

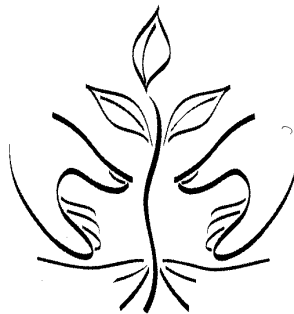


Stockwood Free Church (Baptist)

Child Protection Policy and Procedures

September 2007

Following the Home Office Code of Practice *Safe from Harm*
as published in *Safe to Grow*, the guidelines and procedures
published by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Revised 4th Edition 2004





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Stockwood Free Church (Baptist)

Policy Statement on Children, Young People and the Church

This statement was revised at the Church Meeting held on ...
It will be re-affirmed annually at the church's Annual General Meeting

- As members of this church, we commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all, especially children and young people.
It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children and young people and to report any abuse discovered or suspected.
We recognise that our work with children and young people is the responsibility of the whole church.
We undertake to exercise proper care in the selection and appointment of those working with children and young people, whether paid or volunteer.
The church is committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with children and young people and to providing supervision.
The church is committed to following the Home Office Code of Practice Safe from Harm and adopts the guidelines and procedures published by the Baptist Union of Great Britain in its booklet Safe to Grow.
Each worker with children and young people must know the recommendations and undertake to observe them. Each shall be given a copy of the church's agreed procedures and Good Practice guidelines.
As part of our commitment to children and young people, the church has appointed:
..... to be the Child Protection Officer
..... to be the Children's Advocate
..... to be the Independent Advocates.
Their roles will be regularly explained to children and their names, addresses and phone numbers publicly displayed in each room of the church.

We acknowledge that children and young people are part of our church today. They have much to give as well as to receive. We will listen to them. As we nurture them in worship, learning and in community life, we will respect their wishes and feelings.

Signed, on behalf of the church meeting Date



Good Practice in Children's and Youth Work

Why do we need good practice guidelines?

As followers of Jesus we will want to welcome children and young people into our church and give them time and attention. All children and young people, whatever their age, gender, racial background, culture, or disability, should have the opportunity to grow up safe from harm. As valued members of the church community, they should be treated with respect, listened to and kept safe.

Many people say that good practice in this area of activity is just common sense. However, the variation in what is considered to be common sense in child care terms is enormous. Because of this, we have to make a special effort to try to define good practice. Sometimes good practice needs to deal with issues that we may take for granted, but because we are dealing with other people's children, we have to be especially careful. Good practice is not a straitjacket, designed to stop us doing things. On the contrary, it enables us to do things children and young people enjoy in a safe environment. Much of what is presented here is good practice irrespective of child protection issues. We want to operate these standards because we strive to do the very best for children and young people.

These good practice measures are first and foremost about protecting children and young people. However, they will also help to protect workers from false accusation or unnecessary and unwarranted suspicion.

The following good practice guidelines are in the main quoted directly from *Safe to Grow*, Revised 4th Edition 2004.



Good practice in working with children: numbers

- As far as possible, a worker should not be alone with a child or children, where their activity cannot be seen. On church premises, this may mean leaving doors open, or two groups working in the same room. Glass panels in doors are a great advantage in church premises.
- Don't invite a child or young person to your home alone. It is acceptable to invite a group if you ensure that another adult is in the house. Establish that each parent/carer knows where their child is and at what time they should return home.
- In a counselling situation with a young person, where privacy and confidentiality are important, ensure that another adult knows the interview is taking place and with whom. Whenever possible, another adult should be in the building and the young person should know they are there. Set an agreed time limit prior to the counselling session and to stick to it. Make another appointed time to continue if necessary.
- Children and young people must not be given access to church premises unless responsible adults are present.
- At no time should one adult be alone on church premises with a child or group of children and young people.
- Make sure you have a suitable ratio of staff to children and young people. How would you manage if someone has an accident and needs immediate medical attention. Recommended ratios vary according to the age of the children concerned and whether or not the activity is taking place indoors or outside. Consider the gender balance of your workers in relation to the children and young people with whom you are working.

Indoor activities

0-2 years 1:3

2-3 years 1:4

3-8 years 1:8

8 and over 2:20 (male and female) + 1 extra adult for every 10 children

Outdoor activities

0-2 years 1:3

2-3 years 1:4

3-8 years 1:6

8-13 years 2:15 (male and female) + 1 extra adult for every 8 children

13 and over 2:20 (male and female) + 1 extra adult for every 10 young people



Good practice in the way we work with children

- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity. Use age appropriate language and tone of voice. Be aware of your own body language and the effect you are having on the individual child or young person.
- Listen well. Be careful not to assume you know what a child or young person is thinking or feeling. Listen to what is spoken and how it is said. At the same time, observe their body language to better understand what is being said.
- Do not engage in any of the following:
 - × invading the privacy of children or young people when they are using the toilet or shower.
 - × rough games involving physical contact between a leader and a child or young person.
 - × sexually provocative games.
 - × making sexually suggestive comments about or to a child or young person, even in 'fun'.
 - × scape-goating, belittling, ridiculing, or rejecting a child or young person.
- When it is necessary to control and discipline children and young people, this should be done without using physical punishment. (A situation may, however, arise where a child or young person needs to be restrained in order to protect them or a third person.)
- In such situations, or if an incident of concern arises (e.g. a stranger on the premises), it may be appropriate to complete an incident report.
- Make sure another adult is present if, for example, a young child has soiled their underclothes and needs to be thoroughly washed. If possible, the child's own parent or carer should be called in to carry out such a task.
- Do not respond to excessive attention-seeking that is overtly sexual or-physical in nature.



Good practice - keeping parents/carers informed

- All children and young people attending church groups should be registered and parents/carers asked for details of full name, date of birth, address and contact telephone number(s). Consent forms for emergency medical treatment and for travel arrangements should be completed if children are being cared for in the absence of their prime carer, whether on or off church premises (Form 10). This information should be readily available to workers. Be aware that in some families, there are legal constraints on contact with children by absent parents.
- Parents/carers should be advised of the Child Protection Policy and given a written statement about who is caring for their child, with workers' or leader's name(s) and telephone number(s). They should be advised of what action will be taken if a child protection issue arises.
- There should be a clear understanding of what sort of activities the child or young person will be doing and the time limits of these. Arrangements for returning children to their parents' care should be clarified. Where children are collected from activities, (which will normally be the case with children up to 11 years of age) nominated persons should be identified by the parent/carers as acceptable to carry out this task.

Good practice -can I touch a child?

- It is hard to conceive how one can be a nurturing, caring worker with children and young people without some physical contact happening at least occasionally! For example, if a child is distressed it is natural to want to put an arm round their shoulder. It could even be thought of as abusive not to respond by touching a child in such circumstances. However, you must be conscious that what to you is an innocent touch may have another, more sinister meaning for children who have experienced abuse. If you find that the child is cringing or responding in a negative way to being touched, then stop immediately and find an alternative, non-tactile way to convey your concern.
- Be aware of your own and other workers' behaviour in terms of touching. Always be prepared to answer the question, 'For whose benefit is this taking place?' It is advisable to avoid touching a child when no-one else is present in the room.
- If you see another worker acting in ways that might be misconstrued, speak to them or to a leader about your concerns. Leaders should encourage an atmosphere of mutual support and care which allows all workers to be comfortable enough to discuss inappropriate attitudes or behaviour.
- The question of 'touch' has wider implications in the life of the church, for example, on greeting those arriving at church, and 'sharing the peace'. We need to be aware that not every adult or child one welcomes that kind of contact.



Good practice -abuse of trust

- Relationships between children or young people and their leaders can all be described as 'relationships of trust'. The leader is someone in whom the child or young person has placed a degree of trust. This may be because the leader has an educational role, is a provider of leisure activities, or even is a significant adult friend. In every case, however, that relationship is not one of equal partners and there is the potential for the trust to be abused by the leader, who is in a position of power over the child or young person.
- All voluntary organisations are expected to have a policy which sets out the boundaries of such relationships.
- It is always wrong for a leader to enter into a sexual relationship with a young person. Whilst young people aged 16 or 17 can legally consent to some types of sexual activity, they may still be emotionally immature. Their vulnerability could be exploited either deliberately or unwittingly. In these circumstances it does not make any difference whether or not the sexual relationship is consensual. The imbalance of power makes it an abuse of trust.
- It is not acceptable for a leader to form a romantic relationship with a child or young person with whom they have a relationship of trust. Such a romantic relationship (even if consensual) would not be a relationship of equal partners -the leader is always in a position of power over the young person and exploitation is almost inevitable, even if unintentional.
- The inappropriate nature of romantic relationships is obvious where the leader is an adult, but less so when the leader is also a young person. However, if such a romantic relationship did occur, there would still be a confusion of the roles of leader and romantic partner. Normally in these circumstances the leader should cease either the relationship of trust or the romantic relationship with the young person.



Good practice in supervision and support

- Establish good networks of supervision amongst those who are working with children and young people. These networks also help to protect workers from putting themselves in situations where they can face suspicion or false accusation.
- Workers should seldom, if ever, find themselves in sole charge of children or young people. There will therefore be a good deal of opportunity for 'mutual supervision'. Without being intrusive, workers can help one another maintain a culture of good practice.
- It may be useful to keep a register of attendance of all leaders and helpers, in addition to the register of children attending meetings.
- The leader of a group may wish occasionally to sit in with other workers to observe more closely their ways of working and to feed back reflections. This should be approached as a positive reinforcement of good practice rather than as a critical exercise that undermines confidence.
- Leaders and workers should be observant of the kinds of behaviour which could give rise to concern:
 - the amount of physical contact between a worker and children. Is it appropriate? Does the child look comfortable? Who initiates any touching or cuddles?
 - Are any children or young people being specially favoured or treated harshly?
 - Is a worker being secretive about what they are doing?
 - Is a worker transporting children/young people alone? Are the same ones dropped off last?
 - Are any workers inviting children or young people to their home? Do the parents know? Why are they inviting the children? Who else is present?
- If something is causing you concern, keep a note to which you can refer should you need to take action later.
- Discuss in individual sessions or at team meetings how better to meet the needs of the children and improve the systems in place for their protection. This may identify things that, in isolation, might not make much sense, but when shared with others begin to form identifiable indicators of needs or concern.
- Participate in training events on working with children on child protection and encourage your co-workers to do so.
- Provide an annual review for all volunteers, to talk about their work, to confirm that each wishes to continue and to discuss possible development and training.



Good practice -health and safety

- A desire to safeguard children and young people from harm will mean that we need to be safety conscious. Even modern church buildings have not always been designed with the best interests of children in mind. Nevertheless, there are ways of protecting all users of the property, especially children. Look at the church building using 'the eyes of a child', from their height and see what potential hazards you notice.
- **Furniture:** Is it in a safe condition, child sized etc?
- **Equipment:** Are potentially hazardous tools, cleaning fluids etc stored in a safe, locked place?
- **Electrical:** Do you have checks on all electrical equipment and use socket covers when sockets are not in use?
- **First Aid:** Is there a first aid box - kept full - with people who are trained in first aid on site? Do you have an accident book for record purposes?
- **Fire Equipment:** Is there suitable fire fighting equipment over the whole of the premises? Do you carry out fire drills?
- **Lighting:** Is the building well lit internally and externally - especially around the entrance points?
- **Accident and Emergency:** Do you have details of contact addresses and telephone numbers for parents/carers of all the children on site? Have they consented to you getting emergency treatment for their children if necessary?
- **Insurance:** Is your church insurance adequate to do work with children and young people on and off site?
- **Security:** How easy would it be for a child or young person to leave the building during an activity without being noticed? How easy would it be for a stranger to get into the building during a children's or young person's activity without being noticed?
- **Redevelopment:** When redevelopment plans are being drawn up, are the children's and youth leaders consulted about issues that affect the use of the building, not least the safety and security of the children and young people? Are the children and young people themselves consulted about improvements they would like to see in church buildings?
- **Health and Safety Policy:** All churches should have one. A guideline document which helps a church develop one is available from the BU Corporation and can be downloaded from the BU website: www.baptist.org.uk.



Good practice when transporting children

- Avoid giving lifts to children or young people on their own. If they are alone, ask them to sit in the rear of the car.
- All private transport must have correct insurance cover for passengers.
- Always insist that seat-belts are worn when travelling.
- Parental consent forms must be completed before a trip and a checklist of appropriate information given to parents prior to the event (see Appendix 1, Event and Activity Checklist).
- If using a minibus this must have the appropriate permit and the driver be licensed to drive it. If people are making a contribution to its use, you are required to get a Section 19 permit from the DETR.
- When using coaches, ensure that the company has full insurance cover. Check on the limit of passenger numbers and do not exceed this number. Children should remain seated and wear seat belts provided.
- On every trip, an adult should have a written list of those children or young people for whom they have responsibility, including medical information, plus emergency contact names and numbers, even if the whole group is to remain together. A copy of this list, including emergency contact numbers, must be left with a member of the child protection team.
- If travelling in several small groups, it is good practice to insist that the same group of children travel on both the outgoing and return journeys with the same adult. This minimises the possibility of children going astray because of false assumptions that someone else has taken them.

Good practice when looking after children overnight

It is impossible to lay down hard and fast rulings that will cover every situation. However, sensible precautions will minimise the risks for both workers and children and young people. Carry out a risk assessment as part of planning the programme.

- Males and females should sleep separately. If the group of children has both boys and girls, then it is important to have a mix of male and female workers.
- There are arguments both for and against children sleeping separately from adults. If children sleep alone, who knows what may take place amongst them? If an adult sleeps in with a group of children, the adult is open to accusation of abuse and the children are potentially more at risk of abuse by the adult. It may be appropriate to consider appointing an adult who undertakes a waking night patrol at random. If, for example, you are on a campsite with a public right of way, greater night time vigilance may be demanded.
- There will be differences in the most appropriate way to deal with the overnight care of children and young people in light of the venue, the children's ages and other prevailing conditions. What is important is that the situation is discussed by the workers and an agreement reached together as to how they will proceed. Children are best protected in an environment where the adults concerned are aware of the issues of child abuse and there is an acceptance of the need to be watchful.
- Particularly when taking away a mixed age group, it is important to remember that some children are abused by other (often older) children or young people.
- All parents/carers should be given written details of an identified contact worker, with an address and telephone number of the overnight location. Parents/carers must be advised in writing of how their children will be cared for in their absence. It will often be helpful to arrange a meeting with parents/carers before the event where questions can be raised.
- A checklist of appropriate information given to parents prior to the event, including correct clothing and other "kit" for whatever activities they are taking part in (see Appendix 1, Event and Activity Checklist).
- Parents/carers must have completed a suitable consent form (Form 11) including emergency contact numbers, details of their child's medical care/conditions, current medication, name and telephone number of the child's doctor.
- The leader should keep a written list of the children or young people on the trip, including medical information, plus emergency contact names and numbers. A copy of this list, including emergency contact numbers, must be left with a member of the child protection team.

Good practice when looking after children overnight (continued)

- A reliable mobile phone is a useful tool in working away from the usual church base. Ascertain the telephone numbers for emergency situations before any possible crisis occurs.
- It is helpful to make sure that at least one adult is in charge of specific aspects of the programme. These jobs will vary taking into consideration building, type of programme, etc.
- The person with overall responsibility must check that the person designated as the First Aid officer holds an appropriate, valid certificate. The person responsible for catering may need to hold a Basic Food Hygiene Certificate.
- Check the insurance cover of any building in which you will be sleeping. There may be a limit on numbers it accommodates. If exceeded, insurance can be invalid.
- Check the building and know where water, electricity and gas can be turned off. Know the fire drill for the building, and make sure you have a fire drill as soon as possible after entering the premises. Know where the fire extinguishers are. A Location Specific Plan should be displayed alongside the Fire Notice in each room.
- Church halls and rooms used for sleeping larger numbers of people **MUST** have **TWO** means of exit.
- Know where the nearest hospital and doctor are and inform the local doctor if you are sleeping there. It is also a good idea to notify local police. This applies if you are sleeping in any building, even if only for one night, and even if it is your own church. Also it is helpful to inform the fire brigade.
- Residential activities must have safety rules and boundaries. e.g. letting adults know where you are, not entering the kitchen without asking the cook, etc.
- Where outdoor activities are concerned, either leaders should have the appropriate qualification, or if the activity is being provided by an outside organisation, then the leaders should check that this organisation is registered with the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority and have appropriate insurance. Current guidelines suggest that for any camping or hill walking activity, the basic qualification which should be held is the Basic Expedition Leader Award (BELA) or an equivalent, for example a scout or guiding qualification.

Child Protection Procedures

Responsibility for SFC Child Protection Policy and Procedures

- It is the responsibility of all church members to welcome children and young people and to affirm their acceptance of the church's child protection policy.
- All church members should be alert to situations where children may be vulnerable and know who to speak to if they think a child is being harmed.
- The minister and deacons are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the policy and procedures are implemented and resourced in the church. They should be fully conversant with both policy and procedures.
- As a managing trustee of a charity working with children, the position of deacon is a "regulated position" under the provisions of Part II of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000. It would be a criminal act for anyone banned from working with children to allow him/herself to be nominated for the diaconate.
- The church appoints a child protection team:
 - A child protection officer: a deacon who will co-ordinate the team.
 - A children's advocate: who will speak on the children's behalf and offer their voice within church life.
 - Independent advocate(s): who will be independent of the children's work but available for children to speak to.
- All members of the child protection team will receive appropriate training in child protection issues and procedures.
- The child protection officer will:
 - Be the primary contact for taking action when abuse is disclosed or suspected
 - Co-ordinate the process of appointment of new volunteer workers with children including application for Enhanced Disclosures from CRB via CAS etc.
 - Keep securely all incident reports, application forms, references etc.
- The child protection team have the responsibility for acting on the church's behalf in referring allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities.
- The child protection team will review the child protection policy and procedures annually, on changes in relevant legislation and on issue of any new edition of *Safe to Grow*, communicating any changes to the church at the AGM or as required.
- All workers with children and young people must have obtained an enhanced Disclosure from the CRB. A new Disclosure should be obtained every 5 years.



Recognising abuse

Types of abuse

Physical	where children's bodies are hurt or injured. This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning/scalding, drowning or suffocating.
Emotional	where children do not receive love and affection, may be frightened by threats or taunts, given responsibilities beyond their years, told they are worthless and inadequate, exploited or corrupted.
Sexual	where adults (and sometimes other children) use children to satisfy sexual desires.
Neglect	where adults persistently fail to meet a child's basic physical, psychological or emotional needs or protect them from danger, seriously impairing health and development.

Some signs of abuse

Physical	unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly on a part of the body not prone to such injuries. Lack of medical attention.
Emotional	reverting to younger behaviour, nervousness, sudden under-achievement, attention seeking, running away, stealing, lying.
Sexual	preoccupation with sexual matters evident in words, play, drawings; being sexually provocative with adults; disturbed sleep, nightmares, bed-wetting; secretive relationships with adults or children; tummy pains with no apparent cause.
Neglect	looking ill-cared for and unhappy, being withdrawn or aggressive, having lingering injuries or health problems.

This list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more indicators is not in itself proof that abuse is actually taking place. It is also important to remember that there might be other reasons why most of the above are occurring.

Who causes harm to children?

The person causing harm:

- Is most often someone known to the child (parent, sibling, other relation, family friend, neighbour).
- Is often an adult with whom the child or young person has a valued relationship, in a position of trust within an organisation to which the child belongs or with which they have contact.
- can be of any background.
- may act in isolation or with other adults.

How should I listen to a child's concerns?

- React calmly so as not to further distress the child/young person.
- Listen carefully to what they have to say.
- Allow them time to say what they want, don't rush or interrupt them or ask more questions than you need to in order to establish whether there is a cause for concern or to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said.
- Do not ask closed questions (ones answered by 'yes' or 'no') or 'leading' questions such as, 'Did he say/do something to you?' Use open questions such as, 'Is there anything else you want to say?' 'Can you tell me more about that?'
- Accept what the child/young person says and take seriously what you are hearing.
- Reassure them and confirm that you know how difficult it must have been to confide in you.
- Tell the child/young person he/she is not to blame and that it is right to tell.
- Help the child/young person to understand what is going to happen next. Do not promise that any child protection concern which affects them or other children or young people will be kept confidential.
- Be aware that a child/young person may be frightened and that he/she may have been threatened if they tell of what has been happening to them.

What should I do when abuse is suspected or disclosed?

- If you consider the child to be under immediate threat, contact a member of the child protection team immediately, or if these are not available, the social services duty team (for contact numbers see page 22).
- In all cases, make a clear written, signed and dated record of what the child told you as soon as possible after the disclosure/incident. This should include:
 - The child's name, address, date of birth
 - The nature of the concerns/allegations/disclosure
 - A description of any visible injuries
 - An exact record of the child's words, their behaviour and demeanour
 - What you said to the child
 - Any actions you have already taken (contact with parents, child protection team etc)
- Discuss your concerns with a member of the child protection team without delay, giving them your written report, if available. (Role of the responsible person appendix 2)
- Do not act alone or start to investigate the issue yourself.



Child Protection Policy and Procedures

What should I do if I am worried about one of the workers and their behaviour?

1. Be sure of your concerns - carefully observe the behaviour that gives cause for concern and weigh it against the church's child protection policy and any statements of good practice. Keep a written note of your concerns and any action you take.
2. Check out your concern with a member of the child protection team. It may be that another worker is also worried. In doing this, care should be taken not to raise alarm, break confidences or malign someone, even unwittingly.
3. Talk to the person about whom you have concerns. It may be appropriate and wise to involve the minister, a member of the child protection team or a deacon in this discussion.
4. A decision will need to be made as to whether any action should be taken. Should the person stop work with children or work in a different way? Do they need training? It may be that no action needs to be taken at all because there never was a real cause for concern.
5. Remain aware that the worker will probably feel angry or hurt about having been viewed in a suspicious way: they may need further pastoral help from someone in the church to help them through these feelings and any change in role that was agreed.

What if an allegation is made against either a voluntary or paid worker?

All of those working with children and young people should be aware that if an allegation is made against them, they will be advised/or required to withdraw from their responsibilities while an investigation is carried out. They may even be asked not to attend church during this period.

This can be very hurtful as it appears that the person is being treated as guilty before any investigation has been completed. It is important to understand this is to safeguard both the worker and protect the child/young people.

It is good for pastoral care to be shared by more than one person. One person giving pastoral support to the worker and one to the person bringing the allegation.



Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Procedure for appointment of volunteer/or paid worker with children/young people

1. Give the volunteer a copy of the job profile (Form 3) and of the church's child protection policy and procedures document. Ensure that the volunteer understands that they will be asked to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure from CRB or, for supervised helpers (including those under 18 years of age), to complete a self-disclosure (Form 6).
2. Ask the volunteer to fill out an application form (Form 4), giving details of two people who can provide references. At least one must be from outside the church. One should be a colleague in previous children's work if applicable.
3. Take up the references (using Forms 7 & 8).
4. On receipt of references, interview the candidate. The interview will give the opportunity to discern whether the person is suited to the post and to seek together the mind of God. It will enable all involved to have a clear understanding of what the post entails and what will be the expectations of the worker and the church. The interview should explore the person's past experiences of contact with children and young people. Follow up any inconsistencies or concerns with more searching questions. Ask the candidate whether they have been asked to leave a post working with children or young people and whether children have ever been removed from their care.
5. Having weighed up all the available evidence, make a decision whether or not to appoint the candidate.
6. Invite the suitable candidate to take up the appointment subject to a satisfactory check of their criminal record. Ask the volunteer to complete an application form for an Enhanced Disclosure from the CRB via CAS (see Forms 13-15), or for supervised helpers (including those under 18 years of age), to complete a self-disclosure (Form 6).
7. Confirm the provisional appointment by asking the volunteer to sign a volunteer agreement (Form 9), countersigned by the Minister and Church Secretary. Explain the essential elements of the church's child protection policy and procedures.
8. Offer the new (and existing) workers regular training in improving skills for the job and in child protection issues.
9. Review the post at the end of the 6 month probationary period, ensuring that both volunteer and church are happy to continue.
10. Paid workers will receive regular supervision and an annual appraisal.



Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Supervised Helpers (including under 18s)

- Young people who assist with caring for other children and other supervised helpers (volunteers who help on a one-off basis) will be appointed as stated in the 'Appointment of volunteer workers with children and young people' .
- No young person under 18 years or other supervised helper may be left in sole charge of children of any age.
- Supervised helpers should be aware of and agree to follow the child protection policy and procedures.

Other users of church premises

- Outside groups using the premises for residential purposes must have their own child protection policy.
- Groups using the premises for meetings must comply with the SFC child protection policy. Individuals from such groups are not permitted into areas where activities for children or young people are taking place.



What do we do if we have a known offender in the church?

Occasionally churches may find that a member of their fellowship or congregation has been convicted in the past of abusing a child. Those with convictions for harming children should be given a welcome, and receive the love and friendship of the church community. However, our love should be shaped by wisdom. In welcoming them into the fellowship of the church, we should ensure the safety of children.

Particularly with regard to sexual abuse, evidence suggests that patterns of behaviour are deeply ingrained in those who harm children. One of the factors that leads towards a lower likelihood of re-offending is a willingness to avoid situations involving contact with children. For the sake of the protection of children and for the sake of an offender's journey towards forgiveness and restoration it is important that those who have offended against children in the past are not given positions of responsibility for children within the church. It is important that they are not able to use the context of church gatherings to establish such inappropriate relationships with children and their families.

An discussion must be held with the person concerned in which clear boundaries are established for their involvement in the life of the church. A written contract should be drawn up in line with *Safe to Grow 2004* (appendix 3), which identifies appropriate behaviour and which the person is asked to sign. The contract should be monitored and enforced. Those who offend against children can often be manipulative. If the contract is broken certain sanctions should be considered, again in line with *Safe to Grow 2004*, (appendix 3) It is important to work in partnership with other agencies whenever possible. If a probation officer has been appointed, church leaders should seek to make contact and establish how best the person should be helped to participate in the life of the church.

The church will live out the gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation by giving a proper place to those who have offended against children in the past. The church should resist the temptation to demonise and de-humanise them. However, in giving them a place in the life of the Christian community the church will do so with that wisdom that holds them on their journey towards forgiveness and wholeness, enabling them to live with the consequences of their past in the light of God's forgiveness and acceptance. Although service with responsibility for children may not be appropriate, there may be other ways in which they can express their service of God and contribute to the life of the church. Such people should not be debarred from all active involvement in the life of the church.

Note: Often only a few people know the details of any offence. If information on the offender is known to the church only because it was revealed as a result of a Disclosure by the Criminal Records Bureau it would be a criminal offence for that information to be passed on to others.



Definitions

Child protection team: a group responsible for acting on the church's behalf in referring disclosures or suspicions of abuse or neglect to the statutory authorities.

Child protection officer: a deacon who will co-ordinate the team

Children's advocate: person who will speak on the children's behalf and offer their voice within church life

Independent advocate(s): person who will be independent of the children's work but available for children to speak to.

Child: Any person under 18 years of age (Children Act 1989). Includes "young people".

Disclosure

- i) disclosure is a term used when a child talks about (discloses) abuse
- ii) Disclosure is a term used for a criminal record check certificate (Basic, Standard or Enhanced) according to the amount of information obtained.
- iii) 'self-disclosure' is a signed declaration an occasional helper makes about their criminal record.

Abbreviations

CAS Churches' Agency for Safeguarding. An ecumenical agency used by the BU to obtain Disclosure from CRB

CRB Criminal Records Bureau. Government agency issuing Disclosures related to a person's criminal record

DETR Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions

Contact Numbers

Child Protection Team:

Child Protection Officer: *contact no*

Children's Advocate: *contact no*

Independent Advocate(s): *contact no*

For urgent issues if the child protection team cannot be contacted:

Social Services Emergency Duty Team (out of hours): 01454 615165

Police Child Protection Team: 0227 9454328 or 999

Other useful numbers

NSPCC: 0808 80050000

Domestic Abuse Advice: 0800 6949999



Event and Activity Checklist

When arranging a day trip, a special activity or a residential stay, parents should be given full information prior to the event and a consent and medical form should be completed. The information to be given to parent should include the following:

- Name of visit or activity
- Date(s)
- Venue / destination
- Name, address and telephone number of leader responsible for the event
- Names of other leaders who will be present
- Contact telephone number of the venue (or mobile number of leader)
- A brief description of the activities/programme
- If young people are not to be supervised all of the time, this should be made clear to parents
- If specialist tuition/training is being offered, details of tutors/trainers etc and any relevant qualifications
- (e.g. if you are taking a group canoeing, sailing or abseiling etc)
- Departure place and time
- Return place and time
- Cost (including to whom cheques should be payable)
- Transport arrangements
- Items to be brought (e.g. coat, swimming kit, walking boots, packed lunch, money etc)
- Date by which reply is to be made, and person to whom it should be sent

THE PARENTAL CONSENT FORM SHOULD BE RETURNED PRIOR TO THE ACTIVITY AND SHOULD BE TAKEN ON THE ACTIVITY BY THE LEADER.



The role of the responsible person

On being informed of an allegation or actual abuse the responsible person will need to consider how to respond to the reported concerns. The responsible person should be aware of their own limitations in assessing the seriousness of concerns that are raised. They should always consult with people with experience and expertise.

Three judgements will need to be made by the responsible person:

1. Do I consult with someone outside the church?
 - a. Unless you feel confident that other advice need not be sought the presumption should be to consult.
2. Do I inform the parents/carers?
 - a. It is usual to inform parents/carers of actions that are taken or concerns that are raised which affect their children. However, if the parents are implicated in the abuse you should consider if the child will be put at further risk by telling the parents/carers advice should be sought from Social Services.
 - b. A referral should always be made to Social Services when it is believed that a parent/carer may be physically or sexually abusing a child/young person. In this instance the parents/carers should not be informed.
3. Do I refer to Social Services?
 - a. If there is an allegation or suspicions of abuse the responsible person should refer these to Social Services and/or the police.
 - b. However, not all concerns will need to be referred. If suspicions are raised then the decision might be taken to monitor the situation.
 - c. If the concern is about a worker acting in an inappropriate way, it may be that the responsible person speaks to the worker and reinforce good practice.
 - d. If the responsible person refers to Social Services they will be advised regarding action and further involvement
4. Should medical assistance be sought?
 - a. Always seek appropriate medical help when necessary. Should a child need immediate treatment this should be sought ensuring that you contact the parent as soon as possible
 - b. If there is disagreement about a referral to Social Services between the person in receipt of information regarding actual or suspected abuse and the responsible person the person should report their concerns to the church leadership.

It is important to remember that the child's welfare and safety is paramount. Protecting children from harm is of primary importance.

What do we do if we have a known offender in the church?

An discussion must be held with the person concerned in which clear boundaries are set and a written contract is drawn up which identifies appropriate behaviour and which the person is asked to sign.

The contract

- ❖ Should identify the meetings the person should attend
- ❖ Should specify that they should sit apart from children
- ❖ May be asked that they are accompanied by a befriender on church premises
- ❖ Will require the person not to attend small group meetings where children are present
- ❖ Will require that the person declines hospitality where there are children
- ❖ Will state that the person will never be alone with children while attending church functions
- ❖ Will require the person to stay away from areas of the building where children meet

The contract should be monitored and enforced. Those who offend against children can often be manipulative. If the contract is broken certain sanctions should be considered.

- ❖ The initial contract might be curtailed to restrict access to children
- ❖ More people might need to be informed in order to protect children. In doing this you must balance the past offender's civil liberties, the requirements of the data protection act and protection of children and young people. **Please note:** if the information is known to the church only because it was revealed as a result of a disclosure by the Criminal Records Bureau it would be a criminal offence for that information to be passed on to others.
- ❖ Ultimately, the church might have to ban the person from attending church. If the person joins another fellowship it would be appropriate to indicate any concerns there might be about the person to the church leader.



Stockwood Free Church Policy statement on Equal Opportunities

This statement was agreed at the Church Meeting held on.....

As an organisation using the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosure service to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, this church undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly any subject of a Disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information received.

We welcome people to serve the church on the basis of the right mix of talent, skills, character, potential and call of God, including those with criminal records.

A Disclosure is requested only after a through risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned.

A criminal record will not necessarily be a bar to a person serving with children and young people. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offences.

In order to protect the confidentiality of those with criminal records we will access Disclosures through the Churches' Agency for Safeguarding. We invite the Baptist Union's Child Protection Advisory Panel to advise us in the appointment process when necessary, and we agree to act on their advice for the protection of children and young people