

Grace Fellowship



## SAFEGUARDING GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

SAFEGUARDING  
...it is everyone's responsibility



**September 2023**

## Grace Fellowship Safeguarding Guidance Document

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## **SECTION 1: Promoting Safe Practice - Grace Fellowship**

Grace Fellowship promotes procedures which encourage safe work practices by church workers undertaken with children, teenagers and adults. The church wishes to create and maintain an organisational culture that reflects the importance of safeguarding for all. All church workers, including elders, deacons, ministry leaders, Life Group leaders, teacher volunteers and paid staff ladies are regarded by Grace Fellowship as persons working in positions of trust within the church and as such are expected to adhere to the safeguarding guidance document.

### **Biblical context of Safeguarding**

Grace Fellowship views safeguarding as an important practical expression of biblical principles. As evangelical Christians, our belief is that scripture is authoritative in all areas of life and conduct. There are many passages in scripture that shape our thinking in relation to safeguarding.

For example, in Ezekiel 34 God contrasts himself as a good shepherd to the failed human leaders of God's people. He describes himself as one who will make his people "dwell securely" (v 25) and "be secure" (v 27), judging those who act selfishly (v 18). He summarises these actions in verse 16 as "I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice." All of this (and many, many other passages) clearly portrays a God who is very concerned for the vulnerable, both to prevent and to avenge harm.

The New Testament makes it clear that the defining feature of our relationships in the church is to be one of love (John 13:35). This love is defined in many places, but most clearly in I Corinthians 13:4-7: "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Notably, love is not just about "being nice," but seeking the good of others.

"Safe," therefore, should be a good word to describe church. Notably, the Christian life comes with many risks; Jesus after all warned that many would oppose us and describes the Christian life as one of taking up a cross – certainly not "safe!" (Matthew 10:16-38). But that risk should be largely external; the risks to believers should not come from the community known as the "body of Christ." Until we reach the New Heavens and New Earth (Revelations 21:4), nowhere is absolutely safe, and yet as a church we have a responsibility to do what we can to minimize risks when we meet as a community. Therefore, when we describe a "safe" church, we do not mean that we have eliminated all risks; but rather, that we have done what we can to minimize them.

"Safety" in the church should be experienced on at least two levels. The first regards physical safety. Even as the ancient Israelites were held accountable to keep others physically safe (Deuteronomy 22:8, Exodus 21:36), so we in the church should take reasonable steps to minimize the physical danger experienced at any church activity.

The second sense of "safety" is that the church should be a place free of abuse. We define abuse here as words designed to tear down others, actions that physically harm (or threaten

harm) others, and inappropriate sexual conversation or touch. (Colossians 3:8, Ephesians 5:3-11, 1 Peter 2:1, etc.)

The church is intended to be a community of grace, love, kindness and compassion, in which Christians gather together as those who have responded to the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. As such, the church should never be a place where abuse or exploitation are experienced. However, the reality is that all people are capable of behaving in ways that are unacceptable and potentially harmful to others. Therefore, the church must always be vigilant and never complacent and be constantly on our guard.

Within each church community, there is a diversity of people co-existing together, including wide variances in commitment and experience. Churches are in an unusual position from a safeguarding perspective. The church as an inclusive community involves welcoming strangers and the acceptance of all. That inevitably implies accepting even those who could pose risks to children, teenagers or adults.

Grace Fellowship is committed to fostering an environment where everyone can worship and participate in the events of the church in safety. The Bible addresses a number of these topics, and we have referred to it frequently in developing this guidance document, but inevitably the Bible is not a manual that addresses all possible scenarios. The following reflects our understanding of best practices to keep God's command of caring for others, particularly the vulnerable, in our midst.

### **Content of teaching and theology**

Grace Fellowship is a multi-denominational church, and we all work together (overseers and Ministry Leaders) to select content that is founded on solid Biblical principles, in line with the *Grace Fellowship Statement of Faith, Governance & Membership document*.

A brief description of the persons working in positions of trust within the church is provided below.

### **Church Workers regarded as Persons in Positions of Trust at Grace Fellowship**

#### **Elders**

The elders at Grace Fellowship share the responsibility and authority of spiritual leadership and oversee the affairs of the church.

#### **Deacons**

The deacons perform a service role under the leadership of the elders in management of church property, logistics and other ministries delegated by the elders. All ministries in Grace Fellowship are assigned to an elder and/or a deacon to support the ministry, requiring limited to frequent interaction, depending on the nature of the ministry.

#### **Ministry Leaders**

Ministries in Grace Fellowship are led by spiritually mature women or men with the required leadership, technical skills and spiritual maturity to lead and manage that specific ministry. Gender-specific ministries are led by the gender required for the ministry, e.g., women leadership for the women's ministry and Mom2Mom ministry, and men leadership for the men's ministry.

Ministry leaders have the authority to carefully choose curriculum, review it with the overseeing elder if required, and communicate it to their ministries.

### **Life Group Leaders**

The Life Group ministry is an essential part of the church where attendees have the opportunity to experience church as it is described in the Bible (e.g., as described in Acts 2:42); the first church devoted themselves to the apostolic teachings (training and equipping), to fellowship (ministering to one another), to the breaking of bread (worship), and to prayer (intercession).

Life Groups are led by spiritually mature women or men overseeing and leading the different functions of Life Groups. Life Groups are usually organised in geographical areas, and generally meet weekly at the home of a host.

### **Teacher volunteers**

Volunteers are used in multiple ministries in Grace Fellowship; they teach in the Friday school ministry, women's ministry, men's ministry, AWANA, youth ministries, Life Groups etc.

### **Staff ladies**

Grace Fellowship employs a large number of staff ladies to support Friday School and AWANA teachers and strive towards maintaining the required adult to children's ratios. They attend every week, receive payment for their service, and since they generally work for Grace Fellowship for a long period of time, they get to know the children and the parents of the children when the parents come to drop them off and to pick them up. As far as practical, staff ladies are assigned to the same classroom at every meeting; the benefit is that they get to know the child/ren and their behaviour.

### **Safeguarding assurance at Grace Fellowship**

#### **Grace Fellowship members**

The Grace Fellowship members are required to:

1. Follow, to the best of their knowledge, the Grace Fellowship safeguarding guidance document.
2. Take note of the appointment of the Safeguarding Members that will form the Safeguarding Committee.

<b>Safeguarding Committee - Members</b>	
1	Nominated children's / youth ministry member (female member)
2	Nominated women's ministry member (female member)
3	Nominated deacon (female or male member)
4	Nominated elder

### **Safeguarding Members**

Safeguarding issues is to be reported to Safeguarding Members, through:

- Direct contact (discussion, email, phone call, etc.)
- Grace Fellowship Safeguarding email, [safeguarding@gracefellowship.qa](mailto:safeguarding@gracefellowship.qa),
- Grace Fellowship website [www.gracefellowship.qa](http://www.gracefellowship.qa) under 'Safeguarding', which will also be forwarded to the email [safeguarding@gracefellowship.qa](mailto:safeguarding@gracefellowship.qa),

The assigned Safeguarding Member will discuss the issue with the referrer, and, if it cannot be resolved in the discussion, arrange a Safeguarding Committee meeting to discuss the issue. The Safeguarding Member will keep the referrer, if not anonymous, informed of actions/decisions.

## **Safeguarding Committee**

The Safeguarding Committee will meet on an ad hoc basis to discuss the Safeguarding issues raised and may require the affected ministry leaders to participate in the meeting. The Safeguarding Committee will meet at least biannually to discuss the Safeguarding governance and administration. The committee is required to:

1. Ensure the Safeguarding guidance document and related forms are up to date.
3. Ensure that any Safeguarding concerns or allegations are handled in line with Grace Fellowship procedures.
4. Ensure the poster 'Safeguarding policy' is up to date and clearly displayed in every meeting location (presentation and/or physical poster).

The safeguarding procedures are summarised below and are further expanded with regards to children and teenagers (Section 2).

## **Key safeguarding procedures: responding and reporting concerns and allegations**

### **Responding to a concern or allegation about a child, teenager or adult**

Concerns about a child, teenager or adult may arise in several different ways, for example:

- the child, teenager or adult may confide in someone about something that concerns them about themselves or another person,
- an activity may be observed that causes concern or raises questions about what is happening,
- someone else may raise a concern.

Irrespective of the source of the information, the individual receiving the information needs to observe the following procedures when responding to the child, teenager or adult.

### **Referring the concern or allegation**

All concerns and allegations regarding harm to a child, teenager or adult must be reported to a Safeguarding Member. When information shared raises concerns that a child, teenager or adult has suffered, or is at risk of suffering any harm, then a Safeguarding Member will in most circumstances refer those concerns or allegations to the Safeguarding Committee.

The recommendations will be shared with the elder boards when the person alleged to be perpetrating the harm is in a position of trust, to take the appropriate actions.

## SECTION 2: Promoting Safe Practice - Children and Teenagers

The following is guidance specific to children and teenagers.

There are many ministries and activities within the church where teenagers are involved in activities not solely provided for teenagers and are not necessarily led by individuals who have formal training in working with children and teenagers.

The following ministries in Grace Fellowship involves working with children and teenagers:

### 1. Children's Ministry – Friday School at Grace Villa

- **Pre-school children in ground floor classroom:** This group of children is younger than 3 years old, and not toilet trained.
- **Pre-school children in first floor classroom:** This group of children is 3 to 5 years old, and toilet trained.
- **Elementary school children in first floor and second floor classrooms:** This group of children is older than 5 years old.

Children's Ministry offers both Programming and Childcare. Programming involves Biblical teaching and lesson plans. Childcare is looking after children in the absence of volunteer teachers.

### 2. AWANA at Grace Villa

- This group of children is 2 to 12 years old and meet in the sanctuary and fellowship hall on the ground floor of Grace Villa, with age-grouped classes occurring in other classrooms of the villa.

### 3. Youth Ministry – Impact Zone (IZ)

- This group of teenagers in in Grades 6, 7 and 8 in the US school system, and years 7, 8 and 9 in the UK school system and meet either at the sanctuary or rooms at Grace Villa, or at a venue (e.g., club house) outside church premises.

### 4. Youth Ministry – Grace Youth United (GYU)

- This group of teenagers is in Grades 9 to 12 in the US school system, and years 10 to 13 in the UK school system and meet either at the sanctuary or rooms of Grace Villa, or at a venue (e.g., club house) outside church premises.

Midweek childcare may also be provided during special meetings, such as during Business Meetings and Grace Essentials, if these meetings are not scheduled on Fridays. Occasionally during Childcare, children are combined into one room, perhaps not where they typically would be assigned, due to the number of available staff ladies. For instance, on Wednesdays during Women's Ministry meetings, Childcare is provided in a separate room upstairs, even with babies, since there are not sufficient staff ladies to provide separate Childcare according to ages.

Anyone involved in any activity within Grace Fellowship, where that activity brings them into contact with children and teenagers, should abide by the following principles.

## Participating in external activities

Formal approval for external activities planned, should be sought where appropriate (*Form 2: Application for Approval of Activities*). A register of attendance (*Form 3: Session Record*) at the location of activity should be maintained, together with a register of workers and volunteers at each session. Parents should be kept informed of the nature of activities.

## Annual children registration

At the start of a new year in September, all children attending the children and youth ministries are registered to:

- Ensure that the parent's phone numbers are up to date.
- Allergies, medical or mental health conditions, and requirements of children are registered.

## Allergies

- The detailed list of children with allergies are kept at Grace Villa (Friday school).
- The nursery and pre-school Friday school rooms are off-limits for certain allergens, such as nuts, since the children is considered too young to advocate for themselves.
- If activities are planned that will impact children with allergies, parents of children contacted and alternatives arranged, e.g., gluten-free cookies for snacks.
- Staff Ladies and Friday School Leadership review Epi-Pen administration procedures annually.
- Leadership will always attempt to find a parent to administer the Epi-Pen, depending on the level of emergency, Staff and Leadership may decide to administer the life-saving medication.

## Closets

- Space allocation to rooms within Grace Villa to store items are managed by the GF secretary.
- Closets are to be positioned in such a way to limit and prevent trips, breaks and movement.
- Closets are to be kept secure and locked to ensure they are safe from little prying hands and organized so items do not fall when it opens.

## First Aid, safety and hygiene

For Friday school, the following guidelines apply:

- Staff ladies inspect each classroom and bathroom before Friday classes start, e.g., to ensure air conditioners work, an adequate toilet supplies in bathrooms. If any unsafe condition is noticed, it is reported to the deacons, who will fix it as soon as possible.
- Staff ladies clean classrooms after the Friday school classes, wipe down furniture, surfaces, toys, door knobs, and take out trash.
- A First Aid kit is kept on the first floor in Grace Villa; it is inspected and updated regularly by a member of the Friday school leadership team.
- Staff ladies are not trained to give medicine or allergy medication (e.g., EpiPen); in case of a medical emergency, a staff lady will go and fetch the child/ren's parents immediately in the sanctuary or fellowship hall.



- For pre-school children in age group younger than 3 years, the toys in the classroom are labelled by age group to ensure safety. Furniture purchases and updates will be made with safety and particular audience/use in mind.

### Checking children in and out

- Signs are displayed on the landing to ask parents not to linger or stay on the landing, to check their child/ren in or out and go, to ensure there is no congestion.
- Two nametags are used for each child; one is kept with the child and the other one with the parent/s.
- Parents pick children up in single file lines.
- One staff lady stationed at the door to open the door, ask the parent for the tag and allow child to go once corresponding tag is received.
- Children dropped off too early has an impact on adult to child ratio and also has an impact on the staff 's praying time before teaching starts.
- Overt measures are used to convey when children are safe to be dropped off at class, to ensure children do not go into classrooms unattended and unsupervised before classes start.
- At the end of service, if a child is not picked up by parents, a staff lady will be sent to search for parent/s within fellowship along with the child (with tag).

### Supervision and staffing of children and teenagers

Children and teenagers should always be supervised when participating in Grace Fellowship ministry activities. For younger age groups, high adult to children ratios are required for increased accountability.

Age group	Staffing	Supervision Ratio (adult : children)	Notes
Pre-school class ground floor (< 3 years)	Only female staff	1 : 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One member from management team always present in room</li> <li>• For fire escape, one staff member can carry two children</li> <li>• This room is not shared with other groups</li> </ul>
Pre-school classes first floor (3 to 5 years)	Male or female teachers	1 : 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children must be able to climb the stairs on their own</li> </ul>
Elementary school classes (over 5 years)	Male or female teachers	From 1 : 8 to 1 : 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one staff lady assisting in each class</li> </ul>
AWANA	Male or female volunteers	From 1 : 8 to 1 : 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one staff lady assisting in each class</li> </ul>
Impact Zone	Male and female volunteers	1:10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male and female volunteers</li> <li>• Doors not allowed to be closed</li> <li>• Regular checking on groups</li> <li>• At least two adults per meeting</li> </ul>

Grace Youth United	Male and female volunteers	1:10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male and female volunteer per group</li> <li>• Doors not allowed to be closed</li> <li>• Regular checking on groups</li> <li>• At least two adults per meeting</li> </ul>
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Ministry leaders or overseers are always planning for compliance, yet at times will be confronted with a situation where there will not be correct staffing or supervision ratios, e.g.

- An unregistered child shows up.
- A staff ladies get called into work the Friday morning of church.
- A teacher volunteer has to leave due to an emergency at home.

In these scenarios, it is important that ministry leaders not just understand the rules, but also mitigate the situation such as to combine classes, move staff around, cancel a class in an extreme case, or even leave a door cracked and open for accountability.

**Maximum occupancy per classroom:**

The counts below are based on the maximum number of children per classroom:

Grace Villa Classroom	Maximum occupation
Rainbow	15
Jungle	15
Ocean	24
Space	28
Mountain	28
Middle School (top classroom)	20

Depending on use and age of classes, these numbers may be adjusted after careful evaluation with the Ministry Leader and overseeing deacon and elder.

**General requirements:**

- One Friday School ministry leader and one staff lady are on duty each Friday to do the headcount and to ensure the adults and children ratios are maintained in each classroom.
- The parents of children attending Friday school should always be available and on church premises throughout all of the school sessions.
- If a child is upset or emotional, or upsetting other children, a staff lady will be sent downstairs to the church sanctuary or fellowship hall with whiteboard displaying the child’s name, to ensure they are partnered with their parent/s to safeguard the situation.
- Always at least two adults per class, with at least one female (teacher volunteer or staff lady).

## Toilet escort assistance

Toilet escort assistance will be required for the pre-school and elementary school classes. The guidance for toilet escort is provided below.

Age group	Notes
Pre-school class ground floor (< 3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children not toilet trained</li> <li>• If requested, a father allowed to change his own child, but no other child</li> <li>• Changing tables are available in the room, toilet escort provided for children doing toilet training, following the relevant procedures</li> </ul>
Pre-school classes first floor (3 to 5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children needs to be toilet trained</li> <li>• Only female staff allowed to escort children to toilet, following relevant procedures</li> </ul>
Elementary school classes (over 5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children needs to be toilet trained</li> <li>• Children are not escorted into the bathroom</li> </ul>

### General requirements:

- Each Friday School classroom in the Grace Villa has an adjacent bathroom with a toilet, except the top floor classroom.
- The staff ladies will inspect the toilets before each Friday school session, to ensure that it is adequately stocked (e.g., toilet paper, soap and paper towels for washing and drying hands).
- Only one child will be allowed to use the bathroom at any point of time.

## Fire evacuation assistance

Since the children's ministry and youth ministry are assembling in the Grace Villa, fire escape assistance is required in the unlikely event of a fire. The Grace Villa has been equipped with fire detectors to facilitate early detection of fire, and fire extinguishers to enable first response to extinguish small fires.

When a fire is detected, the Grace Villa must be evacuated in an orderly fashion to the outside assembly area adjacent to the swimming pool to ensure safety of attendees. The guidelines below are to be followed for assisting children in evacuation when a fire has been detected.

Age group	Fire evacuation assistance
Pre-school class ground floor (< 3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ratio of 1 adult to 2 children will ensure that each volunteer teacher or staff lady will be able to carry at most two small children to safety</li> </ul>
Pre-school classes first floor (3 to 5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children must be able to climb the stairs on their own before they are allowed to attend the pre-school classes on the first floor</li> </ul>
Elementary school classes (over 5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During fire evacuation, volunteer teachers and staff ladies will escort children from top floors to the outside assemble area</li> </ul>

### General requirements:

- The number of children and occupants per classroom are always registered to account in case of emergency evacuation. The head count will be confirmed at the outside assembly area after emergency evacuation.
- The top floors of the Grace Villa are equipped with ropes and hand holders to ensure that children stay on the rope until reaching the outside assembly area in case of emergency

### Consent

Ensure that there is consent for each child or teenager under 18 to take part in an external activity not supervised by their parents. Consent forms must be completed by an adult with parental responsibility. **Form 1: General Consent Form** of this guidance document should be used, if the ministry does not have a similar form yet. This should give contact information, permission to seek medical help in an emergency and details of any allergies or reactions to certain foods. Where this is being used for an on-going group or activity then this form should be updated annually.

Consent should be obtained in relation to any activity which is over and above the regular activities. This could be an occasional 'high risk' activity, e.g. canoeing, or going on a trip, or desert camping. Such activities will also require formal approval using **Form 2: Application for Approval of Activities**. Risk assessment guidance is found at Section 8.

### Best practice guidance for dealing with children and teenagers

All those working with children and teenagers should:

1. Ensure familiarity with the Safeguarding guidance document.
2. Set a positive example for others to follow.
3. Treat each child and teenager with dignity and respect.
4. Be respectful of diversity and seek to promote equality for all teenagers, regardless of age, disability, gender, or race.
5. Empower children to safeguard themselves by listening to them, giving them choices, believing them and giving them relevant advice and information (as befitting their age and understanding). Always be mindful of the language used, tone of voice, and body language.
6. Use touch appropriately and within the context of the local customs. Physical contact, where it occurs, should be kept public.
7. Be open and transparent as a team. Team members should monitor one another in the area of behaviour or physical contact. They should be free to help each other by constructively challenging anything which could be misunderstood or misconstrued.
8. Encourage others to appropriately challenge attitudes or behaviour they feel uncomfortable with, or do not support.
9. Be always mindful of children's safety but also be mindful of the worker's safety to protect themselves from allegations. Behaviour should be open, transparent and accountable. Be aware that however well-intentioned someone's actions are, they may be misinterpreted by others.
10. Learn how to control and discipline children without resorting to physical punishment. Never smack or hit a child and do not shout. Discipline and control

- should be managed by changing voice tone, referring disciplinary issues with individual children to their parents and asking for additional support if necessary.
11. Get to know the children and find out what works for them as individuals and as a group. Make age-appropriate group agreements (ground rules) with the children and teenagers on what is acceptable behaviour (e.g. no hitting, shouting, name calling etc.) which can be reviewed regularly together. Abusive peer activities e.g., bullying must not be tolerated and be reported to the parents of the affected parties.
  12. Agree some basic guidelines for each activity so that everyone is behaving in a consistent way and expectations are clear. Make sure these are shared and understood by volunteers, new workers, parents and children.
  13. Never work alone with a child or a group. In church premises, this could mean leaving doors open, or arranging for two groups to undertake activities in the same room. This enables workers to support each other and remain accountable to each other as a team.
  14. Respect the privacy of children but never promise to keep secrets and generally do not enter into private or intimate conversations with children and teenagers. Offering appropriate care and support is important so, in listening to a teenager's problem or offering advice, care should be taken in selecting an appropriate location and setting for such a discussion. Where possible, other leaders should be made aware of the meeting and other people should be around. Avoid situations within a relationship of trust which could compromise that relationship.
  15. Not initiate or allow games or use of equipment which involves significant physical contact between adults and children, or which could be seen as provocative.
  16. Do not make or allow suggestive remarks, or banter, to, or about any individual and they should avoid being drawn into a situation which allows or encourages a teenager to seek attention in a manner that is overly physical.
  17. Seek advice and deal appropriately with attention seeking behaviour displayed by children or teenagers e.g., tantrums. Make sure that you manage yourself appropriately.
  18. Not invite children or teenagers into their own homes unless accompanied by a parent.
  19. Not transport a child or teenager without written permission from the parent, and then with a chaperone. Workers should ensure that another leader/ helper accompanies them in the vehicle. If circumstances dictate that a child/teenager must be transported alone, other leaders/helpers must be made aware of what is happening, and the child must travel in the rear seat of the vehicle.
  20. Be careful of the use of social media and mobile phones with children and teenagers.

## **SECTION 3: Promoting Safe Practice - Adults**

The following guidance relates specifically to adults.

Grace Fellowship seeks to provide a safe, inclusive community for all who wish to take part in the events of the church and create an environment which helps them to grow spiritually and cares responsibly for them. Christians have a duty to love one another in a manner modelled upon Christ's self-sacrificial love for us on the cross.

Through ministry and contact with adults in many settings, Grace Fellowship has a particular responsibility to ensure that all people are treated with dignity and respect and to be alert to signs of abuse and mistreatment.

This guidance document is designed for all members of the church who have some responsibility for the pastoral care of others. It is intended to help the church community understand the needs of adults to help improve pastoral care.

### **Best practice guidance for dealing with adults**

All those working with adults should:

1. Ensure they are familiar with the Grace Fellowship safeguarding guidance document.
2. Set an example they would wish others to follow.
3. Always respect the person and all their abilities and treat each person with dignity and respect.
4. Work to respect and uphold the rights of all regardless of their ethnicity, gender, impairment or disability, age, church denomination or cultural background.
5. The choices that an individual makes should be recognised even if they appear risky and they must never be forced or coerced to participate in an activity. It is important to ensure that the choices offered to individuals are fully understood by them.
6. Be mindful of the language used, tone of voice, and body language. Clear and appropriate language should be used at all times.
7. Use touch appropriately, within the context of the local customs and respect an individual's boundaries.
8. Be mindful of the safety of adults, but also of your own safety and protect yourself from allegations of inappropriate behaviour. Behaviour should be open, transparent and accountable. Be aware that however well-intentioned someone's actions are, they may be misinterpreted by others.
9. Accord adults the highest level of privacy and confidentiality possible in the circumstances. Offering appropriate care and support is important, so in listening to a person's problem or offering advice, care should be taken in selecting an appropriate location and setting for such a discussion. Where possible, other leaders should be made aware of the meeting and other people should be around. Avoid situations within a relationship of trust which could compromise that relationship.
10. Ensure social media is used with care.
11. Allegations and concerns about abuse must be taken seriously and it should be reported straight away to the Safeguarding Member, taking careful notes of what has been seen or heard.
12. Never be afraid to ask for help and advice from your leaders or more experienced staff.

## Participating in Activities

Ministries have a responsibility to assess the risk involved in formal activities that are provided. This could be an occasional 'high risk' activity, e.g. canoeing, or going on a trip, or desert camping.

Formal approval for external high risk activities planned, should be sought where appropriate - *Form: 2 Application for Approval of Activities*. A register of attendance - *Form 3: Session Record* - at the location of activity should be maintained, together with a register of workers and volunteers at each session.

A **risk assessment** template works as a checklist to make sure the possible problems and risks in an activity have been considered and help to plan appropriate steps or actions. An informal check before the start of an activity may be sufficient but for organised group 'high risk' activities, it is usually good practice to complete a written risk assessment. If possible, each church led group activity should include someone who has a First Aid qualification.

## **SECTION 4: Raising Concerns About a Person in a Position of Trust**

Children, teenagers and adults are at risk to be harmed by people they know and trust.

All church workers including elders, deacons, ministry leaders, Life Group leaders, staff and volunteers are regarded by Grace Fellowship as persons working in positions of trust within the church and as such are expected to adhere to the safeguarding guidance document.

An allegation or concern may relate to activities within the church, home or other setting. Concerns may be current or something that has happened in the past. It is important to remember that past events may have relevance for the safety of children, teenagers or adults in the present. Therefore irrespective of when the incident is alleged to have taken place the procedure as detailed in Section 1 should be followed.

Any harm within the church community that is carried out by a person *not* in a position of trust may also be referred to the Safeguarding Committee for consideration. The Committee may decide this is better handled by elders, deacons, or others in the church, or may take up the matter themselves as seems appropriate.

### **What constitutes a breach of trust?**

Any form of abuse or exploitation of a child, teenager or adult constitutes a breach of trust. It is important that those in positions of responsibility, authority and trust are extremely careful to guard against the possibility of this trust being breached.

The definition of breach of trust is wider than an allegation involving significant harm or the likelihood of significant harm to a child or adult. It applies to situations where concerns have been raised for the potential of harm to have taken place. It is important to note that any breach of trust, even in the absence of an allegation, advice will be sought from a Safeguarding Member and the Safeguarding Committee.

Such behaviour would include, but is not limited to:

- Inappropriately touching.
- Failing to abide by safeguarding guidelines including failing to report safeguarding concerns in a timely manner or preventing, discouraging or otherwise inhibiting others from raising any safeguarding concerns that they might have.
- Befriending a child, teenager by indulging or coercing them with inducements such as gifts, treats, money, or developing a trusting relationship with their family or using the internet and other means to develop a relationship in order to abuse or exploit them.
- During the execution of the duties, harass, threaten, intimidate, bully, humiliate or abuse any individual or group.
- Sending emails or posting messages on any social media site or otherwise using IT in such a way as to harass, threaten, intimidate, bully, humiliate or abuse any individual or group.

The concerns may appear to be relatively minor such as the failure to adhere to the safeguarding guidance document.

It is important that individual actions, however well-intentioned, are not misinterpreted. Offering appropriate care and support is extremely important. Real care must be exercised



in listening or offering advice to a child, teenager or adult at risk including selecting an appropriate location and setting for such an activity.

Care should be taken when entering into private or intimate conversations and should be avoided with children and teenagers.

## **How to respond to a concern about a person in a position of trust within Grace Fellowship**

If anyone suspects that a child, teenager or adult at risk is being abused or suspects another worker of using their position of trust inappropriately then there is a duty to report that suspicion to a Safeguarding Member.

Concerns sometimes arise in the context of the church worker's own family setting, for example where someone has accessed child abuse at home or has in some way maltreated their own children. Such circumstances will have a bearing on how the church worker can carry out their role within the church.

Where the concern relates to the protection of a child, teenager, then the procedures and best practice guidelines set out as set out in Section 1 should be followed.

Whatever the concerns are, the person who receives the information in whatever form must discuss the matter with a Safeguarding Member as soon as is practicable.

Where the concern does not relate directly to the protection of a child, teenager or adult or it is not clear, then the matter should still be discussed with a Safeguarding Member.

In the case of an elder accused of abusing their position of trust, the matter will be referred to the Safeguarding Member and Safeguarding Committee for attention and further investigation. The recommendation of the Safeguarding Committee after investigation will be given to the elder board. If the Committee does not feel the elder board responds in an appropriate manner, the Committee is invited to present their recommendation at the next church business meeting for consideration by the congregation. In the case of employees, recommendations by the Safeguarding Committee will be referred to the elder and/or deacon board where appropriate action in accordance with their own disciplinary procedures will take place. In the case of volunteers, they may decide, following a concern or an allegation about them, to discontinue their service. Regardless of this, the recommendations of the Safeguarding Committee will be followed.

The following must be adhered to at all times:<sup>1</sup>

1. At no time should the person about whom concerns have been raised be informed or alerted to the fact that concerns have been raised until required by the Safeguarding Committee.
2. Any contact with the person about whom the concern is made should only take place after liaison with and agreement from the Safeguarding Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that for most cases of disagreement in the church, the pattern of Matthew 18:15-17 should prevail, and the first step of the aggrieved party is to seek a private meeting with the one who wronged them. However, the passage speaks of when "your brother" sins against you, implying it is concerned with peer-to-peer interactions. When there is a situation where a private conversation is likely to lead to further abuse, or when a person in a position of trust has abused those under their care, it seems Biblically appropriate to speak with the Safeguarding committee before speaking to the person of concern.

3. The Safeguarding Committee should prioritize speaking with the person about whom the concerns have been raised at an early stage of the process. (Matthew 18:15, Proverbs 18:17)
4. The Safeguarding Committee must consider all allegations seriously, regardless of the person accused, but also proceed only on the basis of solid evidence (I Timothy 5:19-20). This includes not widely sharing a concern until an investigation has been conducted unless immediate action must be taken to prevent further harm.

### **Temporary or permanent removal from role**

On the advice of the Safeguarding Committee, the elder board, deacon board or other ministry leaders may be required to suspend a paid or volunteer worker pending an investigation and throughout the course of any investigation.

The outcome of the investigation may not warrant any action, and sometimes it may require asking a church worker (such as a ministry leader or elder) to step down.

Grace Fellowship is committed to managing safeguarding concerns and promoting safeguarding through its Safeguarding Committee.

A Safeguarding Member will take responsibility for dealing with all reported concerns, disclosures and allegations of a safeguarding nature and reporting to the Safeguarding Committee.

The Safeguarding Member will keep relevant people informed of actions and decisions during and following the process. In particular, the Safeguarding Committee will convey case updates and recommendations to the elders as appropriate, unless this creates a conflict of interest.

## SECTION 5: Safe Recruitment and Selection Process

All who work for Grace Fellowship, including elders, deacons, ministry leaders, staff and volunteers, are regarded by the Grace Fellowship as persons working in positions of trust within the fellowship and as such are expected to adhere to the safeguarding guidance document and associated procedures and practice guidance.

### Elders and deacons

An election of elders and deacons is held annually by the members of Grace Fellowship, as described in the *Grace Fellowship Statement of Faith, Governance & Membership document*.

The nomination committee interviews the nominees for elders and deacons, including the nominee's background on church discipline, e.g., if he/ she has ever been removed or asked to step down from a position of leadership. The nominating committee may propose to the fellowship only those nominees unanimously recommended. The nominating committee will recommend nominees to the members of the church for ratification.

Each elder and deacon will serve for a one-year term, and each elder and deacon can choose to put their name forward to serve another term. Elders and Deacons will be asked to make a personal assessment of qualification before making the decision to put forward their name for another year of service.

### Ministry Leaders and Life Group Leaders

In general, each ministry in Grace Fellowship is supported by one elder and/or a deacon, who meet with the Ministry Leader to offer support, guidance, and accountability. Ministry Leaders are encouraged to identify a successor and provide opportunities for the successor to act as Ministry Leader. When an incumbent Ministry Leader steps down, the successor, or any nominee to fill the position, will be interviewed by the elder and deacon that oversee the ministry. Depending on the outcome of the interview, the Ministry Leader may be appointed on an interim probation period.

### Teacher volunteers

Volunteers are used in multiple ministries in Grace Fellowship; they teach in the Friday school ministry, women's ministry, men's ministry, AWANA, youth ministries and Life Groups.

Only volunteers that are known in the church are considered and must be connected to another member of the congregation who can account for them. Once a new volunteer has been identified, it is discussed amongst the ministry leadership of that ministry, before the volunteer is accepted.

### Staff ladies

Staff ladies are recruited by referral through existing Grace Fellowship staff ladies; new recruits are usually friends they trust and who worked with children before. They need to complete a volunteer form, detailing their faith, their church experience and children experience. This form is used as the basis of the interview by the leadership team.

If successful, the new staff ladies will be shadowed for a week or two. In general, they quickly learn the rules, policies and procedures learnt from the other staff ladies and

leadership team. They are made aware of the safety procedures, and are required to annually read through the policies, and sign acceptance.

## SECTION 6: Transport

Where transport is being provided the following good practice guidelines should be followed:

1. The vehicle/s must be road worthy. It is the driver's responsibility to make sure that the vehicle is in a roadworthy condition before use.
2. A seat belt must be available and must be used for every individual in the vehicle. The driver endeavours to ensure that seat belts are worn for any journey, no matter how short.
3. The total number of children and adults in the vehicle must not exceed the passenger limit.
4. The maximum speed limits applicable in the State of Qatar should never be exceeded.
5. A First Aid kit and fire extinguisher must be carried on the vehicle and the driver should be familiar with them.

### Transporting children and teenagers

These are guidelines that specifically relate to transporting children and teenagers. Children or teenagers should not be transported without the prior consent of their parents. **Form 1: General Consent Form.**

Do not transport a child or teenager alone. Ensure that a child is always accompanied by another adult. In exceptional circumstances when it can't be avoided it is then essential to make sure that other leaders/helpers are made aware of what is happening, and that the child is seated in the rear of the vehicle.

Leaders/helpers who accompany teenagers in minibuses should sit amongst the teenagers and ideally a leader/helper should sit near vehicle exit points.

If parents make private arrangements to give lifts to children other than their own it must be made clear that such arrangement is between the lift provider and the child's parents and is not an arrangement endorsed or facilitated by church workers.

### Child restraints and seatbelts

1. Children under 3 years must use the child restraint appropriate for their weight in any vehicle.
2. Rear-facing baby seats must not be used in a seat protected by a frontal airbag unless the airbag has been deactivated manually or automatically.
3. Children from 3 years must use correct booster seat (same exemptions as above).
4. Children should use a booster seat until adult seat belts fit correctly; typically age 10 and above should wear a seat belt.

## SECTION 7: External Events

Prior to any external events taking place, where children or teenagers are not supervised by their parents, *Form 2: Application for Approval of Activities* must be completed. Any external event organised for children and teenagers will involve taking responsibility for their well-being, being prepared for any eventuality and anticipating situations where there is possible risk and taking steps to reduce, remove, avoid and manage this. Planning for all residential events should include event leaders and the Ministry Leader. It is expected that completed risk assessments are used to support this meeting.

Before any residential event takes place, the leader must carry out a formal risk assessment of the venue and activities with reference to health and safety guidelines. Consent forms signed by the person with parental responsibility must be obtained for each child attending the event and this must detail the nature of the activities that child or teenager will be engaging in.

If the events will take place regularly at this venue, e.g. weekly events by the Youth Ministries in a clubhouse, annual *Application for Approval of Activities* and an annual risk assessment for the venue is required.

All consent forms must be submitted to the Ministry Leader and a Safeguarding Member together with a completed risk assessment and *Form 2: Application for Approval of Activities*. All forms must be fully completed and stored securely by the Safeguarding Committee, however, the responsibility for this rests with the designated leader of the event.

### External Event Service Provider

When organising an external event, the leader in charge should note the following:

- Confirm and ensure safeguarding procedures are in place in line with the guidance document. In particular ensure that there is a named person who has responsibility for taking the lead in dealing with any safeguarding concerns. This person must be familiar with the safeguarding guidance document and have the names and contact details of all those that they may need to contact in such an eventuality.
- Ensure that the external event service provider is compliant with current health and safety regulations and is licenced for the activities it is intended to undertake, if required, including any higher risk activities such as canoeing and desert camping.
- Ensure that organisers, workers, volunteers, children and teenagers are all familiar with the external event service provider's rules and regulations. Staff at the service provider's premises should be supported to ensure children and teenagers abide by these.
- Ensure there is access to first aid equipment and access to a first aid provider in the event of an emergency.
- Ensure that there is separate sleeping accommodation for males and females. Adults cannot share sleeping accommodation with children or teenagers in their charge. Exceptions may be made in cases where a large number of teenagers are sharing a room, in which case no less than two same-gendered adults may share the room to monitor for safety.

- Adults should be near at hand and accessible at night in case of an emergency. The children and teenagers should be made aware of where adults are sleeping. Adults should not enter sleeping accommodation of the children and teenagers alone.
- A strategy should be in place to inform parents in case of emergency or unexpected or unavoidable changes to the programme or the venue. Ensure that a phone is accessible at all times.

## Parents

The consent of the person with parental responsibility is required before a child or teenager participate in an external event. *Form 2: Application for Approval of Activities* must be completed and signed by them, and should include any relevant medical information such as allergies, special diets, etc.

Before participation in an external event, parents should be made aware of:

- The programme/activities in which their child/ren will participate.
- The names and numbers of leaders/helpers accompanying the group. Where possible it is advisable to arrange a pre-briefing for parents, giving information and allowing them the opportunity to meet the leaders/helpers.
- The address and telephone number of the service provider.
- The group's 'contract', that is, the rules the teenagers will be asked to observe, and the possible consequences if they are broken.
- The type of clothes and other items the children or teenagers will need.

## Children and teenagers

- Children and teenagers must have parental consent to participate in the residential course and its activities.
- Children and teenagers must be fully informed of the nature of the external event and what is expected of them.
- While they should be actively involved and may be encouraged to participate, children and teenagers should never be coerced/forced into any activity with which they are scared or otherwise unwilling to participate.
- Children and teenagers should have access to a telephone whenever possible.

## **SECTION 8: Risk Assessment**

Grace Fellowship priority is to protect children, teenagers, and adults. Activities and environments always carry a risk; and this risk is to be minimised to protect all participants, including our workers and volunteers.

### **What is a risk assessment?**

A Risk Assessment evaluates an activity or environment to identify potential risks or hazards (things that could cause harm or go wrong) for people and taking actions to eliminate or reduce them.

There could be unsafe conditions in the environment that can cause harm e.g. unsecured electrical wires causing a tripping hazard, plugs that are accessible to small fingers or badly stacked chairs; or risks within parts of an activity, especially off site e.g. crossing of roads and transport arrangements.

Some conditions or activities will be a higher risk than others, and the high risks identified must be addressed first due to their potential to cause the greatest harm.

### **When will we need to do a risk assessment?**

A risk assessment should be carried out before activities involving children or teenagers that are not supervised by their parents, as well as church-led activities in extreme conditions, such as kayaking or desert camping. If an activity is regular, it should be risk assessed at the outset and then annually to ensure continued safety. For a one-off activity, a risk assessment should be carried out well in advance. If the activity is to take place externally, it should be considered to visit the venue so that all potential risks at the venue can be identified effectively.

### **Risk assessment process**

There are five questions to identify the risks of an activity or event, with actions to be taken to make it safe according to the level of risk identified.

#### **1. What are the potential risks or hazards?**

For example: crossing roads, open water, vehicles (as passengers), challenging behaviour, specific activities.

#### **2. Who will be in attendance and may be at risk of harm?**

There is no need to list individuals by name – just think about the groups of children/teenagers and ‘staff’ who are taking part in the activity (including those with disabilities, special needs).

#### **3. What are the risks to these groups?**

The potential risks or hazards should be considered.

#### **4. What has been done to reduce the risks?**

Have precautions been taken against the risks from the hazards listed? Have the following been provided: adequate information, instruction or training, adequate systems, or procedures and policies? Reduce the risk as far as reasonably practicable?



## 5. Is there anything else you can put in place to minimise risks?

What more could reasonably have been done for those risks which were found to be not adequately controlled? There will be a need to give priority to those risks which affect significant numbers of people and / or could result in serious harm.

### Estimating the level of risk

Trivial	No action required – no recording necessary.
Acceptable	No action required, monitoring to ensure that controls are maintained.
Moderate	Efforts should be made to reduce the risk.
Substantial	The activity should not commence until the risk has been reduced or removed.
Intolerable	The activity should not be continued or started until the risk has been reduced or removed.

A risk assessment template is provided as **Form 5: Risk Assessment Template**. This should be completed and kept on file within the Ministry and a copy send to the Safeguarding Committee.

The headings are the core areas to be considered and should be added to for specific or unusual activities. The needs of those who will participate in the planned activities should always be considered.

**Forms\*:**

Form 1: General Consent Form

Form 2: Application for Approval of Activities

Form 3: Session Record (Safeguarding Committee)

Form 4: Reporting a Safeguarding Concern or Allegation

Form 5: Risk Assessment Template

\* These forms are used as general guidelines, if ministry forms are not already in place. The forms are available from the secretary at Grace Fellowship.