



## **Safeguarding Policy**

**Approved by:** Trustees of the North London Pastoral Assistants Scheme

**Date approved:** 28 January 2026

To be reviewed at the October meeting of trustees each year.

**Applies to:** Pastoral Assistants, trustees, staff, volunteers, placement supervisors, and anyone acting on behalf of the Scheme

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### **1. Introduction and Commitment**

1.1 The North London Pastoral Assistants (“NLPA”) is committed to creating a safe environment in which children, young people, and adults at risk can live, work, pray, serve, and learn without fear of harm.

1.2 This policy applies to all pastoral assistants, supervisors, trustees, volunteers, staff, and anyone undertaking activity on behalf of the NLPA.

1.3 Our safeguarding approach is grounded in dignity and respect for all. We promote wellbeing and protect those who may be vulnerable from all forms of abuse, including physical, sexual, spiritual, emotional, neglectful, discriminatory, and financial abuse.

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### **2. Our Safeguarding Commitment**

2.1 The North London Pastoral Assistants Scheme (“the Scheme”) is committed to creating and maintaining a safe, respectful, and healthy environment in which everyone is protected from harm.

2.2 Safeguarding is a core part of Christian ministry and discipleship. We will promote the welfare of children, young people, and adults at risk, and we will respond promptly and appropriately to concerns about abuse, neglect, exploitation, coercion, harassment, or harm.

2.3 We recognise that safeguarding includes not only preventing and responding to abuse, but also addressing harmful culture and misuse of power, including bullying, coercive control, intimidation, discrimination, and spiritual abuse.

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### **3. Our Safeguarding Principles**

- 3.1 Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- 3.2 The welfare of children and adults at risk is paramount.
- 3.3 We will listen, respond, and act promptly.
- 3.4 We will record concerns accurately and share information appropriately.
- 3.5 We will work in partnership with placement parishes, diocesan safeguarding teams, and statutory agencies.
- 3.6 We will promote healthy boundaries, supervision, and accountability.
- 3.7 We will encourage speaking up, including whistleblowing, without fear of retaliation.
- 3.8 We will support victims and survivors with compassion and respect.

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### **4. Scope**

- 4.1 This policy applies to all safeguarding activity connected to the Scheme, including: recruitment and selection of Pastoral Assistants; placements in parishes and church contexts; Scheme training days, events, retreats, and travel; online contact, social media, and digital communications connected to Scheme activity; Scheme-arranged accommodation and community living; and safeguarding concerns involving Pastoral Assistants, supervisors, trustees, staff, or volunteers connected to the Scheme.
- 4.2 This policy applies to all pastoral assistants, supervisors, trustees, volunteers, staff, and anyone undertaking activity on behalf of NLPA.

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### **5. Key Definitions**

- 5.1 Safeguarding means protecting people's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.
- 5.2 Child / young person means anyone under the age of 18.
- 5.3 Adult at risk means an adult who has care and support needs and may be unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation.
- 5.4 Abuse may include (but is not limited to): physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional or psychological abuse; neglect; financial abuse; domestic abuse; coercive control; exploitation; modern slavery; discriminatory abuse; bullying and harassment; online abuse; and spiritual abuse.

5.5 Spiritual abuse includes the misuse of spiritual authority, scripture, prayer, prophecy, confession, pastoral care, discipline, or church structures to control, shame, isolate, silence, intimidate, or manipulate another person.

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## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

6.1 Trustees / Management Committee: Trustees are responsible for ensuring the Scheme has an up-to-date safeguarding policy and procedures, implements safer recruitment practices, provides appropriate safeguarding training and supervision, responds appropriately to safeguarding concerns, and reviews safeguarding practice and learning annually (or sooner where required).

6.2 Scheme Safeguarding Lead (SSL): The Scheme will appoint a named Safeguarding Lead who will provide safeguarding advice and oversight, ensure safeguarding concerns are responded to promptly and escalated appropriately, maintain a secure safeguarding log and records, liaise with diocesan safeguarding teams and statutory agencies where required, monitor safeguarding training compliance, and support a culture of safe boundaries and accountability.

6.3 Scheme Director / Coordinator / Chair: The Scheme Director / Coordinator / Chair will ensure Pastoral Assistants receive safeguarding induction, confirm placement readiness (DBS, training, supervision arrangements), liaise with placement supervisors regarding wellbeing and conduct, and escalate concerns to the Scheme Safeguarding Lead without delay.

6.4 Placement Parish Responsibilities: Each placement parish must have a named Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO), provide safeguarding induction to the Pastoral Assistant, ensure safe working practices are followed, provide appropriate supervision and oversight, ensure the Pastoral Assistant is not placed in unsafe or undirected roles, and respond promptly to concerns and liaise with the Scheme where appropriate.

6.5 Placement Supervisor / Training Minister: The supervisor will provide regular supervision to ensure role clarity and safe boundaries, monitor workload and wellbeing, address concerns early and escalate appropriately, and keep brief supervision notes and agreed actions.

6.6 Pastoral Assistants must follow this policy and their placement parish safeguarding policies. They must complete safeguarding training, maintain clear professional boundaries, and report safeguarding concerns immediately. If in doubt, they must seek advice straight away.

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## **7. Safer Recruitment, DBS, and Training**

7.1 The Scheme is committed to safer recruitment, including clear role descriptions and safeguarding expectations, safer recruitment questions in interviews, identity verification, references (including church/community references where appropriate), DBS clearance at the appropriate level before regulated activity begins, risk assessments where relevant, and safeguarding training requirements monitored by the Scheme.

7.2 No Pastoral Assistant will begin regulated activity until all required checks are complete and the placement is confirmed as safe.

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## **8. Induction and Safer Working Practice**

8.1 All Pastoral Assistants will receive induction covering parish safeguarding policy and reporting routes, boundaries and safe working expectations, guidance for pastoral visiting and lone working, online safety and communication boundaries, what to do if worried about someone, and how to record and report safeguarding concerns.

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## **9. Code of Conduct and Professional Boundaries**

9.1 Pastoral Assistants are expected to treat everyone with dignity and respect, avoid being alone with children or adults at risk unless authorised and risk assessed, avoid secrecy, favouritism, or exclusive relationships, not provide counselling/therapy unless qualified and authorised, not accept or give inappropriate gifts or money, not invite children/young people or adults at risk into private accommodation, maintain appropriate digital boundaries and communication practices, and report any concerns about boundary violations, grooming behaviour, bullying, coercion, or spiritual abuse.

9.2 Any serious boundary breach may be treated as a safeguarding matter.

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## **10. Responding to Safeguarding Concerns and Disclosures**

10.1 If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999.

10.2 If a child, young person, or adult at risk discloses abuse or harm, Scheme members should listen carefully and stay calm, take the disclosure seriously, reassure the person they have done the right thing in speaking up, explain that confidentiality cannot be promised, avoid leading questions or investigating, record what was said as soon as possible (facts, date, time), and report immediately via the routes below.

10.3 Safeguarding records must be factual and accurate, dated and signed, stored securely, and shared only on a need-to-know basis. Confidentiality will be respected, but it must never be promised where information must be shared to protect someone from harm.

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## **11. Reporting Routes and Escalation**

11.1 Safeguarding concerns can be raised to the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO), the Placement Supervisor / Incumbent, the Scheme Safeguarding Lead, and/or the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

11.2 If the concern involves parish leadership or Scheme leadership, it must be escalated directly to the Scheme Safeguarding Lead and/or the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

11.3 If concerns are not being taken seriously, escalation is expected and supported.

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## **12. Allegations Against Pastoral Assistants, Clergy, Staff, or Trustees**

12.1 Any allegation of harm, abuse, boundary violations, or inappropriate behaviour involving a Pastoral Assistant, a placement supervisor or church officer, or a trustee, staff member, or volunteer connected to the Scheme will be treated seriously and responded to promptly.

12.2 Where appropriate, matters will be referred to the diocesan safeguarding team and/or the police and local authority safeguarding services.

12.3 Interim safeguarding measures may include removal from duties or suspension from placement while concerns are assessed.

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## **13. Whistleblowing and Speaking Up**

13.1 The Scheme encourages a culture where people can raise concerns without fear.

13.2 Whistleblowing includes reporting unsafe practice; bullying, harassment, coercion, or intimidation; spiritual abuse or misuse of power; and safeguarding concerns being minimised, ignored, or covered up.

13.3 No Pastoral Assistant will be penalised for raising a safeguarding concern in good faith.

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## **14. Online Safety and Communications**

14.1 Pastoral Assistants must use appropriate and transparent communication channels, avoid private or secretive messaging with children/young people, follow parish guidance on photos, livestreaming, and consent, not hold safeguarding disclosures in WhatsApp or personal DMs, and maintain professional boundaries online and on social media.

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## **15. Safeguarding in Scheme-Arranged Accommodation and Community Living**

15.1 Where the Scheme provides or arranges shared accommodation, the Scheme recognises that everyone has the right to feel emotionally and psychologically safe in their home, bullying, coercion, harassment, intimidation, and spiritually abusive behaviour will be taken seriously, concerns should be raised early and responded to appropriately, and accommodation is primarily for rest and home life and does not permit informal ministry access to children/young people or adults at risk.

15.2 Household agreements support prevention and wellbeing, but do not replace safeguarding reporting routes.

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## **16. Independent Safeguarding Support: Guarding the Flock**

16.1 The Scheme has partnered with Guarding the Flock, an independent safeguarding consultancy, to strengthen safeguarding practice across the Scheme.

16.2 Guarding the Flock will be used to provide safeguarding advice and consultation (including complex or culture-related concerns), safeguarding training for Pastoral Assistants, supervisors, and trustees, and reflective safeguarding supervision to support safe practice, boundaries, accountability, and healthy culture.

16.3 Guarding the Flock provides support and guidance, but does not replace diocesan safeguarding teams, statutory safeguarding agencies, emergency services, or the Scheme's safeguarding responsibilities.

16.4 Safeguarding concerns will continue to be reported through the appropriate parish and diocesan safeguarding routes, and to statutory agencies where required.

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## **17. Pastoral Care and Wellbeing**

17.1 Safeguarding concerns can be distressing for victims and survivors, those who disclose, those who report, and Pastoral Assistants and leaders responding to concerns.

17.2 The Scheme will ensure that appropriate pastoral support is available, and that people are signposted to specialist services where required. Pastoral support does not replace safeguarding action.

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## **18. Review and Learning**

18.1 This policy will be reviewed annually and following any serious safeguarding concern, learning review, or significant change in Scheme practice.

18.2 The Scheme is committed to learning, accountability, and continuous improvement.

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## **19. Key Contacts (To be completed by**

**each placement supervisor)**

### **19.1 Independent Safeguarding Advisor:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

19.2 Scheme Director / Coordinator / Chair of Trustees:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

19.3 Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) of placement parish

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

19.5 Diocesan Safeguarding Team: [insert diocesan contact details]

19.6 Emergency services: 999

19.7 Non-emergency police: 101

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