

Saint Laurence

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Culture and Practice	3
Healthy Culture	5
Healthy Habits	5
Safeguarding policy	6
Code of Conduct	7
Breaching the Code of Conduct	8
Safeguarding Young People Online	10
Couples and Families Working Together	16
Use of Private Homes	17
Guidance on acceptable touch	17
Driving	18
Recruitment of Ex-Offenders	19
Welcoming unknown visitors	20
Resources	21

Introduction

It is not expected that everyone reads the document in its entirety once, rather that everyone has it available and refers to the relevant areas as and when required.

If you have any queries about anything in this document, please do contact me or Chris Jones

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Parish Safeguarding Officer

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If you have a safeguarding concern and wish to speak to someone outside the Parish, you can contact the Diocesan safeguarding team on 01865 208 295 or email

safeguardingreferrals@oxford.anglican.org during office hours.

For urgent safeguarding enquiries outside of operational hours, please call our partners Thirtyone:eight on +44 (0) 303 003 1111 for confidential advice, guidance, and support.

Culture and Practice

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22).

Saint Laurence is a church that lives to see the young people of Reading come to faith. We engage with young people through schools' work, our youth club, small groups, holiday activities, residential, church services and mentoring.

However, more than this, we are family. We add up to more than the sum of our activities and programmes. We bring our own individual shapes to this community and expect the young people to shape us too. Like family, we all need each other in different ways, at different times. We want every church member to be part of the welcome that we offer young people.

We take our responsibility for the pastoral care of our young people seriously. We seek to express our commitment to them through kindness. For us, kindness doesn't just mean good safeguarding practice, but being willing to walk with them in their lived experience. We want to be trusted, hope filled people that young people can lean on. We undertake this responsibility in the sure hope that their lives can be wonderfully transformed by God's

love. We aim to foster an inclusive culture, where our whole church, young people and adults, have confidence to seek help and guidance where necessary. We commit ourselves to being reflective – ensuring that we have the flexibility to creatively respond to anything the young people bring to us. We commit ourselves to work transparently. We are open to learning through appreciative enquiry: challenging each other with kindness. In the context of being family together, we are willing to be challenged and are prepared to change our individual and collective approaches in response to young people's needs.

We frequently manage sensitive, pastoral issues. We recognise that we need to proactively work together to express kindness in our relationships both inside and outside our church building. We seek to form constructive, respectful relationships with parents, families, foster carers, statutory services and other agencies. The welfare of the child is our paramount consideration in the conversations that we have and the actions that we take (Children Act 1989).

National reports frequently remind us of the poor mental health of young people and the unimaginable difficulties and pressures they face. Our local hospital has seen a significant rise in teenage A&E mental health admissions. We are a church in the centre of Reading, a town which is home to many vulnerable teenagers.

Our aim is that this building and the relationships formed within it are a sanctuary for these precious young lives. That we would lead them with cords of kindness to the One who made them and knows them. Our lived hope is that their lives will be transformed through an encounter with Jesus, who loves them so much, He gave His life for them.

***I led them with cords of human kindness,
with ties of love.***

***To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek,
and I bent down to feed them.***

(Hosea 11:4)

Healthy Culture

At Saint Laurence, we practice:

Empowerment - we encourage individuals to develop autonomy, think for themselves and we respect the freedom to express disagreement or concern.

Supervision - it is our practice, that anybody holding positions of responsibility within the church, engage with a regular space where discussion of helpful and unhelpful behaviours can occur.

Support - we seek to offer appropriate and additional support, most especially for people who have experiences of abuse.

Training - we prioritise our team relationships, engage with reflective practice together, and we seek training and expertise in areas where we identify our learning needs.

Awareness - we will not avoid facing difficult and complex issues. We challenge unhelpful behaviours and raise awareness of the impact of such behaviours on others.

Healthy Habits

At Saint Laurence, we seek to be:

Curious - we listen to each other's stories and try to see how the world looks through their eyes.

Present - we want to encounter each other with authenticity and confidence.

Reimagining - we pray for hope and opportunity in places where we long to see change. We live in the light of hope.

Safeguarding policy

At Saint Laurence, we take seriously our shared responsibility of ensuring the safeguarding of our children, young people and vulnerable adults. Every person has value and dignity. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. This implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

We commit ourselves to nurture, protect and safeguard all our members, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults.

We recognise that safeguarding is the responsibility of the whole church community. We seek to offer adequate support and training to church members, developing their capacity to recognise and appropriately respond to any signs of abuse and neglect.

We undertake to exercise proper care in the selection and appointment of those working in both paid and voluntary positions with children or vulnerable adults, including the use of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosures.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Team are advised of our use of the thirtyone:eight DBS umbrella scheme, and we will inform them of any DBS Disclosures that are not clear. We will respond without delay to concerns or allegations that a child or vulnerable adult may have been harmed, cooperating with the police and social care services in any investigation. We will ensure that we have clear reporting procedures in place.

We will challenge any abuse of power by anyone in a position of trust.

We will seek to offer informed pastoral care and support to anyone who has suffered abuse, referring them to appropriate agencies and community support where necessary. We will seek to find support, including supervision and referral to the proper authorities, for any member of our church community known to have offended a child, young person or vulnerable adult. We will support them in finding an alternative, nurturing church community, who has the capacity to provide them appropriate, focused and kind pastoral care.

In all these principles above, we will follow the House of Bishops Safeguarding Policy statement, Diocesan, Statute, local safeguarding guidance and recognised good practice.

Code of Conduct

This behavioural code is for adults working with children, young people and adults to reduce their risk of harm at Saint Laurence, as well as reduce the risk of unfounded allegations against workers.

The role of workers (paid and unpaid):

When working with children and young people or adults at risk of harm, you are acting in a position of trust for Saint Laurence. You will be a role model and must act appropriately.

Good practice

- Treat everyone with dignity, respect and fairness, and have proper regard for individuals' interests, rights, safety and welfare.
- Ensure your language, tone of voice and body language is respectful.
- Work in a responsible, transparent and accountable way.
- Be approachable, reflective and receptive to challenge and learning.
- Be prepared to challenge unacceptable behaviour.
- Listen carefully to those you are supporting.
- Avoid any behaviour that could be perceived as bullying, emotional abuse, harassment, physical abuse, spiritual abuse or sexual abuse (including inappropriate physical contact such as rough play and inappropriate language or gestures)
- Seek advice from someone with greater experience when necessary.
- Work in an open environment – avoid private or unobserved situations, including when administering First Aid.
- Follow policies, procedures and guidelines and report all disclosures, concerns, allegations, and suspicions to the Safeguarding Officer.
- Don't make inappropriate promises particularly in relation to confidentiality.
- Do explain to the individual what you intend to do and don't delay acting.

Unacceptable behaviour

- Not reporting concerns or delaying reporting concerns
- Taking unnecessary risks or invading a person's privacy.
- Any behaviour that is or may be perceived as demeaning, threatening or abusive in any way.
- Passing on your personal and/or social media contact details and any contact that breaches the Saint Laurence social media policy.
- Developing inappropriate relationships.

- Punitive, blaming or rejecting responses to individuals or groups.
- Colluding or enabling abusive or unhealthy dynamics (for example, peer bullying or allowing someone to involve you in their excessive attention seeking etc.)
- Smoking and consuming alcohol or illegal substances in front of young people.
- Favouritism/exclusion – all people should be equally supported and encouraged.
- Allow unknown adults access to children, young people and adults that may be vulnerable. Visitors should always be accompanied or encouraged to return to Saint Laurence when there isn't an activity running.
- Giving lifts to children or young people, without transparency or agreement (except for medical emergencies and such). Please advise a staff member of what you did and why at the earliest opportunity.
- Arrange social occasions with children and young people without appropriate permissions and transparency.

Breaching the Code of Conduct

At Saint Laurence, we believe that our children and young people are safer in the context of a transparent, kind and supportive culture, where we aren't defensive and difficult issues can be raised and worked through together. Where any breach of this code of conduct occurs, you can expect to have the issue raised with you clearly, respectfully and supportively. We will always want to work restoratively, rather than punitively, gaining all the learning there is for each one of us: continuing to build and strengthen a safe church community for all. We always work in the best interests of the children and young people.

In serious cases where you have behaved inappropriately you will be subject to appropriate disciplinary/restorative actions and procedures (especially in the case of paid staff).

In serious cases, we would advise the Diocese, who may make a referral to statutory agencies such as the Police and/or the Local Authority children's or adult's social care departments or DBS. If you become aware of a breach of this code, you should escalate your concerns to the Clergy and/or Safeguarding Officer.

Child Protection

If you are concerned about anything while online working with young people, adhere to the guidelines and reporting procedures as per Saint Laurence policy and/or statutory reporting requirements.

Video Meetings

Among the many programmes available to both youth work professionals and young people alike, the following points can guide all parties to safe usage:

- Young people can attend meetings as invited participants via invitation link. A church zoom account is used for all our online gatherings.
- Meetings are hosted from an account held and managed by Saint Laurence. Members of staff and various members of the church have access to the account details.
- We ensure that meetings are password protected and can only be joined by invitees.
- We never invite anyone to join a meeting unless they are a member of the youth group or a leader with the youth group.
- Where possible, video calls have 2 leaders present. When we go into breakout rooms, we also need to have 2 leaders. Where this is not possible, we record a group or meeting. We store the recording securely on Saint Laurence Google drive for 3 years.
- We inform participants and their parents/guardians (for under 16s) that we will be recording the meeting, gaining their permission to do so, in line with Saint Laurence policy.
- We make ourselves familiar with the features of our chosen apps in advance and provide clear guidance for young people on the safe use of the app prior to working online.
- We are clear about the planned duration of the online interaction in advance. We suggest sessions of approximately 30-60 minutes, according to recommended safe usage.
- We are clear on the code of conduct for participants. For example, we ensure all participants, regardless of age are dressed appropriately, participating fully and working together etc. The Saint Laurence code of conduct always applies.
- We check with all young people that they are comfortable with using the app and whether they are experiencing any barriers to participation (e.g. no broadband access or access to equipment; a disability that impacts their ability to interact via screen such as visual impairment etc.). We make accommodations as appropriate.

- We reconsider how online groups are run if it leads to the significant exclusion of members, always seeking alternative and creative ways to engage with young people.

Managing behaviour in video meetings

Video calls should be treated in the same manner as face-to-face work and subject to the Saint Laurence code of conduct:

- We have developed a clear set of rules/code of practice for our groups through a process of participation and consultation, including the issues raised in our risk assessment.
- All negative behaviour is addressed by the staff/leaders in a consistent manner.
- A leader has the right to end the engagement of any individual from the group chat if deemed necessary. Negative behaviour is always addressed in a clear, kind and constructive way.

A suggested approach for challenging behaviours

- Using a participative process, we explore the reasons for and the consequences of negative behaviour for the individual/group.
- We state clearly the behaviour that's expected in the group.
- We state clearly the behaviour that is not acceptable in any group.
- We always expect and affirm positive changes in behaviour.

Safeguarding Young People Online

Since 2020 working remotely and communicating with young people through using a variety of communication tools and apps has become the new normal. The following guidelines reflect best practice and work towards maintaining the safety of young people and those working with young people at Saint Laurence.

Why is this important?

Social Media offers fantastic opportunities for keeping in touch with young people outside of the church setting. However, the possibilities need to be balanced with the responsibilities. There are some important aspects of using social media that you may not have considered in relation to your role as a leader of young people.

This policy is about accountability with regards to the content of your online messages, activity, and profile. Use common sense. If you wouldn't or shouldn't do something offline, then you shouldn't do it online.

Social media is a tool which can be used and abused, but in addition, is dangerously open to misinterpretation. So just like good practice guidelines for face-to-face work, it's important we have these for online. This is both to ensure safety for young people, as well as safety for adults from the risk of unfounded allegations (either from the young person or their parent/carers about their child).

It is important that you accept responsibility and take on board the following guidelines or do not use social media to communicate with young people.

If used carefully then social media is a better and safer way to contact young people than calling or texting.

Official Saint Laurence Social Media accounts

Saint Laurence's code of conduct says that best practice is that adults should ensure you are never alone with a young person, and this extends to social media. As a result, all contact made with young people on social media by staff must be done so using the official Saint Laurence accounts (subsequently referred to as 'the account'). These accounts shall be used for sharing information, messaging young people and can also be used to publicise the groups on social media platforms. These accounts shall be set up as a 'person' and so shall be able to friend or follow young people, the church official accounts (managed by multiple staff members) can and do follow young people under 18, to facilitate our means of communication.

The login details of these accounts shall be shared with members of the youth team allowing access to view all activity and communications with young people. This allows the whole team accountability as every member of the team will be able to login and view any private conversations had with a young person by any member of the team and any posts made by the official youth account.

The same basic rules and recommendations apply to operating in the digital workspace as they would in regular work environments. As a starting point, please refer to the Saint Laurence safeguarding and online policies, which apply equally to online spaces as they do in our usual youth work engagement. In addition, the safeguarding handbook and code of conduct stipulates guidance for good practice.

Saint Laurence staff should not befriend young people or vulnerable adults on social media using their personal profiles.

We acknowledge that this is a complex area in the context of church community and shared lives so suggest members of the community use their judgement as to appropriateness of social media friends and talk to a staff member or safeguarding officer if any concerns arise.

With respect to online youth work & social media, we ensure the following:

- Saint Laurence staff only use official Saint Laurence social media accounts and devices to communicate with a young person. We do not use a personal account or device to contact a young person.
- We talk with young people about the safe use of social media sites and apps within the youth group, ensuring they are informed.
- We use 'About' or 'Group Information' sections to declare group rules and promote safe usage.
- We do not require any users of our social media sites to disclose personal information.
- We do not tag or provide contact details for members on social media sites.
- The staff team moderates the content of all social media sites: monitoring posts, removing inappropriate content and liaising with the safeguarding lead with any instances of bullying or harassment.
- We are aware of the most appropriate settings on each social media site/app to safeguard young people and use accordingly. For example, we have closed groups and we moderate.
- We complete an appropriate risk assessment for the activity we are running, and our leaders are familiarised with guidance in team briefings.
- When we are talking online 1:1 with a young person (for example, when only one person attends a planned small group) we move our engagement onto the phone, rather than continuing to use visual connection (such as WhatsApp face calls, zoom, facetime etc.)

Instant Messaging services as used by Saint Laurence staff members:

- WhatsApp should only be used to communicate with those over 16 years of age, as per current UK guidance.
- Communication should be on an individual basis and the use of groups and group messaging within WhatsApp is not to be used.
- SMS is to be used for those under 16 years of age.
- Personal Snapchat accounts should not be used, only the @stlaurenceyouth account should be used to communicate with young people. Only young people that we already know should be contacted via Snapchat. Snapchat should only be used on a work phone by staff. The location service should always be turned off.

- Where any messaging is used by Saint Laurence staff to communicate with young people, this must only be on a work phone and messages between adults and young people should never be deleted. Limited time messages must never be used.
- Due consideration should be given to whether parents/carers should be made aware of any arrangements or commitments that warrant adult contact to their child.

Social Networking Platforms as used by Saint Laurence staff members:

- All Saint Laurence youth social media accounts should be private.
- Content posted by the account should never include anyone's personal information - addresses, phone numbers, etc. The exception to this is staff member's work phone numbers or email addresses and the church address.
- Personal information about young people will never be shared by the account and young people should not be encouraged to share personal information publicly on the account.
- The account should only follow those young people and adults who are known and part of the community, with permission from the young person or adult - this rule excludes following business/creator accounts.
- Any 'lives' where young people under 18 are being featured, permission should be sought from a parent/guardian in advance. Because of the publicly accessible nature of these lives, the 'hidden words' feature should be used. A moderator should be chosen - staff member or a Saint Laurence DBS checked adult - whose responsibility it is to check live comments as they appear and remove any inappropriate comments or users from the live feed.
- Social media takeovers, where young people use the account to post content they have created should be done as safely as possible, protecting all young people following the account. Young people should not be given the account details to post freely but should send their content to a leader to be posted for them. If they are given a staff member's work phone that is logged into the account - where this is done, all other apps on the phone will be locked and inaccessible to young people. Young people will be given clear guidelines as to what is and isn't appropriate content.
- TikTok videos cannot be dueted, stitched, downloaded, or turned into stickers by anyone but the account holder.
- The BeReal account is a private social networking account, but comments cannot be filtered but will be overseen by the account holder. Comments cannot be left by anyone who we haven't authorised to follow the account, so this provides some layer of filtering.

- Facebook is not typically used with young people due to its lack of popularity with the younger generation. However, any instances of usage with young people should follow similar rules to other social networking sites. Staff should not be friends with young people under the age of 18 on Facebook. Any communication between staff and young people should happen within a public, visible forum - the Saint Laurence Church Facebook group.
- Direct messages from the church social media account should start or end stating which member of the team is writing. For example, "Hey, it's Chris. Youth groups start at 4:45 tonight" or "see you next week. Megan."

Photos/Video

Under no circumstance should photos of young people be stored on your personal devices. Any pictures taken using personal devices should only be saved to the church Google drive account (through sending it to a staff member) and then deleted from your device. Consideration should be given to why the photo is taken in the first place.

The children/youth activities permission forms will offer an option for parents to consent for pictures and video of their children being posted by the official Saint Laurence accounts and to be used as publicity only. Photos or video should never be used for any purpose other than these and if we do not have consent then under no circumstance should a picture featuring that child be used in any capacity. All team members should be made aware of such individuals to ensure photos are not taken of them.

Times to Contact Young People

Consider carefully the times of day when you are contacting young people. The middle of the night is not appropriate. 9am till 9pm is our good working guideline. Should a young person contact you after this time, conversations should be appropriately brief and take into consideration the fact that they may have school in the morning and so should not continue late into the night.

Sharing Contacts

Under no circumstances should you share anyone's contact details.

Working with Parents/Guardians

As we navigate virtual workspaces and employ creative means through which we can organise online youth work activities or respond to a Young Person's needs at a time of crisis, the opportunity may arise where we can connect with parents/guardians and explain

why, how and when we intend to facilitate that activity or response. In doing so, Saint Laurence staff:

- Acknowledge that different families will have different rules and approaches to screen-time, therefore we feel that clarity on the purpose and value of online activity or response is important.
- Review the parental permissions in place in respect of our members. Even if the existing permissions cover online communications and working, we feel it is worth reviewing when we approach new forms of online engagement.
- Know that the digital age of consent is 16 so when working with anyone online under that age, we seek permission from a parent/guardian for the use of each individual app/social media site. However, we believe it is best practice to have relevant parental permissions in place for all young people aged 18 and younger.

Code of Conduct (shared with young people)

- Do not send offensive, violent, sexual or any other form of inappropriate material to young people or leaders. If this occurs, you will be removed from the session and your parents will be contacted. If the material is of a violent or sexual nature the police may need to be contacted.
- If you are video calling, please use the function to change the background so you are not sharing your personal space – your bedroom is a private space.
- You must join the waiting room to sign into a session before the session begins. This is so we can make sure that only people we all know take part.
- You must not share invite links for our sessions with people who do not attend the youth club normally. If you have a friend who wants to join, they must get in touch with Megan Sawyers by phone 07378 372472 or email megan@stlreading.org because they will need their parents to complete a membership form before they take part in our activities.
- Do not, under any circumstances, record or screenshot online sessions. Doing this is a serious breach of the Data Protection Act 2018 and will lead to parents/carers being notified.

Code of Conduct (staff/leaders/adults)

- Wherever possible, there must be a minimum of 2 staff on each online session (alternatives are outlined above).
- There must be one lead member of staff on each session and one staff member undertaking a register/checking who has joined the session.
- Leaders must arrive 15 mins early for an online session to prepare.

- Leaders must debrief with the lead worker at the end of the online session.
- Leaders must ensure their physical background does not show anything private or inappropriate or that some would find offensive (e.g., posters/artwork, books etc)
- Leaders must not smoke or vape during online youth sessions.
- Leaders must not drink alcohol before or during online sessions.
- Leaders must wear appropriate clothing that is not revealing online.
- Leaders must ensure their language and conduct during sessions are always professional.
- Leaders must be clear on their roles prior to the session starting.
- Leaders must be aware of how to report safeguarding concerns.

Couples and Families Working Together

Saint Laurence Church is required to ensure that environments are safe for all, particularly under 18's. As part of this we commit to reflective practice, and for this to occur, any under 18's provision cannot be solely led by a couple, or family members regardless of location.

Where a couple or family members are working together there should be a third safely recruited adult leader/helper present. The reason for this is to ensure adults can keep each other accountable for how they behave around under 18's. The relationship between a couple, or family members may make such mutual accountability difficult and arrangements to ensure the presence of a third adult are required.

We are committed to developing good team relationships and in some cases, these may develop deeper relationships for individual team members. In the instance of a romantic relationship occurring between team members, it is required to be reported to the point person of the activity as soon as possible to ensure that the above can be addressed.

January 2022: Adapted from Oxford Diocese 'Safer Environment and Activities' September 2019

Use of Private Homes

- Under 18s provisions preferred location to occur are at Saint Laurence Church, Reading, or pre-organised offsite activity i.e., bowling. However, Saint Laurence Church, Reading recognises that this is not always possible and additionally, activities/sessions being hosted in someone's home can be a valuable part of youth group/community life.
- Safer working practice arrangements should be followed, with diligence given to the prohibition against lone working. Two adult leaders should always be present. If the group is led by a couple, or family members there should be a safely recruited third adult leader/helper present.
- A risk assessment needs to be carried out prior to the activity/session occurring to ensure that this is a safe environment for under 18's to attend. This assessment needs to be completed by someone who does not live in the property to ensure it is objective. The assessment needs to consider if there are other adults on the premises and if they have not been safely recruited. To mitigate any unknown risks other adults who live in the property that have not been safely recruited, must always be supervised and preferably have no direct contact with under 18s.

January 2022: Adapted from Oxford Diocese 'Safer Environment and Activities' September 2019

Guidance on acceptable touch

Sympathetic attention, humour, encouragement and appropriate physical contact are needed by children and adults. Some physical contact with children, particularly younger children, is wholly appropriate. The following guidelines regarding touching are suggested:

- Always ask permission.
- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be in response to a child or young person's needs and not related to the worker's needs. It should be age appropriate, welcome and generally initiated by the child/young person, not the adult worker.
- Avoid any physical contact that is or could be construed as intimate, exclusive, sexual, abusive or offensive.
- Allow the child to determine the degree of physical contact with others except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. when they need medical attention).

Please note that tactility with some young people can unintentionally communicate special preference and favouritism to others who may then feel excluded or lesser. Please be consistent in your use of touch across all your relationships with children and young people.

In addition:

- You can allow people you support to give you brief hugs if you feel comfortable with this.
- You can allow people you support to hold hands or link arms with you to help with travel and stability.
- You should discourage people you support from touching your face. You can offer your hand instead.
- You should never let people you support from sitting on your lap. You can offer to sit side by side.
- You should avoid using touch if the person you support is very distressed and is unlikely to tolerate it.

Sometimes it may be possible that we are unintentional or unaware when we are using physical touch inappropriately. As part of our commitment to having a reflective culture at Saint Laurence, we must be willing to raise questions and concerns with one another, ensuring we are always doing our best to behave appropriately with children and young people. If you observe something you feel is inappropriate, please do not hesitate to share your concern to the supervisory adult, clergy or safeguarding lead.

Driving

Transporting Children by Private Car

Children and young people should not be transported in a private car without the prior consent of their parents/carers. This also applies to giving lifts to and from a church activity.

We adhere to the following guidelines:

- All those who drive children on church-organised activities should hold a full driving licence.
- All cars that carry children/ young people should be comprehensively insured. The insured person should make sure that their insurance covers the giving of lifts during church activities. Insurance companies should be informed that lifts may be given.
- All cars that carry children/young people should be clean and, in a road, worthy condition.

- Seatbelts must always be worn whether in the front or the back of the car.
- Any driver who has points on their licence should advise the activity organiser.
- Any driver who has an “unspent” conviction for a drink driving offence or for dangerous driving or racing on the Highway should not transport children/ young people.
- Best practice when driving young people is to have an additional adult in the car, however, if this is not available, parental consent must be given.
- There may be exceptional circumstances, where a child/young person needs to be driven without consent (for example in the case of a medical emergency, or if no parent has come to pick them up), however this should be shared within the appropriate team with agreement, and the parents advised as soon as possible.

Recruitment of Ex-Offenders

As an organisation assessing applicants' suitability for positions which are included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order using criminal record checks processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), Saint Laurence Church, complies fully with the code of practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly. We undertake not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a criminal record check based on a conviction or other information revealed as we can only ask an individual to provide details of convictions and cautions that we are legally entitled to know about. Where a DBS certificate at either standard or enhanced level can legally be requested (where the position is one that is included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 as amended, and where appropriate Police Act Regulations as amended). We can only ask an individual about convictions and cautions that are not protected.

Saint Laurence Church is committed to the fair treatment of its staff, potential staff or users of its services, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependents, age, physical/mental disability or offending background. We actively promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records.

During recruitment we will select all candidates for an interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience. At an interview, or in a separate discussion, we ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place about any offences or other matters that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.

An application for a criminal record check is only submitted to DBS after a thorough risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For those positions where a criminal record check is identified as necessary, all application forms, job adverts, and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that an application for a DBS certificate will be submitted in the event of the individual being offered the position.

Saint Laurence Church ensures that all those in Saint Laurence Church, who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences. We also ensure that they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders, e.g., the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

Saint Laurence Church makes every subject of a criminal record check submitted to DBS aware of the existence of the code of practice and makes a copy available on request. We undertake to discuss any matter revealed on a DBS certificate with the individual seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

January 2022 Adopted from the [Disclosure & Barring Service](#)

Welcoming unknown visitors

It is important that as a church we are a welcoming environment for visitors to our services. However, we need to balance this with being aware of visitors entering the building and our lack of knowledge of their backgrounds. We particularly want to keep our children and young people safe, whilst not stifling their welcoming nature.

- Children/Young people must not be the only people on the door welcoming but must have a DBS adult present also.
- If a child/young person wants to talk to a visitor, they are advised to take a known adult with them.
- A community parenting approach is needed, so if we as adults see a child/young person talking to a visitor alone, we should approach and join in the conversation. We should congratulate/commend the child/young person for being welcoming but remind them to take an adult with them in future.
- We ask you also to be mindful that some adults may find conversations with unknown visitors awkward, and you may want to join in these too.
- Visitors are welcome in the building during services if they are wanting to participate, however if the visitor wants to view/photograph the building then they

should be asked to leave and referred to the signs on the door explaining why we don't have an open-door policy.

- During youth only events, unknown adult visitors are not permitted.

You know your children best; can we encourage you to have a conversation with your children about welcoming versus 'stranger danger' and explain the above, in terminology you feel suitable to their understanding.

Resources

Online Safety

<https://www.webwise.ie/category/parents/explainers/>

<https://www.webwise.ie/parents/explained-image-sharing-app-instagram/>

<https://www.youth.ie/programmes/projects-initiatives/web-safety-in-youth-work/>

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/CMT-AD-23-2020_-

[_Covid_19_Interim_measures_with_regard_to_use_of_WhatsApp.pdf](#)

<https://youngharrowfoundation.org/images/downloads/ypfWebsite/LGBT-Digital Youth Work-Suite-of-Resources-Produced-by-The-Proud-Trust.pdf>

Child protection:

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children [DCYA 2017] <https://www.youth.ie/documents/child-protection-during>

[covid19/?utm_source=Stay+in+touch+with+NYCI&utm_campaign=1306c618a7-Safeguarding+infographic](https://www.youth.ie/documents/child-protection-during-covid19/?utm_source=Stay+in+touch+with+NYCI&utm_campaign=1306c618a7-Safeguarding+infographic)

[Child+Protection17.&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c5e3fd8386-1306c618a7-390931973&mc_cid=1306c618a7&mc_eid=6b463d4978](https://www.youth.ie/documents/child-protection-during-covid19/?utm_source=Stay+in+touch+with+NYCI&utm_campaign=1306c618a7-Safeguarding+infographic)

Other Useful Websites

<https://www.digitalyouthwork.eu/tips-for-online-youth-work-when-youth-centres-are-closed/>

<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/coyote-magazine/smart-and-digital-youth-work-resources-where-to-find-more#>

www.hotline.ie

www.spunout.ie

www.watchyourspace.ie

www.mentalhealthireland.ie

www.jigsaw.ie

<https://jigsawonline.ie>

www.belongto.org

www.bodywhys.ie

www.hse.ie/CAMHS/HSE