

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Against Boundary Violations, Abuse of Authority, Exploitation and Sexual Misconduct

Go Church (Belgium)

Valid for all current and future locations of
Go Church Belgium
Version: January 2026

1. Statement of Commitment

Go Church Belgium is committed to creating and maintaining a church environment in which every person is treated with dignity, respect and care.

The church adopts a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, exploitation, harassment, grooming, coercion, spiritual abuse, financial abuse, retaliation and all forms of misconduct. The safety and wellbeing of children, young people, vulnerable adults and church members shall always take priority over reputational, organisational or leadership interests.

Safeguarding is not merely a legal responsibility but a spiritual, moral and organisational responsibility shared by all who serve within the church. Every leader, volunteer, employee and ministry worker contributes to the protection and wellbeing of those entrusted to our care.

This policy establishes church-wide standards for prevention, reporting, response, accountability and ongoing safeguarding improvement.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Pastors
- Elders
- Board Members
- Employees
- Volunteers
- Interns
- Ministry Leaders
- Worship Team Members
- Children's Workers
- Youth Leaders
- Contractors
- Guest Speakers
- Visiting Ministry Teams

The policy applies whenever these individuals act on behalf of Go Church Belgium.

This policy specifically covers interactions involving:

- Children and young people under 18 years of age
- Vulnerable adults
- Church members
- Visitors
- Individuals receiving pastoral support
- Participants in camps, conferences and retreats
- Participants involved in online ministry activities

Safeguarding obligations continue outside formal church meetings whenever individuals are acting in a recognised ministry or leadership capacity.

3. Safeguarding Principles

Go Church Belgium commits itself to the following principles:

Protection First

The welfare of people takes precedence over the reputation of leaders, ministries or the church.

Accountability

No individual is exempt from safeguarding expectations because of position, seniority, influence or spiritual authority.

Prevention

Prevention is more effective than response. The church therefore prioritises education, awareness and risk reduction.

Transparency

Safeguarding concerns are addressed openly, fairly and consistently.

Respect

Every individual has the right to safety, dignity, privacy and appropriate boundaries.

Justice

All concerns are treated seriously while maintaining fairness toward all parties involved.

4. Definitions Boundary

Violation

A boundary violation occurs when behaviour crosses appropriate personal, emotional, physical, relational or professional boundaries.

Examples include:

- Inappropriate familiarity
- Excessive private communication

- Favouritism
- Repeated disregard for personal limits

Boundary violations may not always be criminal but require attention before escalation occurs.

Abuse

Abuse is the misuse of power, authority, trust or position in a way that causes harm.

Abuse may be:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Psychological
- Sexual
- Spiritual
- Financial

Sexual Harassment

Any unwanted sexual behaviour, communication, comment, gesture or physical contact.

Grooming

The deliberate process of building trust with a child, young person or vulnerable person for the purpose of future exploitation or abuse.

Abuse of Authority

The misuse of leadership, ministry position, organisational authority or spiritual influence to manipulate, pressure, intimidate or control another person.

Vulnerable Adult

An adult whose circumstances, health, disability, dependency or personal situation increase their vulnerability to exploitation or abuse.

5. Recruitment, Screening and Selection

5.1 Recruitment

Safeguarding begins before a person enters ministry.

All ministry workers shall undergo a proportionate recruitment process.

5.1 Minimum Requirements

Before commencing service, workers should:

- Complete an application form if requested
- Participate in an interview
- Read the safeguarding policy
- Sign the safeguarding declaration

- Sign the code of conduct
- Attend safeguarding induction training

References

The church may obtain references where appropriate, particularly for roles involving leadership, pastoral care, youth ministry or children's ministry.

Criminal Record Checks

Where legally appropriate and relevant to the role, criminal record documentation will be requested in accordance with Belgian law. These must be reviewed every three years.

The following roles will be required to present a “clean criminal record: documentation:

- Pastor
- Leader
- People in contact with any type of youth ministry

Ongoing Suitability

Appointment to a role does not guarantee permanent suitability.

The church may:

- Conduct periodic reviews
- Require additional training
- Restrict duties where safeguarding concerns arise

5.2 LOCAL AUTHORITY AND OTHER RELEVANT ORGANISATIONS CONTACT DETAILS

Nominated Child Protection Lead

Name: Georges Mills-Odoi
Phone: +32 474 02 55 08

Deputy Child Protection Lead

Name: Jemima Mills-Odoi
Phone: +32 474 24 34 20

Relevant Contacts

Name: Violence, abuse and child abuse helpline
Number: 1712

Name: Child Focus
Number: 116 000

Name: Tele-Onthaal Number:
106

6. Code of Conduct

All ministry workers must act in a manner that promotes safety and trust.

General Conduct

Workers shall:

- Demonstrate integrity
- Respect boundaries
- Avoid manipulation
- Act transparently
- Encourage accountability

Workers shall not:

- Abuse authority
- Exploit trust
- Use threatening behaviour
- Use degrading language
- Engage in discriminatory conduct
- Seek personal gain through ministry relationships

Physical Contact

Physical contact must be:

- Appropriate
- Observable
- Welcome
- Respectful

The following must be avoided:

- Forced physical contact
- Prolonged intimate contact
- Inappropriate touching
- Contact undertaken in secret

The default rule is “boys with boys, girls with girls.”

Communication

Communication must remain respectful and appropriate.

Staff and volunteers shall not:

- Request secrecy
- Send inappropriate messages
- Share sexual content
- Use communication channels to establish unhealthy dependency

7. Pastoral Care and Prayer

Pastoral ministry carries significant influence and therefore requires heightened accountability.

Meetings

Pastoral meetings should:

- Occur in observable locations where possible
- Be known to another responsible person
- Avoid unnecessary isolation

Prayer Ministry

Individuals must be asked for consent before physical contact during prayer.

For example:

“May I place my hand on your shoulder while praying?”

Consent may be withdrawn at any time.

Confidentiality

Pastoral confidentiality is respected whenever possible.

However, confidentiality is not absolute where:

- A child may be at risk
- A vulnerable adult may be at risk
- Criminal conduct may have occurred
- Self-harm or suicide risk is present

Professional Referral

Pastoral leaders are not substitutes for professional healthcare providers.

Where necessary, individuals should be encouraged to seek assistance from qualified:

- Psychologists
- Therapists
- Doctors
- Crisis services
- Legal professionals

8. Protection Against Abuse of Authority

Leadership positions inherently involve unequal power. Abuse of authority may occur even when apparent consent exists. Examples include:

- Pressuring members into compliance
- Discouraging criticism
- Demanding unquestioned loyalty

- Using spiritual language to control behaviour
- Influencing personal decisions beyond legitimate pastoral care

No leader may:

- Punish legitimate concerns
- Retaliate against complainants
- Misuse confidential information
- Threaten members who leave the church

Complaints concerning senior leadership may be reported directly to an independent safeguarding contact designated by the church.

9. Prevention Culture and Early Warning Signs

Abuse rarely begins with a major incident.

It often develops gradually through increasingly concerning behaviour.

Go Church Belgium recognizes four levels of concern:

Level 1 – Concern

A single event causes discomfort or uncertainty. Level 2

– Pattern

Repeated behaviour generates ongoing concern.

Level 3 – Reasonable Suspicion

Specific evidence suggests misconduct may have occurred.

Level 4 – Formal Report

A victim, witness or third party reports an incident directly.

Staff and volunteers should report concerns at the earliest appropriate stage.

Good-faith reporting shall always be encouraged.

10. Reporting Procedure

Every safeguarding concern must be taken seriously.

Step 1: Immediate Safety

If a person is in immediate danger:

- Contact emergency services.
- Take appropriate action to ensure safety.

Step 2: Report

Concerns should be reported to:

- The Safeguarding Officer

- A designated safeguarding contact
- Senior leadership where appropriate

Step 3: Documentation

The concern shall be documented promptly and factually.

Documentation should include:

- Date
- Time
- Location
- Persons involved
- Observations
- Statements made

Opinions and speculation should be avoided.

Step 4: Escalation

The Safeguarding Officer determines whether:

- Internal action is required
- External professional advice is required
- Authorities should be contacted

11. Incident Management Procedure

Upon receiving a report:

1. Protect

Ensure the safety of affected individuals.

2. Assess

Evaluate immediate and ongoing risks.

3. Record

Maintain a confidential written record.

4. Support

Provide pastoral and practical support.

5. Investigate

Conduct appropriate review processes.

6. Escalate

Refer matters to authorities where appropriate.

No volunteer or ministry worker should independently confront an accused individual unless instructed by the safeguarding team.

12. Consequences and Corrective Action

Consequences will depend upon severity.

Possible outcomes include:

Level 1

Informal discussion and guidance.

Level 2

Written warning.

Level 3

Additional supervision.

Level 4

Temporary suspension.

Level 5

Removal from ministry responsibilities.

Level 6

Permanent exclusion from roles involving vulnerable persons.

Level 7

Referral to police or other competent authorities.

Protective suspension is a safeguarding measure and does not imply guilt.

13. Training, Documentation and Annual Review

Go Church Belgium commits to ongoing safeguarding development.

Training

The church shall provide:

- Initial safeguarding induction ☐ Annual refresher training
- Specialist training for leaders
- Youth and children's ministry training

Documentation

The church shall maintain secure safeguarding records, including:

- Training records
- Signed declarations
- Incident reports

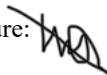
- Risk assessments

Access shall be limited to authorised persons.

Review

This policy shall be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- Legislation changes
- Serious incidents occur
- Organisational learning suggests improvements

Place, Datum: 11-01-2026 Name: King Appiagyei Signature: 

Legal and professional framework: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) · Belgian Civil Code and relevant child protection provisions · Belgian Criminal Code provisions concerning sexual offences, sexual integrity, exploitation, and the protection of minors and vulnerable persons · Victim Support legislation and recognised victim assistance services in Belgium · Child Focus Belgium and ECPAT international safeguarding standards · ACT Alliance Code of Conduct on Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, Fraud, Corruption, and Abuse of Power.