

CHILD/WORKER PROTECTION POLICY

Issue 2

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Church Statement

The church takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people entrusted to its care. Members of the church given responsibility in youth work are expected to share the message of the Bible in a safe, non-threatening and non-coercive environment. We believe that prayer is crucial to our work and encourage all workers to meet for prayer and the church to be in prayer for our workers.

Church Mission

As part of its mission the church is committed to listening to, relating effectively and valuing children and young people whilst:

- Ensuring their protection within church activities.
- Encouraging and supporting parents/carers
- Ensuring that children's/youth workers are given support

The church however recognises that many children and young people today are the victims of neglect, and physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Accordingly, the church has adopted the policy contained in this document (hereafter "the policy"). The policy sets out agreed guidelines relating to the following areas:

1. The recruitment and training of children's/youth workers
2. The Supervision of activities and practical issues
3. Responding to allegations of neglect or abuse, including those made against leaders or members of the church.

This policy is formulated to help children's/youth workers to respond appropriately when abuse is disclosed or discovered. Within this document a child refers to any person under the age of 18.

These guidelines have been prepared with reference to the PCCA's "Churches" Child Protection Advisory Service.

Principles

- We respect children as individuals and protect their well being in every way that we can.
- We seek to foster relationships of the utmost integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness. All who work for the church should behave responsibly in their conduct and use of authority. The greatest care will be exercised to avoid the abuse of trust.
- We seek to maintain the highest standards in all pastoral, counselling, educational, worship and recreational circumstances. The exploitation of any relationship for self-gratification is never acceptable.
- The welfare of children is of prime importance.
- It is possible to be lulled into a false sense of security by thinking that church workers could never be guilty of abuse because they are part of the Christian community. For this reason these guidelines apply to all those in close contact with children. This approach is not intended to treat anyone as under suspicion, but instead seeks to take sensible measures to be observed by everyone. It also offers some safeguard to those working with children from unfounded accusations, or from behaving in ways that may be well intentioned but unwise.

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Recruitment and Training

- (a) All prospective workers who are likely to have contact with children will be asked to complete an application form prior to confirmation of their appointment (appendix 1). This will include a declaration as to whether they have been the subjects of criminal or civil proceedings or whether they have ever caused harm to children or put them at risk. All persons who will regularly work with children within the church will have a CRB check prior to commencing their role. Workers can commence supervised interaction with young people during while awaiting a response to their CRB check. CRBs will be reviewed every 3 years.
- (b) Workers will be line managed by the church's youth worker.
- (c) Workers will all be provided with training on child protection and a personal copy of this policy document.
- (d) Workers will have opportunities to meet together with a leader to discuss work programmes and areas of concern, including issues relating to discipline.

A Safe Environment

We will plan our work with children so as to minimise any opportunity for abuse, specifically:

- **RATIOS.** We will ensure that groups using the premises outside of Sunday services will have at least two leaders and, in mixed sex groups, preferably one of each sex.
- **SOCIAL NETWORKING.** We will ensure that workers and children are safeguarded from allegations of inappropriate electronic communication by maintaining a consistent approach throughout the church. Guidelines for this are included in this document (appendix 3).
- **TRANSPORT.** When transporting children in private vehicles, wherever possible, two adults will be present. Where this is not possible, an adult will not transport a young person without obtaining permission from the parent or a senior church leader.
- **PHYSICAL CONTACT / USE OF RESTRAINT.** We believe that discipline is the education of a person's character and a necessary element in our care. To ensure a balanced and consistent approach guidelines for the exercise of discipline are included in this document (appendix 4).
- **ACCIDENTAL INJURY.** The church will take all reasonable steps to prevent injury to children in their care. It will also maintain adequate public liability insurance.

The church will maintain a register in which all incidents of injury or concern about the welfare of children in our care will be recorded.

Recognising and Dealing with Abuse

- (a) There will be a Designated Officer of Safeguarding Children (DOSC). He or she will be the central point of contact, communication and co-ordination in all cases of actual, suspected or reported abuse.
- (b) The church will take seriously any allegations of abuse, whether from an adult or a child.
- (c) We will collaborate fully with the statutory and voluntary agencies concerned with child abuse and will not conduct formal investigations on our own.



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- (d) We shall, wherever possible, maintain confidentiality concerning information made available to the church as a result of the implementation of this policy. The church is however under a moral and legal obligation to release such information where required by a statutory body, or where the best interests of a child require it.

Appendix 1

Application Form for Voluntary Work with Children

All prospective workers with children and young people are to complete this form. If there is insufficient room to fully answer questions, please continue on separate sheets. The information will be kept confidential by the church, unless requested by an appropriate authority.

1. Personal details

Full Name

Maiden/Former Name(s)

Date and place of birth

Address

Telephone No.

How long have you lived at the above address? ____ years. (If less than 3 years, please give previous addresses with dates.)

Previous Address:

Please tell us about your Christian experience (i.e. how long you have been a Christian, which church(es) you have attended, name of minister/leader, any activities undertaken.)

Please give details of previous experience of looking after or working with children and/or young people. Please include details of any relevant qualifications or appropriate training either in paid or voluntary capacity.

Please give the names, addresses and telephone numbers and role or relationship of two people who know you well and who would be able to give a personal reference.

1.

2.

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Have you ever had an offer to work with children/young people declined?

YES

NO

(please tick)

If yes, please give details.

Do you suffer or have you suffered any illness, which may directly affect your work with children or young people?

YES

NO

(please tick)

If yes, please give details.

2. Declaration

Because of the nature of the work for which you are applying, this position is exempt from the provision of section 4(ii) of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Acts 1974 (exemptions) Order 1975, and you are therefore not entitled to withhold information about convictions which for other purposes are “spent” under the provisions of the Act and in the event of appointment, any failure to disclose such convictions could result in the withdrawal of approval to work with children and/or young people within the church.

Have you ever been charged with or convicted of a criminal offence; or are you at present the subject of criminal investigations? (N.B. The disclosure of an offence may not prohibit your appointment.)

YES

NO

(please tick)

If yes, please give details including the nature of the offence(s) and dates

Have you ever been involved in court proceedings concerning a child for whom you have parental responsibility?

YES

NO

(please tick)

If yes, please give details and dates

Has there ever been any cause for concern regarding your conduct with children?

YES

NO

(please tick)

If yes, please give details

I confirm that the submitted information is correct and complete.

Signed

Date

Appendix 2

Recognising and Responding to Abuse

The following behavioural signs may be indications of child abuse, but they should not be taken in isolation. They may or may not be indicators that abuse has taken place but workers should be alert to the consideration.

Physical signs of abuse

Injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them.

Injuries which have not received medical attention.

Bruises, bites, burns or fractures which do not have an accidental explanation.

Signs of consistent neglect such as under nourishment, constant hunger, untreated illnesses or inadequate care.

Indicators of possible sexual abuse

Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse.

Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and inappropriate knowledge of adult sexual behaviour.

Child who is sexually provocative with adults.

Emotional signs of abuse

Changes or regression in mood and behaviour including withdrawal, aggression or depression.

Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults.

Attention seeking behaviour

Persistent tiredness

Running away/stealing/lying

What to do if you suspect abuse may have occurred

1. You must report concerns to the DOSC who is nominated by the church to act on their behalf in referring all allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities.
2. If the suspicions in any way involve the DOSC then the report should be made to the pastor. If the suspicions in any way implicate the entire church leadership then the report should be made to PCCA Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS), PO BOX 113, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ. Telephone 01322 660011 or 01322 667207.
3. Do not discuss your concerns with anyone else, including the child's parents.

It is of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make direct referrals to the child protection agencies or seek advice from the PCCA, although we hope that members of the church will use these procedures. If, however, you feel that your concerns have not been dealt with then it is open to you to contact the relevant organisation directly. However, this church policy is our commitment to effective child protection.

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Allegations of physical injury or neglect

If a child has a suspicious physical injury or symptom of neglect:

1. The DOSC, or other designated church leader, will contact Social Services (or CCPAS) for advice if concerned about the child's safety.
2. The DOSC, or other designated church leader, will ensure that immediate emergency medical attention has been sought if necessary.
3. In other circumstances, the pastor, or other church leader, will speak to the parent/guardian and suggest that medical help is sought.
4. The doctor will be informed of any suspicions of abuse and s/he will then be able to initiate further action, if necessary.
5. In cases of real concern where the parent/guardian is unwilling to seek help the DOSC, pastor or other designated church leader, will contact Social Services or CCPAS for advice.

Allegations of sexual abuse

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse:

1. The DOSC, or other designated church leader, will contact CCPAS for advice/support but will not speak to the parent or anyone else implicated in the allegations.
2. The advice of the CCPAS will be sought in writing for future reference.
3. Under no circumstances will the DOSC, or other designated church leader, carry out investigation into the allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse. The precise details of the allegation will be provided to the Social Services Department, whose task it is to investigate the matter under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.
4. If the person making the allegation or in receipt of the allegation should disagree with the DOSC, or other designated church leader involved, then that person retains the right to report the matter directly to the Social Services Department.
5. The DOSC, or other designated church leader, may also be required by the conditions of the Church Insurance policy to ensure that the Insurance Company is immediately informed of any incident that may lead to a claim against the church.

How to react when a child wants to talk about abuse

- Listen to what the child says without expressing doubts.
- Keep calm and look at the child directly.
- Do not promise confidentiality – let them know you may need to tell someone else.
- Even if a child has done something wrong they are never to blame for abuse.
- Do not push for information the child is unwilling to give.
- Do not express shock, disbelief, or blame.
- Reassure the child that they were right to talk to you.
- Let the child know what you are going to do next.
- If you have reason to believe a child is at serious risk in returning home then it may be necessary to refer to the Social Services or Police.

What to do once a child has talked to you about abuse

- Make notes as soon as possible; write down exactly what the child said, and when and where you spoke. Sign and date the notes and report it to the DOSC or other designated church leader as soon as possible.
- Refer to the procedures outlined in this policy document.

Appendix 3

Use of social networking sites within the youth work of the church

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DSCF) advise¹ that adults should be circumspect in their communication with children to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming. Having appropriate safeguards in place minimises the risk of those intent on abuse from being able to gain access to children and they also protect workers from false accusation.

When using a social networking site individuals must have a separate profile for use as a church youth worker or similar, linked to an agreed church/youth organisation email address. The principle here is that church youth leaders/youth workers are able to communicate with young members in their groups and vice versa without other personal information being shared. The minimum age of users must agree with the terms and conditions of the particular social network site (e.g. 13 years or above for Facebook).

Parental consent should be obtained prior to commencing communication. Each group will appoint someone to regularly review the site to monitor the content with the proviso that if any of the young people are unhappy about what is being shared, they are able to raise this with impunity. Cut off times (e.g. 11pm) when members of the group can communicate with each other should be agreed. The youth group account should only contain friends within the “real world” group.

Any personal account of a worker should be kept completely separate with privacy controls set up to display the minimum of information to those not their ‘friend’.

For further safeguarding of all users the 'click CEOP' link button should be added to any youth group profile.

¹ ‘Safer Working for Adults who work with Children and Young People’,

Appendix 4

Relationships

Touch is an important part of human relationships. For example, it can be necessary to stop a child hurting herself or himself, or can be a natural way of responding to someone in distress. However, we must be sensitive to what is appropriate or inappropriate physical contact. Leaders must be conscious of situations in which their actions, however well intentioned, could be misconstrued by others as harmful. For example,

- Keep everything in public. If you need to talk to a child one to one do so in a public area, with the door open and ensure another leader is aware this is taking place.
- Any touch should be related to the child's needs and not the worker's.
- Any physical contact should be instigated by the child and not the worker.
- No workers or team members should enter into inappropriate relationships with young people in their care.

Discipline is a necessary part of a person's character. It includes nurture, training, instruction, verbal reprimand, teaching and encouragement. It brings security, produces character, is evidence of love and creates a good environment for other children.

Ask God for wisdom, discernment and understanding.

Do not act in haste or in anger.

Be a good role model and set a good example (Children cannot be expected to do what you don't do and vice-versa).

Do not compare children with each other, but work on each child's positives, encourage and build them up.

Be consistent in what you say and ensure that other team members know what you have said. This avoids any manipulation or confusion.

Practical guidelines for discipline in children's work

- (a) Be insistent, consistent and persistent.
- (b) Never smack or hit a child.
- (c) If you feel angry then call on other leaders to handle the situation.
- (d) Do not shout in anger or put down a child.
- (e) Talk to a child away from the group and not publicly.
- (f) Never reject a child, just their behaviour.
- (g) Each child is unique, special and individual. Each child needs a different method of being dealt with. We, therefore, need to ask why a child is behaving badly.

Practical ideas for dealing with bad behaviour

- (a) Change voice tone, but try not to shout.
- (b) Separate children who have a tendency to be disruptive when together (These children are often friends, give them a chance, perhaps warn them and only separate if they are disruptive).
- (c) Have the child sit right in front of you.
- (d) Get a helper to sit next to the child.
- (e) Be pro-active and do not wait to be told to deal with a situation.

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- (f) Take the child aside and talk to them, challenging them to change, whilst encouraging their strengths.
- (g) Warn a child that you may have to speak to their parents.
- (h) If a child's behaviour is constantly disruptive then seek advice and guidance from a leader.
- (i) Warn them, if necessary send them outside the room (under supervision). It may be appropriate to apply sanctions of some kind against them. Do this in consultation with other leaders and ensure that parents are advised in cases of banning.

Use of restraint

In extreme situations, the use of physical restraint may be required to:

- A) prevent a child causing damage to him/herself, others or property
- B) Prevent a criminal act from taking place

In such situations the following procedures should be followed:

- 1) Give a clear instruction to the child to stop what they are doing, and that physical restraint will be used if they persist. Use a calm, authoritative voice. Summon assistance if possible.
- 2) In most cases, a guiding hand, placing your hand central to the child's back will be sufficient to move the child from danger.
- 3) If the child is physically aggressive, calmly restrain his/her arms to prevent further damage.
- 4) Under no circumstances should the force used be more than is necessary and must never be in the form of a physical punishment.
- 5) In cases where restraint has been used details of the incident must be reported as soon as possible to your line manager.