Vale Elim Church (Wantage)

Church Safeguarding Policy

for England

2026-2027

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Details of your church:

Name of church: Vale Elim Church (Wantage)

Address: St Johns CE Academy - Primary Stanley Hall Road Grove Wantage Oxon OX12 0GR

Telephone number: +44 7810 016 335

Email address: elders@valeelimchurch.org.uk

Website: www.valeelimchurch.org.uk

Charity Number:
England and Wales - 251549

Insurance Company Details: AVIVA (EFGA)

Introduction:

Our churches facilitate and engage in a wide range of activities, including Sunday services, small groups, educational programs, medical aid, poverty alleviation, and ministries for the elderly, children, and adults at risk. We also operate departments that prepare and equip people for ministry in local churches, workplaces, and overseas missions. We recognise our responsibility to apply comprehensive safeguarding standards across all of these contexts, including digital platforms such as livestreams, social media, and online pastoral care.

This safeguarding policy outlines the overarching principles, standards, and procedures which guide our approach to safeguarding. It includes guidance for safer recruitment and procedures for responding to safeguarding concerns, allegations and disclosures.

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of an EFGA church, including senior staff, trustees, ministers, ministers in training, church leaders, paid staff and volunteers.

This policy should be read alongside our organisational policies, procedures, guidance and other related documents:

- Safeguarding Handbook
- Role descriptions for the Designated Safeguarding Officer and Deputy
- Code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Health and safety policy
- Dignity at work Policy
- Recruitment policy

Definition of key terms

For the purpose of this guide, the term '**child**' refers to anyone under the age of 18 years.

Abuse against a child is defined as a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them, or more rarely, by others. Abuse may include physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, domestic, female genital mutilation, online abuse, child sexual or criminal exploitation or extremism/radicalisation. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

The Care Act 2014 defines an **adult at risk** as someone aged 18 or over who:

- Has a need for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and.
- Is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- As a result of those care and support needs are unable to protect themselves from either the risk of or the experience of abuse or neglect.

Such abuse may include physical, sexual, domestic, psychological, spiritual, financial and neglect including self-neglect.

Further details including statutory definitions and how to identify abuse can be found in our Safeguarding Handbook, Appendices B and C.

National Leadership Team Statement on Safeguarding

Elim seeks to build healthy churches across the UK and globally, welcoming people of all nationalities, ages, and backgrounds. The National Leadership Team of Elim is committed to supporting our churches in creating healthy, safe spaces for all.

We recognise the ways in which children and adults can be at risk of harm or abuse, and we are determined to foster a culture that minimises opportunities for abuse to occur. We affirm that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All Elim churches must provide safe, stable, and nurturing environments where individuals can flourish. We recognise that vulnerability may be temporary or long-term, and that relationships of trust must be stewarded with openness, transparency, and accountability.

We recognise the courage it takes to disclose abuse, and we are committed to listening to and supporting survivors. We acknowledge the impact of trauma and strive to ensure our churches are sensitive to the needs of those with lived experience of abuse. Where abuse has taken/takes place within the context of the church or by someone professing a Christian faith, we recognise the impact this abuse can also have on an individual's spiritual wellbeing and development.

Safeguarding is rooted in our theological commitment to justice, dignity, and care for all. It is embedded into our leadership culture through regular safeguarding reviews, training, and accountability mechanisms.

It is imperative that the National Safeguarding Team are made aware of safeguarding issues faced by a local church. They are available for advice and support and should be contacted where concerns have implications for the healthy spiritual culture and good standing of Elim. This ensures that responses are open, transparent, and involve statutory safeguarding authorities, with quality assurance provided by Elim International Centre.

Mark Pugh - General Superintendent

On behalf of the National Leadership Team

Church Statement: Our Commitment to Safeguarding

We are committed to providing a safe, caring environment for everyone. We believe every person should feel valued, safe, and treated with dignity and respect. Whilst we as a church leadership bear the primary responsibility, safeguarding is the responsibility of our entire church community, and our leadership works to ensure everyone in our care is protected and their rights are maintained.

Everyone in our community has a responsibility to help prevent the abuse and neglect of children and adults, respond promptly to concerns for well-being and report any disclosed or suspected safeguarding concerns in accordance with procedures outlined below.

We endorse and adopt this safeguarding policy in accordance with national legislation, statutory guidance, and local safeguarding procedures, along with practical guidance issued by Elim nationally through the National Safeguarding Team. This policy and accompanying practical guidance are informed by relevant legislation such as the Equality Act (2010), Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2026), The Care Act (2014), The Children Act (2004), Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006), Crime and Policing Act 2026.

We recognise that:

- All individuals, without distinction or prejudice of any kind, have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse and neglect.
- Some individuals may require additional or enhanced safeguarding measures due to previous experiences, dependency, communication needs, or other factors that increase vulnerability. We commit to providing personalised approaches, where possible, to keep everyone safe.

In our commitment to promoting a healthy and safe church culture, every Elim church will:

- Adhere to Elim's expectations for the safe recruitment of those working with children and adults at risk (whether paid or voluntary).
- Provide appropriate training, support and supervision to all those who undertake work with children or adults, and those in positions of trust (paid and voluntary).
- Adopt a code of conduct for all adults working with vulnerable groups.
- Adopt the annually revised Elim Safeguarding Policy within three months of publication (usually late September).
- Value, respect and listen to the voice of children and adults at risk.
- Promote inclusive, respectful, and trauma-informed practice, including healthy, non-coercive discipleship that respects personal boundaries and fosters accountability.

- Ensure safeguarding practices are culturally sensitive, recognising and respecting different cultural expressions of care and family structure while remaining committed to responding to any type of recognised harm under the relevant legislation.
- Maintain clear boundaries and adopt safer working practices to promote the safety and welfare of children and adults at risk.
- Ensure that children and adults are provided with information on where to get help and advice in relation to abuse, discrimination, bullying or any other matter of concern.
- Take all safeguarding concerns seriously and respond promptly in accordance with our procedures outlined below.
- Maintain accurate records of all safeguarding concerns and actions.
- Promote transparency and accountability: Whilst recognising that the very nature of safeguarding means that we must respond to allegations sensitively, discreetly and confidentially; this does not mean secretively. We will liaise with and seek advice from social services, the police, and other agencies as necessary.
- Ensure that appropriate and personalised boundaries are implemented for individuals who may pose a risk to others, to promote the safety of all in our community.
- Apply safeguarding procedures across all online and in-person ministries of the church, including discipleship, prayer and deliverance, as well as for all outreach activities such as Missions, Evangelism, Community programs etc.
- Discuss safeguarding as a standing item on the agenda as part of minuted church leadership meetings, including actions taken or not taken. The extent of the detail included should remain within the confines of the need-to-know principle.

Working in partnership

Working in partnership with children, adults at risk, parents/carers, and other agencies is essential in promoting an individual's welfare. Therefore, all Elim Churches will partner with the following stakeholders:

- National - We will work closely with Elim's National Safeguarding Team, who oversee the implementation of safeguarding policy and procedures across every Elim church.
- External - We will cooperate fully with all statutory safeguarding agencies to protect those at risk of harm or abuse, including statutory investigations linked with the church. We will share relevant information, where appropriate, to promote the safety of individuals. We recognise that, at the conclusion of any statutory investigation, it may be necessary for us to undertake internal investigations in partnership with the National Safeguarding Team.

- Organisational - Where possible, and where there is not a conflict of interest, the Designated Safeguarding Officer/Deputy will liaise with the senior minister/church leader when issues arise, to ensure appropriate pastoral considerations are addressed and to promote accountability and communication. However, this should not delay any necessary reporting.
- Local - All individuals working with children and/or adults at risk will be given a copy of this safeguarding policy and accompanying practical guidance. It is the expectation that all those working with children and adults have read and agreed to fully adhere to the policy, procedure, and practical guidelines as a condition of continuing in their role.

A copy of our safeguarding policy has been lodged with the National Safeguarding Team at Elim International Centre, will be displayed within our church building and is available on our church website. The safeguarding policy will also be available on request to parents, carers, and any member of or visitor to the church, or any other individual.

This policy and accompanying practical guidance will be reviewed and updated annually by Elim's National Safeguarding Team, and any necessary revisions adopted into the policy will be implemented through our procedures.

Appointment of Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officers (DDSO)

The Leadership have appointed a DSO and DDSO who will take lead responsibility for safeguarding within the church. The role of the DSO must not be held by the senior minister/church leader of the church, nor any immediate family member of the senior minister/church leader (parents, siblings, children, spouse).

It is recommended that married or romantically involved couples or individuals with immediate familial relationships do not fulfil both DSO and DDSO roles together. Similarly, it is also recommended that the role of DSO and DDSO is not held by two individuals holding ministerial credentials/church leaders simultaneously.

The Leadership fully supports the DSO/DDSO in their role of implementing Elim's expectations for safeguarding and acting in the best interest of every individual in responding to allegations, disclosures or suspicions of abuse.

Church Leaders and Elders play a critical role in ensuring safeguarding is implemented, modelled, supported and maintained across church life. At the very least, a representative of the church leadership will meet with DSO and DDSO on a regular basis and ensure appropriate safeguarding updates are included as a standing agenda item at church leadership meetings. It is the responsibility of the senior minister/church leader to inform the National Safeguarding Team about changes in DSO/DDSO appointments.

Designated Safeguarding Officer (Adults & Children)

Name: John Steventon
Phone: 07919032203
Email: jsteventon@aol.com

Where there are concerns over the appointment or suitability of an individual to undertake this role, advice can be sought from the National Safeguarding Team via the Regional Safeguarding Lead.

Signed by or on behalf of the Leadership:

Signed: John Steventon

Name: John Steventon

Role: Safeguarding Lead

Date: 2026-10-21

Key Contacts

Elim's National Safeguarding Team: safeguarding@elim.org.uk

Relevant Regional Safeguarding Lead: Tom Skelton

Email: Tom.Skelton@elim.org.uk

Contact Number: +44 7360 531 398

Regional Leader:

Name: Carl Johnston

Email: carl.johnston@elim.org.uk

Contact Number: +44 7736 289 801

Local Safeguarding partnerships:

Children's Social Services

Name: Oxfordshire County Council Children's Services

Contact Details: Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) 0345 050 7666 or 999 in an emergency

Out of Hours (Emergency Duty Team): 0800 833 408

Adult Social Services

Name: Oxfordshire County Council Adult Social Care

Contact Details: General Adult Social Care and Assessments:- 0345 050 7666

Out of Hours (Emergency Duty Team): 000 833 408

Local Authority Designated Officer

Details: Oxfordshire LADO:- Jo Lloyd Telephone:- 01865 810603 email Email:- lado.safeguardingchildren@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Safeguarding procedures:

Safer recruitment

(Preventing harm through screening to ensure only suitable people work with children and adults)

As a Leadership, we recognise that we are responsible for ensuring all workers (both paid and voluntary) are appointed, trained, supported, and supervised in accordance with government guidance on safe recruitment.

This includes ensuring that:

- There is a written job description/person specification for the post.
- When advertising a role which involves working with children or adults at risk, it is clearly communicated that any appointment may be subject to a relevant DBS check at the appropriate level.
- Those applying have completed an application form.
- Those shortlisted have been interviewed (and safeguarding has been discussed at interview).
- At least two satisfactory written references have been obtained (and followed up where appropriate). This should not include a relative, and at least one referee should be external to the church.
- Where relevant, qualifications and/or an individual's right to work in the UK have been verified.
- A self-declaration form and appropriate DBS check have been obtained in accordance with the position that the person has applied for, where necessary. This must also be reviewed every 3 years while those involved are in the post, unless they are signed up for the update service. (The church Leadership has nominated Recruiters, who are responsible for administering the application of appropriate DBS checks across the church.)
- Overseas checks have been completed where someone is applying to work with vulnerable groups and has lived overseas.
- Having a criminal record does not necessarily prevent an individual from undertaking a role within Elim, working with children and adults.

As a church, we will comply with the requirements of the Code of Practice for employers (April 2022) concerning the fair treatment of applicants and the handling of information.

All successful applicants will be expected to sign a contract of employment or volunteer agreement and will be provided with access to (and are expected to read) the church safeguarding policy.

Following recruitment, we will provide suitable training (including safeguarding training) for successful applicants, as well as ongoing support and supervision. All

workers, church leaders/elders and ministers are expected to undertake safeguarding training relevant to their role every 2 years and complete an annual suitability declaration, to ensure their ongoing suitability.

Responding to allegations, disclosures and concerns

Anyone who is concerned for the well-being of an individual connected to the church should speak to the DSO/DDSO as soon as possible and should **not** investigate the matter themselves.

Any allegations, disclosures or concerns should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer within 24 hours. Matters which represent an immediate risk of harm should be reported as soon as practicably possible. Reports should be confirmed in writing either in the first instance or as soon as possible if the initial report was verbally relayed to the DSO or DDSO**.** In such instances, the DSO/DDSO will write an account of the verbal report, which can be signed by the individual to indicate their acceptance of its accuracy.

All disclosures, allegations and concerns will be taken seriously and responded to with compassion and care. Where concerns are raised, it may be necessary for an internal or external investigation to be undertaken. This should be discussed, and actions undertaken in conjunction, with the National Safeguarding Team. For more information, see our Safeguarding Handbook

In the absence of the DSO/DDSO, individuals should seek advice from the senior minister/church leader or a member of the Leadership Team, who will then contact the National Safeguarding Team for advice and support. However, where there is conflict of interest, individuals should contact the National Safeguarding Team directly.

Where someone has passed information to the Designated Safeguarding Officer or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer and believes this has not been responded to appropriately, then they should make a direct referral to the relevant statutory authorities outlined below, if necessary, or contact the National Safeguarding Team.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO/DDSO) will:

- Consider the information provided and decide on the most appropriate action to take in response. This may include informing and/or seeking guidance from the National Safeguarding Team, via the Regional Safeguarding Lead.
- Make any necessary contact with relevant statutory safeguarding authorities, if required, within 24 hours of receiving the concern.

  - Where the concern is about a child, the **DSO/DDSO** will contact Children's Social Services.
  - Where the concern is about an adult at risk, or where there is concern about an adult's mental capacity, the **DSO/DDSO** will contact Adult Social Services.
  - Where it is believed that a crime has been committed, the **DSO/DDSO** should contact Police via 101 for non-emergencies, or via 999 where it is believed that an individual is at immediate risk of serious harm.

- Inform the senior minister/church leader about any safeguarding concerns, unless there is a conflict of interest, and collaborate to coordinate any necessary pastoral support.

- Ensure all information relating to the concerns/allegations/disclosures, and all action taken in response, is collated and recorded using the central Elim iKnow safeguarding database.

The DSO/DDSO **must** contact the **National Safeguarding Team** about any safeguarding matter that requires contact with the church insurers or may require reporting to the Charity Commission. This would include any allegations or concerns raised against office holders, minister/church leaders and workers (paid or voluntary), injury to a person while under the care of the church or in church premises, or any action or inaction that could cause reputational damage to the church or charity.

Safeguarding information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis. **No** information about any safeguarding concerns, allegations or disclosures will be shared with members of the church other than those responsible for overseeing safeguarding processes.

When engaged in the activities of Elim International Missions, concerns should be reported to the International Missions Director, who will liaise with the National Safeguarding Team in addressing any safeguarding concerns following the Elim Missions safeguarding procedures.

Partnership with National Safeguarding Team

Where the **DSO/DDSO** are unsure of what action to take, it is the expectation of the church Leadership that advice will be sought from the National Safeguarding Team at Elim International Centre, and that the **DSO/DDSO** will follow the mechanisms or actions recommended by Elim.

The **DSO/DDSO** must report any allegation of a safeguarding nature, or concern raised about a worker (paid or voluntary), ministers, or member of church leadership,

whether they are engaged in regulated activity or not, to the National Safeguarding Team within 1 working day of the allegation being made or concern raised.

Allegations against workers/suspicion of harm

Where the subject of an allegation/concern is working in a position of trust with children, the **DSO/DDSO** should report the concerns to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), or equivalent.

Where the subject of an allegation/concern is working in a position of trust with adults at risk, the **DSO/DDSO** should make a Person in a Position of Trust (PiPOT) referral to Adult Social Care, or equivalent.

If any statutory authority chooses to investigate, the **DSO/DDSO** will follow their advice with regard to action to be taken by the church. This may include suspension from the role, for example.

Where a worker with children or adults at risk is removed from regulated activity because of risk of harm, resigns or retires prior to dismissal, or is dismissed, a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service should be made for barring consideration. This also includes where a worker/volunteer has left their position because of actions outside of their role, which indicate they may not be suitable to work with vulnerable groups. Where the **DSO/DDSO** is unsure of action to take in this regard, advice should be sought from the National Safeguarding Team via the Regional Safeguarding Lead.

A *position of trust* is a legal term recognised in England and Wales referring to roles where an adult has regular and direct contact with children. Since 2022, this has included faith leaders and volunteers in religious settings, and thus, we acknowledge that those working with vulnerable groups within our churches are legally recognised as functioning in positions of trust. As such, criminal charges could be brought against an adult working with children if they engage in a romantic or sexual relationship with a child between the ages of 16-17, regardless of their ability to consent. Any individual concerns about a relationship forming between an adult worker and a young person should inform the DSO/Deputy.

Where the DSO is the subject of an allegation or concern, individuals should inform the senior minister/church leader, who will notify the National Safeguarding Team, without informing the DSO of the concerns raised.

Individuals who may present a risk

The **DSO/DDSO** must inform the National Safeguarding Team when working with or supporting an individual who may present as a current risk to children or adults, for

example, due to criminal convictions or cautions, or inappropriate conduct towards children or adults.

In such instances, a safeguarding risk assessment must be completed, with support from the National Safeguarding Team. It may also be necessary for additional behaviour agreements to be implemented.

This process will be led by **DSO/DDSO**, who will liaise and work in partnership with relevant professionals such as Police Public Protection Teams, Sex Offender Management Teams, Probation and other statutory agencies in assessing risk to inform safeguarding risk assessment and any necessary behaviour agreement. Risk assessments should clearly identify any areas of risk, along with all identified methods of risk mitigation to be undertaken by the church.

Once the risk assessment is complete, you must then consider if it is reasonable for the person to attend the church. The Church Leadership reserves the right to take proportionate measures, such as asking the individual to adhere to a safeguarding agreement (known as a 'behaviour agreement') as a condition of their attendance at church and all related activities. More detailed information regarding this process can be found in our Safeguarding Handbook.

Pastoral Support

We recognise that many safeguarding matters can be deeply distressing for those involved.

The **DSO/DDSO** will liaise with the senior minister/church leader to ensure individuals involved in any safeguarding matters have access to appropriate pastoral care. This would include those who have experienced harm, those who have (or are alleged to have) caused harm, and any family/friends affected.

Where concerns involve a member of church leadership, the Regional Leader must be informed without delay. They will arrange for the offer of pastoral support for the minister/leader involved.

Those providing pastoral support should take care to implement appropriate boundaries and should be aware of best practice guidelines in support of individuals impacted by abuse and trauma.

Where a statutory investigation is in process, details of the investigation should not be discussed during pastoral meetings, and any information shared must be passed on. Any information shared with the DSO, DDSO, the Church Leadership or any other individual about the matter under investigation must be passed on to the statutory body immediately. Any subsequent discussion could prejudice an investigation.

Where an individual who has caused harm accepts some responsibility, the church should encourage and support them in seeking specialised interventions/treatment to reduce the risk of re-offending.

As a church, we recognise the need to ensure those designated to respond to safeguarding concerns also receive regular pastoral support, as we recognise the highly challenging nature of the work they undertake.

Escalation of concerns

In our commitment to openness, should anyone have a concern that our church or the **DSO/DDSO** have not dealt appropriately with a safeguarding concern, we would encourage that person to make contact with Elim's National Safeguarding Team via the Regional Safeguarding Lead or to make a direct referral to the relevant statutory agencies.

Alternatively, you may wish to seek advice from relevant helplines such as:

- NSPCC **– 0808 800 5000 / help@NSPCC.org.uk**
- Thirtyone:eight **– 0303 003 1111 / advice@thirtyoneeight.org (**Elim has implemented an Information Sharing Agreement with Thirtyone:eight, which allows Elim's National Safeguarding Team to receive copies of Thirtyone:eight advice notes provided to any EFGA who contacts their adviceline.)