator, Deputy, and Trustees (where appropriate).

8. Pastoral Care

The Church is committed to providing pastoral support that upholds safeguarding principles.

Pastoral care will always be offered with sensitivity, respect, and clear boundaries.

Survivors of abuse will be supported with compassion, dignity, and confidentiality (within safeguarding limits).

Pastoral carers must be PVG checked and trained in safeguarding awareness.

Pastoral conversations will be handled with appropriate discretion, but concerns of harm disclosed must be reported in line with this policy.

8.1 Principles of Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is part of the church's ministry of love, compassion, and support.

Safeguarding and pastoral care work together — care does not replace protection.

Pastoral care must always respect safe boundaries and safeguarding requirements.

8.2 Providing Support

Pastoral care may include prayer, listening, encouragement, and practical help.

Support should never create unhealthy dependency or overstep personal boundaries.

Where specialist help is needed (e.g. counselling, medical, or social services), the church will signpost to appropriate professionals.

8.3 Pastoral Carers

Only trained and appointed individuals may provide pastoral care on behalf of the church.

All pastoral carers must have PVG membership and follow the Safeguarding Policy.

Pastoral carers must attend safeguarding training and receive regular supervision.

8.4 Confidentiality in Pastoral Care

Conversations in pastoral care are confidential, but the same safeguarding limits apply:

Concerns about harm or abuse must be reported.

No promises of secrecy can be made.

Records of pastoral conversations will only be made where appropriate and will be stored securely.

8.5 Supporting Survivors of Abuse

Survivors of abuse will be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect.

Support will be offered sensitively, with consideration for their spiritual, emotional, and practical needs.

The church will avoid judgemental attitudes and seek to be a place of safety and healing.

9. Responding to Concerns

When a safeguarding concern arises, the Church will act promptly and appropriately.

9.1 Principles

Every safeguarding concern must be taken seriously.

The role of volunteers is to report, not to investigate.

Concerns must be acted on immediately — delay may place a child or adult at greater risk.

9.2 If Someone Makes a Disclosure

Stay calm and listen carefully.

Do not ask leading questions or press for details.

Reassure the person they did the right thing in speaking up.

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Never promise confidentiality — explain you must share the concern with those who can help.

Record the disclosure as soon as possible, using the person's own words.

9.3 If You Witness or Suspect Harm

Make a careful note of what you saw, heard, or suspected.

Do not confront the alleged abuser yourself.

Pass the concern to the Safeguarding Coordinator (or Deputy if unavailable) immediately.

9.4 Reporting Procedure

Contact the Safeguarding Coordinator immediately.

If unavailable, contact the Deputy Coordinator

If neither is available and the situation is urgent, contact:

Police Scotland (999 if emergency)

Highland Council Social Work / Out of Hours Services

Inform the Coordinator as soon as possible afterwards.

9.5 Recording Concerns

Use the Church's Safeguarding Concern Form (Appendix B).

Record:

Name of person at risk.

Date, time, and details of disclosure or incident.

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Your own observations (not assumptions).

Actions taken and who was informed.

Sign and date the record.

No promise of secrecy may be given; the individual must be told that the information will be shared for their protection.

The concern must be reported immediately to the Coordinator or Deputy and recorded on the Safeguarding Concern Reporting Form (Appendix B).

In urgent cases, or where a person is at immediate risk, the Police or Social Work Services must be contacted without delay.

10. Whistleblowing

10.1 Principles

Alness Baptist Church SCIO is committed to a culture of openness and accountability.

Everyone has the right and responsibility to raise concerns about unsafe practice.

Whistleblowing protects children, young people, adults at risk, and the integrity of the church.

10.2 Protection for Whistleblowers

Volunteers, staff, or members who raise concerns in good faith will be supported.

No one will suffer retaliation, disadvantage, or dismissal for raising a safeguarding concern.

Malicious or knowingly false allegations will be treated as misconduct.

10.3 Routes for Whistleblowing

Concerns should normally be raised with the Safeguarding Coordinator

If the concern involves the Coordinator, raise it with the Deputy

If the concern involves both, or if you believe leadership is not acting appropriately, raise the matter directly with the Trustees.

If urgent, you may contact Police Scotland or Highland Council Social Work directly.

10.4 Anonymity

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Whistleblowers may request anonymity, though this may limit the ability to investigate.

All disclosures will be treated sensitively and handled in confidence as far as possible.

10.5 Legal Framework

This policy aligns with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (“Whistleblower Protection”) and Scottish safeguarding guidance.

11. Review, Monitoring, and Policy Cycle

11.1 Monitoring Safeguarding Practice

The Trustees are responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented in every area of church life.

The Safeguarding Coordinator will provide regular safeguarding updates to the Trustees.

Records of safeguarding concerns, training, and PVG checks will be reviewed periodically.

11.2 Annual Review

This policy will be formally reviewed every year by the Trustees of Alness Baptist Church SCIO.

Reviews will consider:

Changes in Scottish safeguarding law or guidance.

Learning from safeguarding incidents or case reviews.

Feedback from volunteers, leaders, and church members.

The updated version will be recorded in the Document Control Table and distributed to all relevant people.

11.3 Interim Updates

The Trustees may update this policy sooner if there are urgent legal or safeguarding developments.

Updated policies will replace all previous versions immediately.

11.4 Communication of Changes

Any changes will be communicated to staff, volunteers, and facilitators.

Training or briefing sessions will be arranged if changes are significant.

12. Policy Approval and Signatures

This safeguarding policy was adopted by Alness Baptist Church SCIO on [Date].

Signed on behalf of the Trustees: _____

Safeguarding Coordinator: _____

Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator: _____

Appendix A: Volunteer Code of Conduct

All volunteers are expected to adhere to the Church's Code of Conduct. This requires treating everyone with dignity and respect, maintaining safe boundaries, avoiding behaviour that could be misinterpreted, and reporting any safeguarding concerns immediately. Volunteers must confirm their agreement to the Code in writing. The form is available in the Supplementary Forms Pack.

Appendix B: Safeguarding Concern Reporting

Any safeguarding concern must be documented using the official Concern Reporting Form. This ensures accurate details are recorded and acted upon. The form should be completed as soon as possible after a concern is raised and passed to the Safeguarding Coordinator. The template form is provided in the Supplementary Forms Pack.

Appendix C: Consent for Activities and Trips

Parents, carers, or adult participants must provide written consent for attendance at Church-organised activities and trips. Consent includes permission for travel, emergency medical treatment if required, and agreement to behavioural expectations. A consent form template is available in the Supplementary Forms Pack.

Appendix D: Accident and Incident Reporting

All accidents and incidents must be recorded promptly to ensure accountability and learning. Reports must include details of the event, actions taken, and notifications made to parents or carers. A reporting form is provided in the Supplementary Forms Pack.

Appendix E: Safeguarding At-a-Glance Guide

A quick reference guide is available to all volunteers and leaders to remind them of the immediate steps to take if they are concerned about a child or adult at risk. This guide includes contact details for the Safeguarding Coordinator, Deputy, and emergency services. The poster-style guide is reproduced in the Supplementary Forms Pack.

Appendix F: Safer Recruitment Checklist

The Church uses a checklist to ensure safer recruitment processes are consistently applied. This includes verifying application forms, obtaining references, conducting PVG checks, and providing induction training. The checklist is available in the Supplementary Forms Pack.

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