

GENEVA ROAD EVANGELICAL BAPTIST CHURCH

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION

POLICY, PRACTICE AND GUIDELINES

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1. SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Church takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults entrusted to its care. Accordingly, the church has adopted this policy and sets out agreed guidelines relating to the following areas:

- recognising and responding to allegations of abuse or neglect, including those made against leaders or members of the church
- appointing children's / youth workers
- supervision of activities and practice issues

1.2 We aim to:

- Promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults of all ages
- Prevent abuse from occurring
- Protect and respond to those who have been abused

In all we do, the welfare of the child and vulnerable adult is the paramount consideration. The Church's safeguarding action will follow the following principle: Recognise, Respond (to the individual), Record, Report and Refer, Review.

1.3 The Minister (Rev Mark Rowcroft – 01325 486426) is the lead Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer and the Church Secretary (Mr Geoff Friston – 01325 286104) is the Deputy Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer for the Church.

1.4 The policy contained here is formulated to help church workers and members to respond appropriately when abuse is disclosed or discovered.

CHRISTIAN SAFEGUARDING SERVICES

1.5 The Church is a member of the Christian Safeguarding Services (CSS). CSS provide advice and guidance on safeguarding and child protection matters, conduct training courses on safeguarding and child protection issues and operate an advice line for urgent issues.

1.6 The Church Secretary, Mr Friston, is the nominated officer and "lead recruiter" for CSS matters. All CSS business, including contact with their advice hotline must be made through him.

DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE CHECKS

1.7 CSS act as the umbrella body for the Church for Disclosure and Barring Service checks (formerly known as Criminal Records Bureau checks).

- It is the policy of the Church that all persons volunteering to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults within the church be asked to obtain an Enhanced disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- Requests to obtain such Disclosures will be made to the individuals concerned by Mr Friston (lead recruiter) or (second recruiter) and only Mr Friston or (second recruiter) will have access to the Disclosures.
- Where a Disclosure reveals offences against children / young people / vulnerable adults the individual will not be permitted to work with children / young people / vulnerable adults within the Church.
- Should an individual refuse to obtain a Disclosure they will not be permitted to work with children / young people / vulnerable adults within the Church.
- Disclosures will be retained securely for a maximum period of 6 months and will then be destroyed.
- Where Disclosures reveal 'spent' convictions under the terms of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act the individuals will be permitted to work with children / young people / vulnerable adults within the Church unless the convictions were for offences against children / young people / vulnerable adults.
- Disclosures will be reviewed regularly.

1.8 It is the policy of the Church to exclude persons from working with children who have previously abused a child or where it is known that the individual has a record of violent / inappropriate sexual behaviour.

2. RECOGNISING - DEFINITIONS of ABUSE

General Definition

2.1 Abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's or vulnerable adult's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Physical abuse

2.2 Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of an interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents. In adults it can include domestic abuse, husband or wife beating or abuse from carers.

Emotional abuse

2.3 Emotional abuse includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies commensurate with her or his personal potentials and in the context of the society in which the child dwells. There may also be acts towards the child that cause or have a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Acts include restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, denigrating, scapegoating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

Neglect

2.4 Neglect is the failure to provide for the development of the child in all spheres: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or carers and causes or has a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible.

2.5 In adults it includes the withholding of adequate care for basic needs. It can also include self-neglect.

Sexual Abuse

2.6 Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violate the laws or social taboos of society.

Exploitation

2.7 Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, or spiritual, moral or social-emotional development. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and child prostitution.

Social Media Abuse

2.8 Social media abuse includes:

Cyberbullying – sending short obscene, ridiculing or threatening messages

Sexting – forced sending of explicit sexual photographs via mobile phones

Grooming – the manipulation of a child with the intent of sexual abuse or exploitation

Cyber-Stalking – repeated threats or messages that make the recipient afraid for their safety

Trolling – starting online arguments with insults provocations and threats

Flaming – Online fighting using obscene language

Scriptural/Spiritual Abuse

2.9 The coercion and control of one individual by another in a spiritual context by the misuse of scripture to control behaviour.

RECOGNISING SIGNS OF ABUSE

2.10 The following signs may or may not be indicators that abuse has taken place, but the possibility should be considered.

Physical indicators of possible abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries that occur to the body in places that are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc
- Injuries that have not received appropriate medical attention
- Neglect through undernourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illness, inadequate care etc
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary tract infections (UTI) or tummy pains.
- Appearing sore around the genitalia
- Simulating sexual activity at an inappropriately young age
- Self-harm injuries or scars. E.g: cuts to arms.
- Substance use
- Flinching reactions
- Changing behaviour, becoming clingy or withdrawn
- Difficulty concentrating
- Poor hygiene
- Failure to thrive
- Avoiding a particular individual

Emotional indicators of possible abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging. Depression / aggression, large mood swings, extreme anxiety
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Running away, stealing, lying.
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement, lack of concentration or persistent tiredness
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention seeking behaviours

3. RESPONDING – HOW TO RESPOND TO SOMEONE WANTING TO TALK ABOUT ABUSE AND ACTION TO BE TAKEN IF ABUSE IS SUSPECTED

3.1 If someone discloses to you that they have been abused you should follow the procedure below.

- Talk in private so you will not be interrupted
- Ask if the person would mind you taking notes
- Do not put words in their mouth – let them tell their story in their own words
- Show acceptance of what the person says (however unlikely the story may seem)
- Keep calm (or at least appear calm to the person)
- Tell them you will need to let someone else know – NEVER promise confidentiality
- Be aware that the person may have been threatened or bribed not to tell
- Never push for information. If a person decides not to tell you after all accept this and let them know you are ready to listen when they are ready to talk
- Find out what the person hopes to achieve by telling you
- Ask open questions i.e. “tell me what happened”

Helpful things you may say

- “Thank you for telling me”
- “It’s not your fault”

Don’t say

- “Why didn’t you tell anyone before?”
- “I can’t / don’t believe it!”
- “Are you sure this is true?”
- Never make false promises
- Never make statements such as “I am shocked, don’t tell anyone else”
- Don’t ask leading questions

3.2 When you think the person has told you everything, you need to bring the discussion to a close. Do this by:

- Reassuring the person that they were right to tell you and show acceptance
- Let them know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens
- Contact the person in the church responsible for coordinating safeguarding and child protection as soon as possible. Do not discuss your suspicions with anyone else.
- Consider your own feelings and wellbeing. Seek pastoral support if needed.
- Do not try to confront the alleged perpetrator

4. RECORDING

4.1 Make notes as soon as possible (preferably within one hour of the discussion about abuse or of you witnessing something that gave rise to concerns), writing down the following:

- what the person said or what you saw
 - what the abuse event involved – what precisely took place
 - who was involved
 - where it happened
 - when it happened
 - what was said (i.e. “It’s our secret, don’t tell anyone”)
 - were there any witnesses
 - any other supporting information
- when they made the disclosure to you,
- what you said in reply
- what was happening immediately beforehand
- dates, times, locations of the event in question and when you made the record.

4.2 From these contemporaneous notes, which must be retained, an Incident Report Form (Annex A) should be completed. These records should be given to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Officers and will be kept safely for an indefinite period of time. The Safeguarding and Child Protection Officers will complete a

Record of Safeguarding Actions Form (Annex B) and will keep this updated throughout detailing any actions taken.

5. REPORTING AND REFERRING

- 5.1 You must report concerns as soon as possible to the Minister (lead Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer) or the Church Secretary (Deputy Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer). They will act on behalf of the Church in referring allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities where necessary.
- 5.2 Suspicions will not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above.
- 5.3 If suspicions or concerns in any way involve the Lead Officer, then the concern should be reported to the Deputy and vice versa.
- 5.4 In case of residential camps, the leader of the work should obtain the local Social Services and Police telephone numbers beforehand in the event of a serious issue arising whilst away from the church that requires immediate action.
- 5.5 Should a reported concern be about a Youth Worker, or anybody with access to children in their work/other voluntary activities, this **MUST** be reported to the Social Services Local Area Designated Officer (LADO). At Darlington Borough Council this is the Children First Response Team on 01325 742020 or the Children's Access Point on 01325 406222 or if out of office hours contact the Emergency Duty Team on 08702 402994.
- 5.6 Concerns about vulnerable adults should be referred to the Social Services Duty Officer on 01325 406111.

Physical Abuse or Neglect

- 5.7 The Minister or Church Secretary will contact the parent / guardian / carer or local Social Services Department for advice if concerned about the child's safety. Advice can also be obtained on a confidential basis from CCPAS.

Sexual Abuse

- 5.8 In the event of allegations or suspicions the Minister or Church Secretary will contact the local Social Services Department directly. They will not speak to the parent / guardian / carer or anybody else, nor will they carry out investigations themselves.

5.9 Where members of the Church are not satisfied with the actions of the Minister or Church Secretary they have a right to take the matter up with the appropriate authority themselves.

6. REVIEW

6.1 This policy will be reviewed annually at the Church AGM.

7. APPOINTMENT OF WORKERS

- Only members of the Church will be appointed as leaders of the children's and young people's work or work with vulnerable adults.
- Non-members who are regular attenders of the Church may be appointed to assist in the conduct of the meetings
- Appointments will be made only with the approval of the Minister, Elders or Deacons
- Appointments will be ratified at a Church Members Meeting

8. GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES - SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

8.1 Children will be supervised with an agreed ratio of adults which in the case of the under 8s will be in accordance with legal requirements

Suggested ratios are as follows;

Age 0 – 2: 1 adult to 3 children

Age 2 – 3: 1 adult to 4 children

Age 4 – 8: 1 adult to 8 children

Age 8 and over: 1 adult to 8 children then 1 adult for each 10 children thereafter.

Should a situation arise which would breach this ratio, for example, at the creche where a child is brought which would mean that there are insufficient adults to supervise, the parent is to be asked to remain with the child.

- 8.2 When transporting children to and from meetings it is preferable that two adults should be present in cars, though this may not always be necessary if the lifts arise out of parental friendships. In the case of children whose attendance at our meetings has given rise to behavioural issues, then two adults, preferably unrelated and one of each sex should be in the car. If only one adult is present, children should sit in the rear seats of the car only.
- 8.3 Careful consideration will be given as to when a male or female worker should be involved in supervision, or whether a worker of each sex or more than one worker is required.
- 8.4 Where possible ensure that a worker is not alone with a child. There may be circumstances where this might be helpful or necessary, such as counselling situations, in all such cases doors must be left open, and someone else must be made aware of what is happening.
- 8.5 Any incident or conduct in a meeting which gives rise to concern must be fully recorded and the information passed to the Minister or Church Secretary for consideration.
- 8.6 Sleepovers will not be sanctioned as part of the official work of the church.
- 8.7 Baptism or any other ceremony must be with the parent's consent unless the child is 16 or over. Parents should still be informed and involved where this is possible.
- 8.8 If a child has an 'accident' and soils or wets themselves, it is clearly in the child's interest to not leave them in such a state where possible. In this contact should be made with the parent and the parent should change the child or clothes be passed to the child to change into themselves.
- 8.9 Another adult must be informed if a child needs to be taken to the toilet. Meeting leaders or helpers should not change babies' nappies or wipe children after they have been to the toilet.
- 8.10 First aid must be administered in the presence of two adults. If a child has an accident and needs to be taken to hospital this should be done by two adults.
- 8.11 Occasionally it may be necessary to depart from these Child Protection Procedures. In this circumstance the action **MUST** have the child's need as the central reason. A Child Protection Officer should be contacted to jointly approve the action where reasonably possible. An incident report or some sort of follow up in writing should then be completed for the records.

9. GOOD PRACTICE - SETTING BOUNDARIES

- 9.1 Touch must be kept to an **absolute minimum**, must be in public, related to a child's needs and should be child instigated. Leaders or helpers should not initiate touch.
- 9.2 You can hug a child who is upset to console them or who is hurt to comfort them but remember that it should not be done when you are alone with the child.
- 9.3 Hugging children should be avoided. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors. Remember, however, that a hug in a group can also be harmful as it could show favouritism. For example, do not welcome a child to a meeting by throwing open your arms and hugging them. Other than consoling or comforting, it is better to avoid hugging at all.
- 9.4 If children try to sit on your knee or hold your hand try to discourage it. Any touch should be age appropriate. Avoid any physical activity which is, or thought to be, sexually stimulating to the child or to the adult.
- 9.5 Team members should monitor one another concerning physical contact.
- 9.6 Leaders/helpers should treat all children / young people with dignity and respect in attitude, language used and actions.
- 9.7 If you invite a child / young person into your home, **ensure** that this is with the knowledge of the Team / leadership and with the approval of the child / young person's parents / guardians.
- 9.8 It is the responsibility of the Leader of the meeting to ensure that appropriate transport arrangements are in place where children are taken home.
- 9.9 Should young people be taken on holidays organised by the Church, the arrangements are to be discussed in detail with the Minister / Church Secretary.

10. GOOD PRACTICE - THINGS TO AVOID

10.1 Never place yourself in a vulnerable position such as being on your own with a child.

10.2 Avoid situations where you may be tempted, especially with older young people.

10.3 Touching a child in private.

10.5 Favouritism and special relationships including excessive attention seeking or singling out for special attention.

10.6 Smacking or physically chastising. NB. Physical restraint for safety reasons may be necessary - but only as a last resort to prevent injury to a child / vulnerable adult or others.

10.6 Losing your temper with a child or scapegoating or ridiculing a child.

10.7 Taking a child home on your own outside of parental friendship arrangements.

10.8 Discussing sexual activity with a child.

10.9 Sexual comments or making comments about a child's attractiveness.

11. GOOD PRACTICE - THINGS TO DO

11.1 Exercise wisdom in your relationships with children.

11.2 Think about child safety at all times.

11.3 Any touch should be age appropriate and in public.

11.4 Always have at least two or even three as a minimum of staff on duty.

11.5 Work in large rooms, or in close proximity with others.

11.6 Always be visible when counselling.

11.7 Discourage crushes - inform the leader of the meeting if there is a problem.

11.8 Be prayerful about difficult situations.

12. GOOD PRACTICE - SAFETY

12.1 Regularly inspect any equipment in use and keep a log of inspections.

12.2 Games must be properly supervised and age appropriate.

12.3 Although it is not a legal responsibility, if possible, an experienced first aider should be on duty. The place of the first aid box must be known (Kitchen cupboard) and its contents regularly checked and re-stocked as necessary.

12.4 Appropriate and prompt action is to be taken if an accident occurs e.g. return the child home; removal to hospital etc.

12.5 The details of all accidents must be recorded and brought to the attention of the Minister / Church Secretary. Parents / Guardians are to be advised of such events.

October 2021

(Initial policy February 2013: revised April 2013, November 2017, March 2018, November 2022).

ANNEX A – INCIDENT REPORT FORM

About this form and the person completing it			
Your name	Your phone number	Your mobile number	Your e-mail address
Are you reporting: <i>Please tick the appropriate box(es)</i>	An incident	A disclosure	A concern
Department /Group / ministry area			Date completed
About the person or people, we are concerned about or involved in the incident			
Their name(s)	Their Address and contact details	Their Date of birth	Name & contact details for parent / (where appropriate)
<i>Please insert more lines as required</i>			
Details of the incident / disclosure / concern			
<i>What happened / was said / have you noticed etc?</i>			
Context of the incident / disclosure / concern			
<i>Where / when / who else was present etc.</i>			
Date of incident / disclosure		Time of incident / disclosure	

Action taken to ensure immediate safety

Other action taken or advice sought

Signature

For office use only: Form reference –

ANNEX B – RECORD OF SAFEGUARDING ACTIONS

Date of action / conversation	Document reference
Description of record	
Information given	
Advice received	
Actions to take	
Outcomes	
Recorded by	Date recorded