



# A Safe Place

## SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

### POLICY AND PROCEDURES

## **Policy Statement on Children, Young People and the Church**

Church Details: Hope Church in association with Catalyst Network

- As leaders of this church, we commit ourselves to the valuing, nurturing, protecting and safe keeping of all, especially children and young people and will ensure that the church is kept aware of this policy.
- It is the responsibility of each member of the church to prevent the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children and young people, and to report any abuse discovered or suspected.
- We recognize our work with children and young people is the responsibility of the whole church.
- The leadership is committed to supporting, resourcing, and training those who work with children and young people, and to providing supervision.
- Each worker with children and young people must undergo the selection process and know the recommendations and undertake to observe them. They will be checked to an 'Enhanced' level with the Disclosure and Barring Service. Each shall be given a copy of this agreed procedures and Good Practice guidelines.
- As part of our commitment to children and young people, the leaders have appointed a children's advocate. The major duties of the advocate are to input on policy matters, check that records are correctly kept and respond to requests from children/youth leaders for help on particular issues. This role will be explained, as appropriate, to children's and youth workers and the advocate's name, and telephone number publicised. The children's advocate will meet the leader responsible for child protection yearly to review policy and records.
- The leadership will ensure that clear boundaries are set for any church attendees who are known to be a risk to children and young people.
- A child/young person is defined as one who is aged up to and including 17 years.

If anyone has concerns about the actions of a church leader or elder, they should speak to the Children's advocate, who will seek advice from external bodies, which may include Social Services or leadership in the Catalyst network. If anyone has concerns about the Children's Advocate, that person should speak to the Church Elder and Children's Social Services (see details at the end of this policy).

## **Arrangements for Supervision of Children's and Young People's Activities**

### **Ratio of Adults to Children**

#### **For routine activities – e.g. Sunday Mornings**

0 – 1 years old	ratio 1:3
2 - 3 years old	ratio 1:4
4 – 7 years old	ratio 1:8
7 + years old	ratio 1:13

### **Special Needs**

For children with 'significant' special needs usually ratio 1 helper per 2 children.

A register will be kept for meetings, recording:

- Workers present
- Children present
- Concerns or significant events (such as a person being asked to leave and the circumstances)
- Aggressive behaviour or bad language towards a worker or peer
- Physical injury

The worker should bring concerns to the attention of the 'Youth/Children's Leader' at their discretion, unless it is deemed to be a safeguarding issue, then they should speak to the Children's Advocate. If in doubt, the worker should speak to the Children's Advocate.

### **Other Activities**

Youth/ Children activities - outings/weekends (Teaching, Games and Camping) - 1:10, minimum of 2 adults, one of each sex if mixed group.

Sleeping accommodation should be single sex rooms/tents, and all arrangements should be checked with the Children's Advocate or an Elder beforehand.

Medical forms should be used on all trips.

### **Safety**

1. An experienced First Aider and First Aid box will be present on Sunday Mornings.
2. Parents/guardians of children under 7 years of age will be given a card with their child's name on it when the children attend their group. This card must be handed over in exchange

for the child at the end of children's work to ensure children are handed back to the care of their parent/guardian or a person nominated by their parent/guardian.

3. In the event of the fire alarm sounding, each group worker should immediately escort all the children in their group out of the building. Workers should be sure to bring the register and confirm all children are present. Once confirmed all children are present from each group, the group leader will inform the meeting's 'Anchor'.

### **Guidelines for Discipline in Children's Activities**

- 1 Be consistent and persistent.
- 2 Never use physical punishment or humiliation.
- 3 Discipline out of love, never anger (Call on support from other workers if you feel you may deal with the situation unwisely in your anger).
- 4 Do not shout in anger or 'put down' a child.
- 5 Establish ground rules regarding swearing, racism, name calling, respect for property etc.
- 6 Keep the ground rules simple and clear, and make sure the children know what action will be taken if they do keep the rules.
- 7 Where correction is necessary, talk to the child away from the group, not publicly. (Explain what they have done wrong, encourage remorse, and end on a positive note).
- 8 Never reject a child, just the behaviour. (Encourage the child that you want them, but you are not willing to accept the behaviour).
- 9 Each child is unique, special and individual, and each child needs a different method of being dealt with. Ask yourself why the child could be behaving in that way.

### **Guidelines for Supporting Good Discipline**

- a Reward good behaviour – tell parents of excellence – praise good listening, working and answers.
- b Change voice tone, but try not to shout
- c Separate children who have a tendency to be disruptive when together. (These children are often friends, give them a chance to behave well, and warn them first)
- d Have the disruptive child sitting next to you.
- e Get a helper to sit with the disruptive child
- f Take the initiative; encourage helpers not to wait until asked to deal with a situation.
- g Take a child aside and talk to them, challenging them to change, whilst encouraging them on their strengths.
- h Warn a child that you will speak to their parent/guardian if behaviour doesn't change and do so if necessary.
- i Do not hesitate in sending for a parent/guardian during a meeting if you need to. Discipline is then their responsibility.
- j Speak to parents after the meeting if there has been a problem or refer to your age group leader/'Children's Advocate' for further action.

## **Behaviour Journey**

- 1 – Speak to the child briefly (You may need to repeat this action depending on type of behaviour.)
- 2 – Remove the child from the main room and speak to them more seriously and individually. (Do not do this publicly)
- 3 – Remove the child for a set time (2 mins-ish depending on age) – then discuss again expecting an apology and let parent know at end.
- 4 – Ask their parent to come out of service and support their behaviour if the child is clearly not responding. Apology must be the conclusion from the child. Action to be taken agreed with the parents; this should be individual to the child and what is effective and appropriate for situation.

## **Good Practice Guidelines for the Prevention of Abuse**

These guidelines are for the protection of the children and young people in the church. The measures given below will help also protect team members from false accusation. Unfortunately, touch can sometimes be misunderstood; words or actions can occasionally be taken out of context. It is, therefore, important to be aware of how misunderstandings can occur and that all people follow this guidance.

### **1 The leadership should ensure that:**

- Regular workers have undergone the selection process, received guidance in respect of these procedures and completed a child safeguarding training course.
- Anyone 18 years old or over without a clean Hope Church Luton DBS under 3 years old:
  1. is not left unsupervised with children, youth or vulnerable adults.
  2. Must then have a clean Hope Church DBS within 3 months of first serving with children, youth or vulnerable adults, or stop serving with them.
- A worker should not be alone with a child where their activity cannot be seen. On church premises, this may mean leaving doors open, or two groups working in the same room.
- In a counseling situation with a young person, where privacy and confidentiality are important, the worker has obtained permission from the young person's parents if this is appropriate. An Elder, Youth and Children's Overseer or the Children's Advocate should know the interview is taking place and with whom. If possible, another adult should be in the building and the young person should know they are there. It is advisable to have the majority of meetings in a public place i.e. McDonalds. Supportive conversations and godly wisdom can be given rather than delving into circumstances that might open issues that should be dealt with by a qualified counselor.
- Access to the church building is safe and well lit.

## **2 You, the worker, should:**

- Maintain a weekly register
- Ensure that children are always supervised and their whereabouts known
- Escort all children not collected by their parent/guardian to their parent/guardian in the main meeting room
- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity (watch language, tone of voice and where you put your body).
- Not engage in any of the following;
  - Inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form.
  - Rough and tumble games or activities which produce excessive physical contact (both age and sex of the participants need to be taken into account)
  - Any scapegoating, ridiculing or rejecting a child or young person.
  - Invading the privacy of children when they are showering or toileting accepting that some children have special needs.
  - Making sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person, even in "fun".
- Manage behavior and discipline children without using physical punishment.
- If a young child has soiled their underclothes and needs to be thoroughly washed, get their parent to attend to them, if this is not possible, make sure another adult is present if you have to deal with them.
- Do not let youngsters involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly sexual or physical in nature.
- If you invite a child or young person to your home, ensure this is with the knowledge of the children's leader/youth leader and that a parent is aware.
- Ensure that arrangements for transporting children are with the knowledge of the children's leader/youth leader and have parental approval. In some circumstances it may be unwise to carry a particular child/young person on their own. Avoid lengthy chats at the end of a car journey. Make sure the person sits in the back of the car.
- Do not share sleeping accommodation with children or young people if you take a group away. Make sure that proper supervision is provided.
- Obtain written permission for any overnight stay away from home, including a contact and telephone number in the event of an emergency.
- When travelling by mini-bus there must be at least one worker in addition to the driver.
- When travelling all children and young people must wear a seat-belt.

## **All members of the church**

If you see a church member or a fellow member of the team acting in ways which might be a cause for concern, be prepared to speak to them or the Children's Advocate about your concern. Leaders should encourage an atmosphere of mutual support and care which allows all workers to be comfortable enough to discuss inappropriate or harmful attitudes and behaviour. Members of the church should feel able to encourage good attitudes and draw to leaders' attention any

areas of concern.

### **Children with special needs**

Churches and children's organisations need to be aware that children and young people who have a disability or special need can be subjected to abuse. Indeed studies have shown that such children are at greatest risk of sexual abuse. There is therefore a need to be extra vigilant in order to protect these children, but there are difficulties:

- It can be hard to know if a child with a disability has been abused because of communication problems
- Children may have difficulty in understanding what is said to them, or in expressing themselves in ways that others understand
- The person communicating with a child may not possess the appropriate personal communication skills themselves (e.g. using appropriate spoken and non-verbal communication or using particular forms of communication such as Makaton signs and symbols, British Sign Language etc.)

There are a number of reasons why a child with a disability suffers abuse:

- Children with disabilities or special needs tend to have more physical contact than those without disabilities or special needs (i.e. therapists, care workers) and may require higher levels of personal care.
- The definition of what constitutes abuse is wider for children with disabilities and special needs (this can include force-feeding, financial abuse, over medication and segregation).
- Attitudes can play a part – the belief of someone that a child or young person with a disability or special need cannot be sexually abused because they are seen as asexual.

The church and children's organisations have a pivotal role in enabling those with disabilities or special needs.

- As with all children the church can assist in teaching personal safety skills to those with disabilities or special needs. The church can encourage a child to take some control of his/her body (i.e. about feelings, that some parts of the body are private and to differentiate between good and bad touches). This is essential to counter the points above.
- In the language used and actions taken the church can encourage those with disabilities or special needs and help them increase in confidence and build self-esteem.
- In doing this, that they may be better equipped to deter those who may wish to abuse them.

### **People who may pose a risk to children of abuse**

If someone attending Hope Church is known to have abused children or if there are well-supported concerns that a person may present a risk to children of abuse, then, whilst extending friendship

to the individual, the 'Children's Advocate', on behalf of the Leadership Team in its commitment to the protection of all children, will meet with the individual and discuss boundaries that the person will be expected to keep in order to safeguard children from the risk of any abuse in the future. A written agreement will be entered into by the individual with the "Children's Advocate" and an Elder, outlining relevant boundaries. This agreement will be communicated to people in the Church as necessary to ensure that children are safeguarded within reasonable bounds of confidentiality. If the person refuses to enter into an agreement or breaks any of the stipulations in the agreement, this should be reported to the Children's advocate and/or a Church Elder and subsequent action(s) agreed in order to ensure that children are safeguarded. This may include exclusion from activities or venues, and it may require a report to relevant authorities.

### **Helping children protect themselves**

- 1 Encourage youngsters to talk about suspicions or situations where they feel uncomfortable or anxious
- 2 Consider how you present Christian truths such as obedience to a parent or adult. Make it clear that if a child is asked to do something that they feel is wrong that they can check it out with another adult.

### **Procedure if abuse is suspected, disclosed or discovered**

The leadership and all the appointed children's and youth workers are committed to the protection of children from neglect, physical, sexual or emotional abuse. If you have a concern pass it on to your 'Children's Advocate.'

There are four types of child abuse. They are defined in the UK Government guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010* (1.33 – 1.36) as follows:

#### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child, known as FII (fabricated or induced illness/ Munchausen syndrome by proxy).

#### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations



being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

### **Additional identified areas:**

#### **Spiritual Abuse**

Linked with emotional abuse, spiritual abuse could be defined as an abuse of power, often done in the name of God or religion, which involves manipulating or coercing someone into thinking, saying or doing things without respecting an individual's right to choose for themselves. Some indicators of spiritual abuse might be a leader who is intimidating and imposes his/her will on other people, perhaps threatening dire consequences or the wrath of God if disobeyed. He or she may say that God has revealed certain things to them and so they know what is right. Those under their leadership are fearful to challenge or disagree, believing they will lose the leader's (or more seriously God's) acceptance and approval.

## **Domestic Abuse**

The Home Office definition of domestic violence is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

## **Child Exploitation**

Hope Church recognises that children and young people are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation, in which, others may coerce or persuade a child to get involved in illegal sexual contact or criminal activity. Hope Church will support any young person who discloses this type of abuse and will report any suspected cases to the Police.

## **Female Genital Mutilation**

Hope Church also recognises that female genital mutilation (FGM) is illegal, will support any person who discloses that they are a victim and will report any suspected cases to the Police.

## **How to react**

If a child or young person starts to talk about something which suggests that abuse has occurred you should remember the following:

- Listen and don't appear to be shocked. (It is not for you to judge whether what is said is right or wrong)
- Accept what the child says (however unlikely it may sound). Record in their own words.
- Don't ask "leading" questions.
- Don't promise confidentiality.

If in doubt of what to do next speak to the Children's Advocate, and tell the child you will be doing this; don't make promises you can't keep.

## **If abuse is suspected, disclosed or discovered**

1. Do not start to investigate, but make a note of anything you are told, what the child said or did, what you said, what the circumstances were with date and times.
2. Do not contact family members, close friends or discuss with others except the Children's Advocate or the Youth or Children's Overseer or an Elder.
3. Do not delay or act alone. If you have doubts it is better to share these rather than risk something being missed.
4. Inform the Children's advocate, Youth or Children's Overseer or an Elder. (Unless this

- creates unnecessary delay or these people are in some way involved)
5. The Children's Advocate may feel it appropriate to discuss the situation with Social Services in an advisory manner.
  6. The person who you inform will make a decision as to whether it is appropriate to contact the Social Services or the Police. The response will be very dependent on the particular circumstances.

### **Social Services Involvement**

If social services or the police are contacted, they will instigate an investigation. It is very important you do not discuss the incident/disclosure with anyone; neither should you ask the child any questions. If you require prayer with regard to being involved with the disclosure, do not discuss the disclosure in your request for prayer.

### **Photography and Media**

The GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) requires that parents or guardians must give permission for organisations to offer an online service in order to hold or process the personal data of those under the age of 16. An online service can be anything from a search engine to bespoke software. However, there is a provision within the GDPR for member states like the UK to lower this age if they see fit. In the UK, the 'age of consent' for allowing the storage of their own data is 13. When the child reaches 13 they themselves need to give their own permission, as well as allowing you to keep holding the older data.

For this reason Hope Church leaders ask for written permission from parents and guardians to take photos or video and publish or upload them of their children. Hope Church leaders ask the permission of children over the age of 13 to do the same. Only authorised people are permitted to take photographs during youth or children's activities and youth or children's events. Anyone is allowed to take photos during Sunday main meetings since these are public events, but it is advised to ask permission from a Church elder or leader before photographing or videoing children.

You can find out more information about the GDPR at [www.gdprforhchurches.org.uk](http://www.gdprforhchurches.org.uk) or [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) (search GDPR).

### **Contacts:**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Telephone Number</b>
Church Leader/Elder	Tony Thompson	01582 968821
Youth and Children Overseer	Linda Geevanathan	01582 968821

Children's Advocate	Ruth Simons	01582 968821 07748187269
Luton Social Services	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub	01582 547653 Out of hours: 0300 300 8123
Thirtyone:eight	Safe-guarding helpline	0303 003 1111

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