

Policy updated: May 2020

**SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT:
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, VULNERABLE ADULTS AND THE CHURCH**

We recognise that our work with children, young people and vulnerable adults is the responsibility of the whole church.

NLCL is committed to:

- The nurturing, protection and safekeeping of everyone, especially children, young people and vulnerable adults.

For the purposes of this statement, a vulnerable adult is taken to be one **“Who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of disability, age or illness; and is or may be unable to take care of unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation”**. This definition of an Adult covers all people over 18 years of age.

- Listening to, relating effectively to and valuing children, young people and vulnerable adults whilst ensuring their protection within church activities.
- Preventing the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It is also our responsibility to report any abuse discovered or suspected, following the agreed procedure of the church, and respond to allegations of abuse, including those made against leaders or other members of the church.
- Helping victims of abuse with appropriate pastoral care.
- Communicating with the statutory authorities where necessary.
- Encouraging and supporting parents and carers.
- Appointing children’s/youth workers in accordance with our outlined procedures
- Training and resourcing those who work with children and young people.
- Supervision of activities and practice issues.

If you have any concerns for a child or in relation to any child protection matter then speak to one of the following, who are the Safeguarding co-ordinators for this church. The Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) and the Deputy DSP are appointed by the Senior Pastor.

DSP: Sarah Carlson 07960 631686

Deputy DSP: Beth Tarbuton 07815 785 032

Senior Pastor: Joel Tarbuton 07792 210272

This document is based on a Model Child Protection Policy supplied by thirtyone:eight (formerly CCPAS) – a project of PCCA Child Care. A copy of this policy and all amendments will be filed with thirtyone:eight. This policy must not be copied by other Churches/ organisations without the written permission of thirtyone:eight.

CONTENTS:

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR THE PREVENTION OF ABUSE pages 3-7

- Good Practice with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults **page 3**
 - The church should ensure that...
 - The children's/youth worker should...
 - The children's/youth worker should NOT engage in...
- Good Practice with Colleagues **page 4**
- Good Practice with Supervision **page 4**
- Practical Guidelines for Safety and Protection **pages 4-5**
 - Child supervision ratio
 - Toilet trips
 - Workers' conduct
- General Guidelines for Workers **page 6**
- Responsibilities for Workers **page 7**
- Touching **page 7**

RECRUITMENT page 8

GUIDELINES REGARDING ABUSE pages 9-10

- Recognition of abuse
- Physical signs of abuse
- Signs of neglect
- Emotional signs of abuse
- Signs of possible sexual abuse
- Who abuses children?
- What to do if abuse is suspected or disclosed **pages 10-11**
 - Abuse of trust
 - If abuse by a member of the church is suspected
 - Practical procedures
- How to respond to a child wanting to talk about abuse **page 12-13**
- Allegations **page 14**
 - Allegations of physical injury or neglect
 - Allegations of sexual abuse

- Offenders in the church **page 14**

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR THE PREVENTION OF ABUSE:

GOOD PRACTICE WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

The church should ensure that:

- Wherever possible, a worker is not left alone with a child or young person (YP) or vulnerable adult (VA) where their activity cannot be seen.

The children's / vulnerable adults' worker should:

- Treat all children and YP and VA with respect and dignity befitting their age.
- Watch his/her language, tone of voice and body language in all situations where children or YP or VA are concerned.
- Avoid paying too much attention to any one child, young person, vulnerable adult or group to the exclusion of others.
- Not invite a child/YP/VA to his/her home alone. Always ensure a group is invited, or that there is another responsible adult in the house. Also make sure that the parents/carer knows where the child/YP/VA is.

The children's / vulnerable adults' worker should NOT engage in any of the following:

- Invading the privacy of children/YP/VA when they are in the toilet
- Physically rough or sexually provocative games/activities
- Making sexually suggestive comments about or to a child, YP or VA, even in fun
- Any behaviour including touching which could be misunderstood, either by the child/YP/VA or another present. Likewise, the children's/ youth / VA worker should not tolerate such behaviour from a child or YP or VA
- Scapegoating, ridiculing, rejecting a child, YP or VA for any reason

GOOD PRACTICE WITH COLLEAGUES

- If you see another worker acting in ways which might be misconstrued or compromise the work with the children, YP or VA, be prepared to speak to them yourself and/or talk to whoever is in charge of the children's work, or someone on the Oversight Team.
- All leaders should make an effort to encourage and support each other, and foster an atmosphere which allows all workers to be comfortable enough to discuss any inappropriate attitudes, speech or behaviour.
- Always remember that as workers with children and young people we are in a position of influence, authority and responsibility and we should act accordingly.
- Remember that we are leaders, then friends. We should neither do nor say anything that will undermine our ability to function as leaders. We must model consistency to the children in conduct, speech, attitude and discipline. If we do this, our friendship will impact their lives to a far deeper level.

GOOD PRACTICE WITH SUPERVISION

- Meet together on a regular basis to review, plan and delegate the work.
- Discuss working and personal relationships with the children/YP/VA.
- Ideally keep a written note of each meeting, including anything of note that was observed, by any worker.
- Pray together regularly for the work, the children/YP/VA and for each other.

The Children's Work Leaders and Oversight Team should act appropriately and sensitively if there are doubts about a worker's practice. They should keep an eye out for any child/YP/VA receiving any exceptional treatment, being highly favoured or treated unduly harshly.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR SAFETY AND PROTECTION

- The environment should be comfortable and safe for the age range of the children (Risk assessment to be done every week)
- Ideally, have experienced first-aiders on call on a rota basis
- Have access to a telephone for emergencies
- Keep a fully-equipped first-aid box with an accident record book

- Keep an attendance register in a secure place - at each session record:
 - date and time of session
 - names of children and adults and helpers responsible for them
 - dates of birth, addresses and contact phone numbers
 - Note anything significant, e.g. accident, upset.

Child Supervision Ratios

Adults (over 16) : Children

BrightStars (18 months – 4 yrs) 1:5

ShootingStars (5 – 10 yrs) 1:8

RockStars (11 yrs +) 1: 10

- If taking children outside, ensure that they are well supervised and cannot wander off. Check the area for safety beforehand.
- If a child's behaviour causes concern or he/she is distressed call for his/her parent/ carer.
- BrightStars and ShootingStars meeting in Howard Hall must be brought to the sessions and signed in by parents/carers, and collected and signed out at the end of each session by parents/carers. RockStars will be taken from and brought back to the Free Church Hall by a leader at the start and end of each session.

Toilet trips

Parents are encouraged to take their child to the toilet prior to the start of the children's work. There will be a point in the session where children are taken to the toilet – all will be encouraged to go at this point. Children of 5+ years should be able to take themselves to the toilet. It may be necessary to escort them to the door and make sure they come straight back again. Children under the age of 5yrs must NOT be allowed to go to the toilet unsupervised.

Workers' conduct

Those working closely with children/YP/VA need to be sensitive to their needs. Care must be taken so that anything we do does not make a child feel uncomfortable or cause them to misinterpret our actions.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR WORKERS

- Pray for wisdom, discernment and understanding in all our dealings with the children
- Encourage each child's strengths; do not compare them with each other publicly
- Build healthy relationships with children and be a good role model, setting a good example. You can't expect children to observe ground rules if you break them yourself.
- Take care to give quieter and well-behaved children attention and don't allow some children to take up all your time and energy.
- Be consistent in what you say and ensure that other team members know what you have said – this avoids manipulation.
- Look honestly at your programme – if children are bored, they misbehave. Is the programme at fault?
- NEVER smack or hit a child and don't shout – change voice tone if necessary.
- Discipline out of love, NEVER anger. (Call on support from other leaders if you feel you may deal with a situation unwisely in your anger.)
- Do not tolerate swearing, racism, calling each other names, etc.
- Each child is unique, special and individual, and each child needs a different method of being dealt with. We need to ask why the child is behaving that way.
- Separate children who have a tendency to be disruptive when together. Give them a chance, warn them and only separate as a last resort.

Do not place your hands on a child to move them, or to stop them doing something, unless this is necessary to prevent harm to them or to another individual. If the child persists in being disruptive, notify their parent to remove them from the session.

- Have the child sit right in front of you or get a helper to sit next to the child.
- Be actively aware, anticipate situations and encourage other helpers to do the same.
- Warn a child that you will speak to their parents and do so if necessary. It may be necessary to send them back into the service.
- If a child's behaviour is consistently disruptive, seek advice and guidance from an overseer (such as the group co-ordinator).

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR WORKERS

(Prior to session)

1. Prepare all materials
2. Carry out risk assessment
3. Check toilet and public access areas
4. Set up room and activity
5. Be aware of individual needs of regular children

(At start of session)

1. Talk to parents of any new children to gain an understanding of the child's needs
2. Take attendance register

(If necessary)

1. If an accident should occur, fill out accident form

TOUCHING

- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be related to the child's needs, not the worker's.
- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the worker.
- Avoid any physical activity that is, or may be thought to be, sexually stimulating to the adult or child.
- Children have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in exceptional circumstances when they need medical attention.
- Team members should monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They should be free to help each other by pointing out anything that could be misconstrued.

- Concerns about abuse should always be reported, following the church policy.

RECRUITMENT

1. The DSP is responsible for recruitment of church members to serve us in our children's work.
2. Anyone who responds positively to the invitation (applicants) is invited to complete an application form providing details of referees.
3. Suitable applicants are invited to complete a voluntary disclosure form and a "reference for suitability" form.
4. Applicants will then be invited to go through the process of completing a disclosure form with the DSP.
5. Completed application forms (together with references and disclosure) are held on file at the NLCL office.
6. Issues arising from blemished disclosures are referred to the NLCL Oversight Team who may take advice from thirtyone:eight regarding the way forward.

GUIDELINES REGARDING ABUSE

RECOGNITION OF ABUSE

Physical signs of abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them.
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- Injuries which have not received medical attention.
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in games or swimming.
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains.
- A bruise, burns, bites, fractures, etc. which do not have an accidental explanation.
- Cuts, scratches, substance abuse.

Signs of neglect

- Under nourishment
- Failure to grow
- Constant hunger, stealing or gorging food
- Untreated illness
- Inadequate care, e.g. frequently wearing dirty clothes, lack of washing and personal hygiene

Emotional signs of abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy. Also depression/aggression, extreme anxiety
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsession or phobias

- Sudden under-achievement , lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers or an adult
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away, stealing, lying,

Signs of possible sexual abuse

- Any allegation made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, regular engagement in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawings
- Sexual provocation or seduction towards adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbance with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders – anorexia, bulimia

Who abuses children?

- Rarely a stranger
- Usually someone who knows the child, e.g. parent, babysitter, sibling, relative, friend of the family
- Sometimes, someone in authority such as teacher, youth worker, children's worker or church worker/leader
- Sometimes, paedophiles and others who set out to join organisations (including churches) to obtain access to children

WHAT TO DO IF ABUSE IS SUSPECTED OR DISCLOSED

If any abuse is suspected, or if disclosures are made, do not jump to conclusions or start to investigate. You must report your concerns as soon as possible to the DSP. They will determine the appropriate course of action, in consultation with the Deputy and Senior Pastor, seeking advice from thirtyone:eight (see below) and referring allegations or suspicions of abuse to the statutory authorities where necessary, on behalf of the Senior Pastor and the Trustees.

In the absence of the DSP the matter should be brought to the deputy who will follow the same procedure.

If the suspicions in any way involve the DSP, the report should be made to the Deputy.

If the suspicions implicate the DSP and the Deputy then the report should be made in the first instance to:

Thirtyone:eight
PO Box 133
Swanley
Kent BR8 7UQ

Telephone 0303 003 1111
info@thirtyoneeight.org

Suspicions will not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. Our aim will be to work in an open way with the statutory authorities where necessary.

Abuse of trust

As a church, we undertake to follow the principles found within the 'Abuse of Trust' guidance issued by the Home Office. It will therefore be unacceptable for those people in a position of trust to engage in any behaviour which might allow a sexual relationship to develop while the relationship of trust continues.

If abuse by a member of the church is suspected

The DSP/Deputy will take appropriate action, in accordance with the procedures outlined above. He/she will arrange pastoral support from a church member for both parties and also for the person to whom the matter was reported. All information will be shared on a 'need to know' basis. Our desire is to protect all parties from any injustice.

Practical procedures

- Contact the church child protection DSP/Deputy as soon as possible.
- Write down what was said immediately. It is important not to change words – you will be asked for this report at some point.
- Do not try to investigate the matter yourself or talk to the parent, guardian or alleged perpetrator of abuse. This could seriously hamper any future investigation.
- On very rare occasions there may be a need to contact Social Services directly; if it is not safe for the child to return home and you cannot get in touch with the DSP or Deputy, for example.
- Consider your own feelings and seek pastoral support from the Oversight Team if needed.

HOW TO RESPOND TO A CHILD WANTING TO TALK ABOUT ABUSE

General points:

- Above everything else listen, listen, listen
- Show acceptance of what the child says (however unlikely the story may sound)
- Keep calm
- Look at the child directly
- Be honest
- Tell the child you will need to let someone know – don't promise confidentiality
- Even when a child has broken a rule, they are not to blame for the abuse
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened or bribed not to tell
- Never push for information. If the child decides not to tell you after all, then accept that and let them know that you are always ready to listen
- As soon as possible, write down what has been shared

Helpful responses:

- You have done the right thing in telling
- That must have been really hard

- I am glad you have told me
- It's not your fault
- I will help you

Unhelpful responses:

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it!
- Are you sure this is true?
- Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- Never make false promises
- Never make statements such as 'I am shocked, don't tell anyone else'

Concluding:

- Again reassure the child that they were right to tell you and show acceptance
- Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens (you might have to consider referring to Social Services or the Police to prevent a child or young person returning home if you consider them to be seriously at risk of further abuse)

ALLEGATIONS

Allegations of physical injury or neglect

The DSP/Deputy and/or Oversight Team of the church will contact thirtyone:eight for advice in cases of deliberate injury or where concerned about the child's safety; the church in these circumstances should not inform the parents. Where emergency medical attention is necessary it will be sought immediately. In other circumstances s/he will speak with the parent/carer and suggest that medical attention be sought for the child; the doctor (or health visitor) will then initiate further action if necessary. If appropriate the parent/carer will be encouraged to seek help from the Social Services Department. Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, if appropriate the DSP will offer to go with them; if they still fail to act the DSP should, in cases of real concern, contact Social Services for advice. The Insurance Company may also need to be informed.

Allegations of sexual abuse

The DSP and/or Oversight Team of the church will usually contact thirtyone:eight for advice. Thirtyone:eight will confirm its advice in writing in case this is needed for reference purposes in the future. In a serious situation Social Services may need to be contacted immediately (if the child is at risk if they go home, for example). The DSP will not speak to the parent (or anyone else) about the matter and will not attempt to carry out any investigation into the allegations or suspicions of abuse; the role of the DSP is to collect and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and to provide this information to the Social Services Department, if necessary. The DSP may also need to contact the Insurance Company.

Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the DSP/Deputy, the absence of the DSP or Deputy should not delay reference to the Social Services Department in the case of an immediate, serious situation. Exceptionally, should there be any disagreement between the person in receipt of the allegation or suspicion and the DSP/ Deputy as to the appropriateness of a referral to Social Services, that person retains a responsibility as a member of the public to report serious matters to the Social Services Department and should do so without hesitation.

The Oversight Team will support the DSP/Deputy in their role, and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.

OFFENDERS IN THE CHURCH

If someone known to have been an abuser becomes involved with the church, we would aim to show them love and pastoral care but also to set appropriate boundaries for them so that others are not placed at risk.