

# Protecting Children and Young People.

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## A General Policy Statement

*The Village MCC* has a moral as well as a legal duty to ensure that it functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Throughout these policies and procedures reference is made to “children and young people”. This term is used to mean “those under the age of 18”. The board of trustees recognises that some adults are also vulnerable to abuse, for further information regarding this please refer to the separate policy titled “Safeguarding”.

The board of trustees are committed to ensuring that The Village MCC and umbrella organisations

- Provides a safe environment for children and young people
- Identifies children and young people who are suffering
- Takes appropriate action to see that such children and young people are kept safe from harm

In pursuit of these aims, the board of trustees will approve and annually review policies and procedures with the aim of:

- Raising awareness of issues relating to the welfare of children and young people and the promotion of a safe environment for the children and young people.
- providing procedures for reporting concerns
- Establishing procedures for reporting and dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff
- The safe recruitment of staff

Amongst their other duties the Lay Delegate of the church has a special responsibility for child protection issues. This person will be given appropriate training and will also be called the Safeguarding Officer. Although it is desirable that the Lay Delegate and Safeguarding office be held in a single post the church may grow too large or situations grow too complex for this to be effective. If the duties of both Lay Delegate and Safeguarding officer are deemed by the board of trustees to be too weighty for one person to carry then a second person will be appointed to the role of safeguarding officer. Where there is more than one lay delegate then each person is equally responsible for safeguarding.

Pastors and volunteers working with children will continue to receive training adequate to familiarise them with child protection issues and responsibilities and the organisations procedures and policies, with refresher training at least every 3 years.

If appropriate the Board of trustees may delegate this responsibility to a member to the leadership team who may through their employment background have particular expertise in child protection issues. The Board of trustees will receive from the Lay Delegate an annual report which reviews how the duties

have been discharged. The Board of trustees recognises the following as definitions of abuse:

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse causes harm to a **child's** person. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning or suffocating. It may be done deliberately or recklessly, or be the result of a deliberate failure to prevent injury occurring.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent or severe failure to meet a child or young **person's** basic physical and/or psychological needs. It will result in serious impairment of the **child's** health or development.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves a child or young person being forced or coerced into participating in or watching sexual activity. It is not necessary for the child to be aware that the activity is sexual and the apparent consent of the child is irrelevant.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse occurs where there is persistent emotional ill treatment or rejection. It causes severe and adverse effects on the **child's** or young **person's** behaviour and emotional development, resulting in low self worth. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all forms of abuse.

### **Domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse is controlling and often violent behaviour, involving physical, sexual, emotional, economic and psychological abuse of adults within all kinds of current and former intimate and family relationships. Domestic abuse **affects** children as it can cause emotional, psychological, and/or physical harm. It has the potential to affect the daily lives of children through fear, insecurity, and lack of confidence. Children worry about their parents more than may be recognised, particularly if they fear for their parents' safety.

### **Spiritual abuse**

In the context of the church community there is a further form of abuse that can have devastating effects on the spiritual development of the child. When trusted members of the Church community abuse children in their care this also constitutes spiritual abuse. Whatever the nature of the abuse the **child's** trust is betrayed and the **child's** belief in natural and divine justice is damaged. One effect may be that the child turns away from the Church and from God.

### **Organized abuse**

Organized or multiple abuses can involve one or more abusers and a number of related or non-related children or young people. The abusers may be acting as part of a network or in isolation and may use an institutional framework or a position of authority or trust to recruit children for abuse. They may use children themselves to recruit other children.

***No form of abuse can ever be justified and the child is never to blame.***

## **B Designated Staff with Responsibility for Child Protection**

### **Senior Staff Member with Lead Responsibility**

The Safeguarding Officer has a key duty to take lead responsibility for raising awareness within the organisation of issues relating to the welfare of children and young people, and the promotion of a safe environment for the children and young people.

The Safeguarding Officer is responsible for ensuring that exempted questions are asked on relevant volunteer and employment application forms. The question will be worded as follows—

*This post meets the requirements in respect of exempted questions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, any applicants for this post who are offered employment or who become volunteers for this organisation will be subject to a criminal record check from the Criminal Records Bureau before the appointment is confirmed. This will include details of cautions, reprimands or final warnings as well as convictions. A criminal record will not automatically bar a person from successfully taking up this post.*

All members of the leadership team and any volunteers working with children and young people will be subject to all legal checks as determined by law.

The Safeguarding Officer will have received appropriate training and should keep up to date with developments in child protection issues. They will also have responsibility for making new staff and volunteers aware of the existing child protection policy.

The Safeguarding Officer will be the main contact point for Child Protection issues and will have contact details for relevant organisations available for employees and volunteers. This list will usually include contact details of relevant individuals and provisions such as the NSPCC Helpline 0800 800 5000 and the local police child protection unit.

### **C Dealing with Disclosure of Abuse and Procedure for Reporting Concerns**

*If a child or young person tells a member of staff about possible abuse:*

*Listen carefully and stay calm.*

*Do not interview the child, but question normally and without pressure, in order to be sure that you understand what the child is telling you.*

*Do not put words into the child's mouth.*

*Reassure the child that by telling you, they have done the right thing.*

*Inform the child that you must pass the information on, but that only those that need to know about it will be told. Inform them of to whom you will report the matter.*

*Note the main points carefully.*

*Make a detailed note of the date, time, place, what the child said, did and your questions etc.*

*Staff should not investigate concerns or allegations themselves, but should report them immediately to the Safeguarding Officer or in their absence any other member of the clergy, Board member or CP Team.*

### **D Reporting and Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against Members of Staff.**

*The procedures apply to all staff, whether trustees, administrative, management or support, as well as to volunteers. The word "staff" is used for ease of description.*

1.1 In rare instances, staff of Christian organisations have been found responsible for child abuse. Because of their frequent contact with children and young people, staff may have allegations of child abuse made against them. *The Village MCC* recognises that an allegation of child abuse made against a member of staff may be made for a variety of reasons and that the facts of the allegation may or may not be true. It is imperative that those dealing with an allegation maintain an open mind and that investigations are thorough and not subject to delay.

1.2 *The Village MCC* recognises that the Children Act 1989 states that the welfare of the child is the paramount concern. It is also recognised that hasty or ill-informed decisions in connection with a member of staff can irreparably damage an individual's reputation, confidence and career. Therefore, those dealing with such allegations within the organisation will do so with sensitivity and will act in a careful, measured way.

1.3 All allegations (even apparently less serious allegations) are to be followed up and referred to statutory services and/or the Child Protection Adviser

The person involved should be suspended from any duties that involve working with children and young people pending investigation.

Suspension is to be seen as a neutral act

Pastoral support should be offered to all parties, including the person who has been accused

All involved should be kept informed of the progress of the investigation

The fact that a person tenders his or her resignation, or ceases to provide services, must not prevent an allegation being followed up

Employers need to keep a full record of the situation

If an allegation does not lead to a conviction but concern remains a risk assessment will take place by the Child Protection Adviser (see 1.5)

If someone tells you that they are involved in committing abuse then

follow the procedures for disclosure by a child

Throughout any investigation any person involved with The Village MCC whether as clergy or lay volunteers will work openly and co-operatively with statutory child protection agencies.

1.4 If there is a conviction then procedures for managing the risk of harm will be followed (see 1.5)

1.5 If there is someone attending the church who may pose a risk of harm to children, or who has disclosed previous convictions for offences against children then a confidential formal risk assessment will take place involving the appointed child protection officer, the Senior Pastor and relevant others. It is important that the person presenting the concerns is aware of and wherever possible consulted and involved in this process. Details of this assessment will be written up along with an agreed contract of behaviour which will be signed by all parties, and the contract of behaviour will be submitted to the Board of trustees. This document will be monitored and reviewed in a time scale agreed at the risk assessment meeting.

## **E Recruitment and Selection Procedures**

The Village MCC's recruitment and selection procedures will take account of the following:

They will apply to all people who may work with children and young people.

The post or role should be clearly defined.

The key selection criteria for the post or role should be identified.

Obtain professional and character references.

Criminal Records Bureau disclosure/List 99 checks (maintain sensitive and confidential use of the applicant's disclosure).

## **Appendix 1**

### **Reporting Concerns**

**The following details must be reported if there is any concern regarding a child or young person/vulnerable adult**

Name/s of child/children :

Age/s: D.O.B.

Address:

Name/s of parents/carers:

Date/time/location:

Record **exactly** what happened/was heard/observed/what was said:

People contacted/action taken:

Signature of author:

Print Name:

Date: Time:

Signature of Safeguarding Officer:

Print Name:

Date: Time: Safeguarding Officer:

Give details of action taken:

Signature:

Print Name:

Date: Time:

## **Appendix 2**

### **Guidelines on Working Individually with Children and Young People**

An adult will not remain alone with one child, young person or vulnerable adult. If necessary groups will meet together to ensure that at least two adults are present.

When an activity is being organised, be it on church premises or in our homes or in the community, we will ensure that at least two adults are present.

If you ever find yourself in the situation of working one-to-one with a child, young person or vulnerable adult, perhaps because they want to share with you something private and personal, the level of risk increases significantly. It is your duty to do what you can to reduce this risk by following these guidelines.

- Public or private? First, ask yourself if you really need to go somewhere private. You can often have a fairly private chat by withdrawing to the corner of a busy hall, or just stepping outside the door. If you are

able to go somewhere where you can be seen but the conversation cannot be heard, this is the ideal.

- Location. The above will not always suffice. If you need to go to a private room, select your location carefully. Do not choose a room that is at the other end of the building from everyone else, even if it is the most private. Stay as close to other people as possible.
- Transparency. Leave doors ajar and curtains open so that others can see in and you have not shut yourself off to the world.
- Physical distance. Be aware that it may be appropriate to think carefully about the physical distance between you and the child/young person/vulnerable adult.
- Comforting. Often in a one-to-one situation, the person you are dealing with will be upset or emotional. It is ill advised to physically comfort them (e.g. hugging, holding hand) unless they initiate it.
- Work as a team. Always tell another worker who you are working one-to-one with and where. Never just disappear. This is applicable to those times when you need to take an infant to the toilet. Other members of your team should help by periodically walking by, popping his/her head around the door just to check things are OK.
- Comfort zone. Do not do anything you are uncomfortable with. You are not obliged to put yourself in a one-to-one situation and can choose to end the discussion at any point.
- Know your limits. Sometimes problems and issues will be discussed with you that you do not have the competence to deal with. Do not be afraid to refer on to a specialist agency or to find out more information about the subject before you meet again.

### **Guidelines on Touch**

Keep everything public.

Touch should be related to the need of the child, young person or vulnerable adult, not the worker.

Touch should be age appropriate - your approach to a five year old will be different to your approach to a fifteen year old

Touch should generally be initiated by the child.

Avoid physical activity that is, or thought to be, sexually stimulating.

Those in your care have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with you or others, except in exceptional circumstances when they need medical attention.

All workers are encouraged to point out to one another any concerns they have regarding a **worker's** physical contact with a young person.

### **Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young people off Church Premises**

These guidelines cover activities held at other venues, in church members homes and organised trips.

The person organising the activity should inform the Senior Pastor.

The organiser will be aware of the safeguarding policy and the guidelines relating to individual work and touch .

The organiser has responsibility for their own understanding of the safeguarding policy and guidelines and for ensuring that all those that help also understand and implement the guidelines.

If during the activity any form of abuse is suspected they should refer to the „Procedure on Disclosure or Suspicion of Abuse“.

If you are transporting a child, young person or vulnerable adult on your own be aware of the vulnerable position you may be in. Wherever possible, seek permission from the parent/guardian/carer. It is advisable to seat your passenger in the rear of the car. Never just disappear. Make another person aware that you are transporting a child, the destination and your expected time of return.

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