Veritas Church — Pastoral Care & Protection Policy

16 November 2026

This is the safeguarding policy of Veritas Church. It sets out how we protect children and adults at risk, and how we respond when harm is feared or found. It replaces the Safeguarding Policy & Procedures approved on 8 August 2025.

In keeping with Scripture, we call this work **pastoral care and protection**. Where the law, the Charity Commission, social services or our insurers speak of "safeguarding", they mean what this policy covers (see section 2).

Item	Detail
Charity	Veritas Church, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered charity no. 1209204
Registered address	2 Elston Green, Grimsargh, Preston, Lancashire, PR2 5LR
Pastoral Care Lead (Designated Safeguarding Lead)	David Scholes (Appendix A)
Deputy Pastoral Care Lead	Andrew Carter (Appendix A)
Safeguarding adviser	Christian Safeguarding Services (CSS)
Adopted by the trustees	16 November 2026
Next review	Before 16 November 2027
Signed, Chair of Trustees	

1. Our Calling

Christ charges the elders of his church to guard the whole flock, and the weakest most of all. This policy is how Veritas Church obeys that charge.

- **Every person bears God's image.** Harm done to any person is an offence against their Maker (Genesis 1:27; 9:6; James 3:9).
- **The little ones are precious to Christ.** He welcomed children, and warned that whoever causes one of them to stumble would be better drowned in the sea (Mark 10:13–16; Matthew 18:6, 10).
- **Shepherds must protect the weak.** Elders are to keep watch over all the flock, serving willingly and never domineering (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2–3). God judged the shepherds of Israel who fed themselves and left the weak unprotected (Ezekiel 34:1–10).
- **God commands us to defend the vulnerable.** We are to rescue the weak and needy, and speak for those who cannot speak for themselves (Psalm 82:3–4; Proverbs 24:11–12; 31:8–9). The sixth

commandment requires us to protect and defend the innocent (Westminster Larger Catechism Q.135).

- **The civil magistrate is God's servant.** God has armed the civil authority to punish evildoers (Romans 13:1–4; Westminster Confession 23.1). Reporting a crime to the police is obedience to God, not disloyalty to the church. Church discipline and civil justice are distinct, and neither replaces the other.
- **Sin is exposed, not covered.** We are to have nothing to do with the works of darkness, but expose them (Ephesians 5:11). Love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8), but it never hides a crime.
- **Those who serve must first be tested.** Leaders must be above reproach and well thought of by outsiders, and no one is to be appointed in haste (1 Timothy 3:2, 7, 10; 5:22).

We therefore commit to welcome all, protect the weak, test those who serve, listen to anyone who tells of harm, report to the civil authorities without delay, and care for all who have been harmed.

2. Words We Use, and Whom This Covers

This policy covers everyone who attends or serves at any Veritas Church activity, and gives special care to children and adults at risk.

We say	The law and statutory bodies say	Meaning
Pastoral care and protection	Safeguarding	Protecting people from harm, and responding well when harm is feared or found
Pastoral Care Lead	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	The person who receives concerns, keeps records and makes referrals
Workers	Staff and volunteers	Anyone serving the church in a role, paid or unpaid, including elders, deacons and trustees
The civil authorities	Statutory agencies	The police, Lancashire children's and adult social care, and the LADO
Accusation	Allegation	A claim that a worker has harmed someone, or may pose a risk of harm
Child	Child	Anyone under 18
Adult at risk	Adult at risk (Care Act 2014)	Anyone 18 or over with care and support needs who is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect, and because of those needs cannot protect themselves
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer	The council officer who oversees accusations against anyone who works with children

Activities covered: Lord's Day worship, Sunday school, Bible studies and prayer meetings, members' meetings, conferences and social gatherings, public events such as psalm sings and show stands, pastoral visits, and our online and any livestreamed ministry.

Parents: Parents are responsible for their own children at worship and all other gatherings. The church is responsible for a child only from the time a parent hands them into an organised activity, such as Sunday school, until the parent collects them.

Other bodies: An organisation running its own activity — for example, a school co-op or a group hiring our venue — follows its own policy. Where we fund or partner with another ministry, at home or overseas, the trustees will check its protection arrangements first.

3. Shepherds and Stewards: Who Is Responsible

The trustees carry legal responsibility for this policy, the elders see that it is lived out, and every worker and member must speak up.

The trustees will:

- adopt this policy, and review it every year, after any serious incident, when the law changes, and before we start any new activity for children or adults at risk;
- keep pastoral care and protection as a standing item at every trustees' meeting, with a report from the Pastoral Care Lead each time;
- make sure the right DBS checks and training are in place;
- report any serious incident to the Charity Commission promptly — in addition to, never instead of, reports to the civil authorities;
- publish this policy on the church website.

The elders will oversee its practice in the life of the church, model it, and exercise church discipline under our bye laws — never in a way that delays or replaces a report to the civil authorities.

The Pastoral Care Lead (our Designated Safeguarding Lead) is David Scholes, with Andrew Carter as Deputy. The Lead:

- receives and records every concern;
- seeks advice from CSS or the civil authorities, and makes referrals;
- is the church's link with the police, social care and the LADO;
- keeps the register of DBS checks and training;
- reports to each trustees' meeting, anonymised where needed.

No single route. Because our Lead is also our minister, no concern may depend on one person. Anyone may go instead to the Deputy, any trustee, CSS, or straight to the civil authorities. A concern about the Lead goes to the Deputy. A concern about both, or about all the elders, goes to a trustee who is not an elder (Graham Burrows, Appendix A), and to CSS.

Every worker and member must report any concern to the Lead the same day, and may contact the civil authorities directly at any time. No one who raises a concern in good faith will be disciplined or disadvantaged for doing so.

4. Testing Those Who Serve

No one serves with children or adults at risk until they have been tested and found suitable, as Scripture requires of officers: "let these also first be proved" (1 Timothy 3:10).

Before anyone takes up such a role, the Lead will make sure they have:

1. a written role description, stating their contact with children or adults at risk;
2. completed an application and a confidential self-declaration;
3. given two references, at least one from outside their family, and met with an elder;
4. received a DBS check at the right level (below) before they start;
5. signed the conduct guidelines in section 5 and completed induction training;
6. served alongside an experienced worker for their first three months.

DBS checks

Since 1 September 2026, anyone who teaches, instructs, cares for or supervises children **once a week or more, on more than three days in any 30-day period, or overnight** is in "regulated activity" — even if another adult supervises them. They need an **enhanced DBS check with children's barred list** before they start. It is a criminal offence for a barred person to do this work, or for us knowingly to let them.

Role	Check we require
Sunday school teachers and regular helpers; anyone helping at an overnight event for children	Enhanced, with children's barred list
Anyone giving an adult personal care, help with money, bills or shopping, or transport because of age, illness or disability	Enhanced, with adults' barred list
Pastoral Care Lead and Deputy, minister and elders	The highest level the role is legally eligible for
Occasional helpers with children (less often than above)	Enhanced without barred list where eligible; never left alone with children
Other workers (welcome, refreshments, music)	None; the conduct guidelines apply

- We apply through CSS or another DBS umbrella body, which confirms each role's eligibility. We never ask for a check the law does not allow.
- A worker who joins the DBS Update Service (free for volunteers) needs no new check: with their consent, we check their status online before they start and every year, and record the date. Otherwise, checks are renewed every three years. We need a new check if the status shows new information, or if the role needs a different level or workforce (children, adults or both). On the same basis, we may accept a certificate obtained through another organisation.
- We record only the date, level, certificate number and outcome. Certificates stay with the holder.
- A criminal record does not automatically stop someone serving; the Lead and elders will assess it with CSS. A barred person may never do regulated activity.

5. Walking in the Light: How We Conduct Ourselves

Workers must be above reproach and walk in the light (1 Timothy 3:2; 1 John 1:7). These guidelines protect the weak, and they protect workers from false suspicion.

With children

- At least two adults are present at every children's activity. No worker is alone with a child out of sight of others; doors stay open or rooms have a window.
- A parent signs each child in and out, and a register is kept for every session.
- Parents take their own children to the toilet. If a worker must help, another adult is told and the door stays ajar.
- Touch is only ever appropriate, public and for the child's good. Workers never physically discipline another person's child.
- Workers contact children through their parents. Messages to a young person go to a group that includes a parent or second leader — never privately.
- The law treats anyone leading religious activities as in a position of trust towards 16- and 17-year-olds in their care. Sexual activity with them is a criminal offence, as well as sin.
- Children are driven only with a parent's permission, by an insured driver, with a proper seat or belt.

With adults at risk

- Before a pastoral visit to an adult at risk, the visitor tells another elder or deacon when and where. Where possible, visit in pairs.
- Workers never handle anyone's bank cards, PINs or passwords, and never become involved in their wills.
- Any gift, loan or legacy offered to a worker is declared to the elders.

With spiritual authority

- Leaders must never use their office to control, frighten, shame, isolate or exploit anyone (Matthew 20:25–28; 1 Peter 5:3). Church discipline follows our bye laws, openly and with due process.
- No one will be told to keep abuse secret, or discouraged from going to the police, to protect the church's name. Under the Crime and Policing Act 2026, deterring a report of child sexual abuse will be a criminal offence carrying up to seven years in prison.

Photographs, livestreaming and online

- Photos of children are published only with a parent's written consent, and never with full names.
- Where worship is livestreamed or recorded, the camera faces the front, notices say so, and families may sit out of shot.
- Online meetings with children or adults at risk follow the same rules as meetings in person.

6. When Someone Is at Risk: Listen, Record, Refer

Anyone who fears that a child or adult is being harmed must tell the Pastoral Care Lead the same day. If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999 first.

1. **Make safe.** If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999.
2. **Listen.** Stay calm. Let them speak in their own words, without leading questions. Thank them for telling you.
3. **Never promise secrecy.** Explain kindly that you must tell those who need to know, to keep people safe.
4. **Don't investigate.** Don't question further, confront or warn the person accused, or examine anyone for injuries.
5. **Record.** Within 24 hours, write down what you saw and heard, in the speaker's own words, with dates, times and who was present. Use Appendix D, sign it, and give it to the Lead.
6. **Refer.** Tell the Lead or Deputy the same day. If you cannot reach them, or the concern is about them, follow section 3 — or contact the civil authorities yourself.

What the Lead does

- Decides, with advice from CSS or social care where needed, whether the matter meets the threshold for referral.
- Refers to Lancashire children's or adult social care, or the police, within 24 hours where it does — at once if someone is at risk now.
- Tells the Chair of Trustees and the independent trustee within 48 hours of any matter that may be a serious incident.
- Records every decision and its reason, including any decision not to refer.

Child sexual abuse is always reported to the police or children's social care, however it comes to light. The Crime and Policing Act 2026 will make this a legal duty for those in regulated activity with children and those giving religious instruction to children. The duty is not yet in force, but we follow it now.

No seal of confession. Our tradition knows no seal of confession, and pastoral confidence never covers abuse. Anyone who confesses to harming a child will be reported (Proverbs 28:13). The law makes no exception for religious settings, and a report does not breach any duty of confidence.

Adults who can decide for themselves are asked for consent before we refer. We refer without consent where children or others are at risk, a serious crime may have been committed, or the adult is being coerced or lacks capacity.

Non-recent abuse. When an adult tells of abuse in the past, we listen, offer support, and ask whether the abuser may still pose a risk to others. If so, we report it.

Care for those harmed. The elders will give pastoral care and help to find specialist support where needed. We will never advise anyone to stay in, or return to, a home where they or their children are in danger. No one will be required to meet the person who harmed them.

Our duty to report never waits for certainty, or for a second witness (section 7).

7. Accusations Against a Worker or Leader

Every accusation that a worker has harmed, or may pose a risk to, a child is referred to the LADO within one working day. Accusations involving adults at risk go to adult social care or the police.

1. The accusation goes to the Lead. If it concerns the Lead, it goes to the Deputy. If it concerns an elder, it goes to the other elders and a trustee who is not an elder. CSS is told in every case.
2. The person handling it refers to the LADO within one working day through Lancashire's online form, or to adult social care or the police.
3. The worker steps back from their role while the matter is examined. This protects everyone and is not a verdict.
4. The church starts no inquiry of its own until the civil authorities involved confirm it will not prejudice theirs.
5. The trustees consider a serious incident report to the Charity Commission.
6. If we remove a worker from regulated activity (or would have, had they not left) because they harmed, or posed a risk of harm to, a child or adult at risk, the trustees must refer them to the DBS. This is a legal duty.
7. If the accused is the minister or an elder, the elders will also inform Knox Presbytery through its presiding minister, and seek its counsel.

What "two or three witnesses" means here

Scripture forbids receiving an accusation against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 1 Timothy 5:19). We hold to this, and understand "witnesses" to include corroborating evidence, not only eyewitnesses.

This standard governs **one thing only**: whether the church's own courts may pass formal judgement, such as censure, suspension from the Lord's Table, or removal from office.

It **never** governs whether we:

- take seriously someone who tells us of harm;
- write it down;
- report it to the police, social care or the LADO; or
- take protective steps, such as standing a worker down.

All of these happen on a single account. Scripture recognises crimes committed where no one could hear the victim cry out (Deuteronomy 22:25–27), and the judgement of crimes belongs to the civil magistrate (Romans 13:4). We will never wait for a second witness before reporting, nor treat its absence as proof of innocence.

Equally, a worker who steps back is not presumed guilty. We will judge without partiality towards the poor or the great (Leviticus 19:15), tell only those who need to know, and do all we can to restore the good name of anyone wrongly accused.

8. Welcoming Those Who May Pose a Risk

The gospel is for every sinner, but someone known to pose a risk to children or adults at risk may worship with us only under a written agreement.

- This applies to anyone with a relevant conviction or caution, anyone on a barred list or the sex offenders' register, and anyone about whom there is a credible concern.

- The Lead and elders, advised by CSS and in contact with the police or probation service, will assess the risk before the person attends regularly.
- A written agreement will set out which meetings they may attend, where they sit and who accompanies them. They may hold no office or role, and must never be alone with a child or adult at risk.
- A small group of named elders will know the details. Who else is told is decided with the authorities.
- The agreement is reviewed at least every six months. A serious breach is reported to the police or probation service.

Repentance is real and welcome, but it does not remove the need for boundaries (1 Corinthians 6:9–11; Proverbs 22:3). If the risk cannot be managed safely, the elders may ask the person to worship elsewhere, and will help them find a church able to receive them safely.

9. Faithful Records, Training and Review

Every concern is recorded faithfully, kept securely, and shared only with those who need to know.

Records

- The Lead keeps concern records and the register in a secure, access-controlled file. Paper records are locked away.
- Data protection law allows us to keep and share this information without consent where needed to protect children or adults at risk (Data Protection Act 2018, Schedule 1, paragraph 18).
- Sharing information with the civil authorities to protect someone is never a breach of confidence.
- There is no longer any time limit on civil claims for child sexual abuse (Crime and Policing Act 2026). Records are therefore kept for 75 years, and destroyed only by decision of the trustees. Our Data Protection & Privacy Policy's retention schedule will match.

Training

Who	Training	How often
Pastoral Care Lead and Deputy	Lead-level training with CSS	Every 2 years
Trustees and elders	CSS safeguarding training	Every 3 years
Sunday school workers and others serving children or adults at risk	Basic training before starting	Every 3 years
All other workers	Read Appendix B and sign to say so	Every year

Review

The trustees review this policy each year, after any serious incident, when the law changes, and before any new activity for children or adults at risk begins. They report on it in the trustees' annual report and the charity's annual return.

Concerns about how the church handled a matter may be raised with the Chair of Trustees and the independent trustee under our Complaints Policy.

Appendix A: Key Contacts

In an emergency, call 999. Otherwise, start with the Pastoral Care Lead.

Who	Name or service	Phone	Email or online
Pastoral Care Lead (DSL)	David Scholes	01772 288070	dave@veritaschurch.co.uk
Deputy Pastoral Care Lead	Andrew Carter	07771 537761	andy@veritaschurch.co.uk
Independent trustee contact	Graham Burrows	07740 622962	vicarburtonholme@gmail.com
Police	Lancashire Constabulary	999 emergency; 101 otherwise	
Children's social care	Lancashire County Council	0300 123 6720 (8am–8pm); 0300 123 6722 out of hours	lancashire.gov.uk
Adults at risk	Lancashire County Council	0300 123 6721; 0300 123 6722 out of hours	lancashire.gov.uk/contact
LADO (accusations against workers with children)	Lancashire County Council	Online form only for referrals	LADO referral page; lado.admin@lancashire.gov.uk for other contact
Safeguarding adviser	Christian Safeguarding Services (CSS)	07960 751778	info@thecss.co.uk
Serious incidents	Charity Commission		Report online through the Commission's serious incident service
Presbytery	Knox Presbytery (CREC), presiding minister		office@kingscrossmoscow.com (FAO: Toby Sumpter)

If a child lives, or an adult was harmed, outside Lancashire County Council's area — for example in Blackburn with Darwen or Blackpool — contact that council instead.

Appendix B: Quick Guide — If You Are Worried

Display this wherever we meet, and give a copy to every worker.

1. **Is anyone in immediate danger?** Call 999.
2. **Listen** calmly. Let them use their own words.
3. **Don't promise secrecy.** Say you must tell those who can help.
4. **Don't investigate**, and don't confront or warn anyone.
5. **Write it down** within 24 hours, in their words, signed and dated.
6. **Tell the Pastoral Care Lead today:** David Scholes, 01772 288070. If he is unavailable, or the concern is about him: Andrew Carter, 07771 537761.

Can't reach either? Call Lancashire social care — children 0300 123 6720, adults 0300 123 6721, out of hours 0300 123 6722 — or the police on 101. You never need permission to contact the authorities.

Appendix C: Kinds of Harm

The law recognises four kinds of harm to children and ten to adults; any of them, in person or online, is a reason to act.

Children (Working Together to Safeguard Children)

Kind	Examples
Physical	Hitting[1], shaking, burning, poisoning, or causing illness
Emotional	Persistent rejection, threats, humiliation, or seeing others harmed
Sexual	Any sexual activity or exposure, including online, grooming and exploitation
Neglect	Persistent failure to meet basic needs for food, warmth, safety, care or medical attention

Children may also be exploited into crime, such as drug-running; this is itself a criminal offence against the child.

Adults at risk (Care Act 2014)

Kind	Examples
Physical	Assault, restraint, misuse of medication
Domestic	Abuse by a partner or family member, including coercive control and economic abuse
Sexual	Any sexual act the adult has not or cannot consent to
Psychological	Threats, humiliation, isolation, including misuse of spiritual authority
Financial or material	Theft, fraud, pressure over money, wills or property

[1] Parents in England may lawfully use reasonable physical punishment of their own children (Children Act 2004, section 58). It can be charged as a crime if it causes injury, such as bruising, grazes, scratches or swelling, and we report any such marks. Church workers never physically discipline another person's child (section 5).

Kind	Examples
Modern slavery	Forced labour, trafficking, domestic servitude
Discriminatory	Harassment or ill-treatment because of who someone is
Organisational	Poor care or neglect within a group or institution
Neglect	Failing to meet someone's care, medical or physical needs
Self-neglect	Neglecting one's own hygiene, health or surroundings

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, a child who sees, hears or experiences domestic abuse is a victim in their own right.

Appendix D: Concern Record Form

Complete within 24 hours, sign, and hand to the Pastoral Care Lead. Do not keep a copy.

Question	Your answer
Your name and role	
Date and time of this record	
Name and age of the person at risk	
Date, time and place of what was seen or said	
What was said or seen — in their own words, without your interpretation	
Who else was present	
Any injuries or marks you noticed (do not examine)	
Anyone named as causing harm	
What you did, and when	
Passed to (name), date and time	
Your signature	

For the Lead: advice sought (from whom, when) · decision and reason · referral made (to whom, when, reference number) · trustees informed (date).

Law and Guidance This Policy Follows

- Children Acts 1989 and 2004, and *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2023)
- Care Act 2014 and its statutory guidance
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, as amended — regulated activity, barring, and the duty to refer to the DBS

- Crime and Policing Act 2026 — removal of the supervision exemption from 1 September 2026 (DfE guidance); duty to report child sexual abuse and the offence of obstructing a report, not yet in force (Home Office factsheet)
- Sexual Offences Act 2003 — positions of trust, including religious leaders
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Charity Commission, *Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees*, updated 8 October 2026 (summary by Browne Jacobson)
- Lancashire County Council LADO procedures and contact numbers