

What is the Minister's role?

If at all possible the minister should be independent of all these roles. If a difficult situation arises, the minister will be responsible for offering pastoral care to the people who are involved and to the church as a whole. It may be difficult for the minister to do this effectively if they are involved too closely in the structures.

Additional information

As a contact person both the Responsible person(s) and Independent Person(s) name and telephone number should be publicised, and children, young people, parents and carers invited to raise with them any concerns. These could range from general questions about the way the ministry is run, to complain about time keeping and cleanliness, to suspicions that a child is being treated unfairly or abused in some way.

Wokingham Baptist Church

Safe to Grow (Safeguarding) Policy

A set of agreed policies and procedures for ensuring a safe environment for children and young people within the care of our church in response to the Children's Act of 1989

Revised 20th October 2009

**This statement was agreed at the Church meeting held on the
21st May 2003.**

It will be read annually at the church meeting held in the month of May where progress in carrying it out will be monitored.

As members of the church, we commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all, especially children and young people.

It is the responsibility of each of us to prevent the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children and young people, and to report any abuse discovered or suspected, to the responsible persons or independent persons.

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 provide supervision.

The church is committed to following 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** (revised edition).

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 the children and young people, the church has appointed Jean Lee and David Vaughan to be Independent persons. Their role will be regularly explained to the children, and their names, addresses and phone numbers publicly displayed; and Clare Hooper and Catherine Jinkerson to be responsible persons.

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 the wishes and the feelings of the children and young people.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS AND ROLES

What is the role of the Responsible Persons?

The Responsible Person(s) are appointed by the church, they are the central point of contact for any child protection concerns raised within the church.

What is a Responsible Person's role?

1. This is the person that workers would turn to if they had any concerns about a child or young person in their care, or about the behaviour of one of their fellow workers.

Any referrals would normally be through this person.

2. They would ensure that all appointment procedures are carried out efficiently.
3. They would be responsible for monitoring compliance with the child protection policy.

What is an Independent Person?

The Independent Person(s) are the people who are appointed by the church to be an alternative point of contact available to children and young people should they wish to speak about concerns to a person who is independent of their group setting.

What is an Independent person's role?

1. They would act as an alternative contact person for children and their families for concerns, comments, suggestions and complaints regarding any aspect of the church's work with children and young people.
2. They would support and monitor the implementation and use of Safe to Grow in the church.

WORKING WITH OFFENDERS

Where someone attending church is known to have abused, or is alleged to have abused children or young people, then whilst extending friendship to the individual, the church in its' commitment to the protection of all children and young people will meet with the individual and discuss boundaries that the person will be expected to keep. It may be appropriate to draw up a formal contract between the church and the person who has abused or who is alleged to have abused. This might include designated areas of the church building where it is/is not appropriate for the abuser/alleged abuser to be at all or specific times. The contract might also state that the abuser or alleged abuser must decline offers of hospitality from church members or attendees where there are children or young people present in the home.

In order to safeguard the welfare of the children and young people in our charge, we need to consider the issues raised by each of the following statements and then consider taking action in the light of our circumstances and structures, and the nature of our activities.

1. Adopt a policy statement on safeguarding the welfare of children.
2. Plan the work of the organization so as to minimize situations where the abuse of children may occur.
3. Introduce a system whereby children may talk with an independent person.
4. Apply agreed procedures for protecting children to all paid staff and volunteers.
5. Give all paid staff and volunteers clear roles.
6. Use supervision as a means of protecting children.
7. Treat would-be paid staff and volunteers as job applicants for any position involving contact with children.
8. Gain at least one reference from a person who has experience of the applicant's paid work or volunteering work with children.
9. Explore all the applicant's experience of working or contact with children in an interview before appointment.
10. Find out whether an applicant has any conviction for criminal offences against children, or any cause for concern regarding their conduct with children.
11. Make paid and voluntary appointments conditional on the successful completion of a 6 months probationary period.
12. Issue guidelines on how to deal with the disclosure or discovery of abuse.
13. Train paid staff and volunteers, their line managers or supervisors, and policy makers in the prevention of child abuse.

Application procedure for new workers:

1. If someone is interested in working in one of the children's or youth groups they can attend **one** taster session where they will be supervised at all times. ID must be shown and a self declaration signed.
2. Informal interview where we will explore with applicant gifts and Christian experience; we will talk with them about any previous experience in caring for children and/or young people; and we will ask about why they want to take on the role at this time.
3. Applicant will receive a copy of the church's safe to grow policy, an application form and a job description. Policy to be read thoroughly and application form to be completed and returned to Rev. Clare Hooper or Mrs Jeanette Hornblow.
4. References will be taken up by Rev. Clare Hooper or Mrs Jeanette Hornblow and returned as confidential.
5. If it is decided to invite applicant to work with children/and or young people applicant will be asked to apply for either an enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Record Bureau.
6. If applicant is deemed suitable their job description will be finalised and the worker will be asked to sign a volunteer agreement.

What will happen next?

The process of professional involvement of physical and/or sexual abuse will usually follow this course:

1. A strategy discussion involving social services, police child protection team, other significant professionals and the person suspecting abuse or to whom the child has talked.
2. A decision will be taken as to whether an investigation is warranted; if so, it will be planned.
3. The investigation may include:
An informal talk with the child
A formal police video recorded interview following disclosure
Medical examination
Preliminary family assessment
4. If there is sufficient concern, a child protection conference will be held to decide the best course of action to protect the child and help the family.
5. There maybe criminal prosecution of the abuser.

What to do if abuse is suspected or disclosed

Do not delay
Do not act alone
Do not start to investigate

Concerns must be reported as soon as possible to the person(s) responsible for Safe to Grow: Clare Hooper (0118 9784793) or Catherine Jinkerson (0118 9328418).

If the concerns involves these people then the following independent person can be contacted: Jean Lee (0118 9774465) David Vaughan (0118 9781455).

The responsible persons and/or independent person are nominated by the church to act on their behalf in referring allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities.

The responsible/independent persons should always be ready to consult and seek advice from either the social services on 0118 9746105 or the Churches' child protection advisory service on 0845 120 45 50. Care needs to be taken that the responsible/independent person does not divulge the identities of the people involved.

If appropriate seek medical help. Should a child require immediate medical treatment this should be sought and all reasonable steps taken to contact the parent and inform them of the situation.

It is the responsible/independent person's duty to report allegations or suspicions of abuse to the social services (0118 9746105). If the parents/carers are not implicated in the abuse, they should be informed of the concerns and action(s) taken.

Following a referral to Social Services, a decision will be taken about the most appropriate way to respond to the concerns raised.

Exceptionally, if there is a disagreement between the person in receipt of information about suspected or actual abuse and the responsible/independent persons as to the appropriateness of a referral to social services. In this situation the person in receipt of the information has a responsibility to report their concerns to the Social Services.

Wokingham Baptist Church Policy Statement on Equal Opportunities

This statement was agreed at the Church Meeting held on 21st May 2003

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 applications for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a Disclosure on the basis of a 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 thorough 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.

BEST PRACTICE

With children and young people

1. The church should ensure that:

As far as possible a worker is not 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.

Ensure that access to the building is safe and well lit.

2. You, the worker, should:

- 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 invading a persons' personal space.
- 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 the body language to better understand what is being said.
- Do not engage in any of the following:
 - invading the privacy of children/young people when they are using the toilet or showering
 - rough, physical or sexually provocative games
 - making sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person, even in 'fun'
 - scapegoating, belittling, ridiculing, or rejecting a child/young person, even in 'fun'.
- Learn to control and discipline children/young people without physical punishment. (The exception to this is if a situation arises where a child/young person needs to be restrained in order to protect them or a third person).
- Make sure another adult is present if, for example, a young child has soiled their underclothes and needs to be thoroughly washed and their parent or carer is unavailable.

What to do if a child talks to you about an abusive relationship

All who work with children and young people should know how to respond if a child or young person talks to them about an abusive or harmful relationship. The following is a summary for reference only. It is no substitute for training.

- React calmly so as not to further distress the child or young person.
- Look at the child or young person directly.
- Listen carefully to what the child or young person has to say.
- Don't rush or interrupt them or ask more questions than you need to in order to establish whether there is cause for concern or to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said.
- Do not ask closed questions (ones which are answered by a singular 'yes' or 'no') or leading questions which suggest what may have happened and who was involved such as, *did he say/do something to you?*
Instead use open questions such as, *'Is there anything else you want to say?' 'Can you tell me more about that?'* all of which will help the child tell you in their own words what is troubling them.
- Accept what they say.
- Reassure the child or young person that they have done the right thing, that they are not to blame and they know how difficult it must have been to confide in you.
- Help the child or young person to understand what is going to happen next. They need to be aware that other people will need to be told. **Do not promise confidentiality with regards to a child protection that affects them or other children or young people.**
- As soon as possible afterwards make notes of exactly what the child or young person said and the date and time.

Sexual abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This includes non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Where adults fail to care for children and protect them from danger, seriously impairing health and development.

Signs of abuse

Unexplained or hidden injuries

Injuries that have not received appropriate medical attention

Unexplained changes in behaviour (withdrawn, outbursts of temper, sudden under-achievement)

Inappropriate sexual awareness (maybe evident in words, play, drawings)

Nervousness/watchfulness

Inappropriate relationships with other children and/or adults

Signs of neglect, such as under-nourishment, untreated illnesses, inadequate care

THIS LIST IS NOT EXHAUSTIVE AND THE PRESENCE OF ONE OR MORE INDICATORS IS NOT 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

- Not allow children/young people to involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly sexual or physical in nature.
- Not to invite a child/young person to your home alone, invite a group, or ensure that someone is in the house. Make sure that the parent knows where their child is.
- Do not give lifts to children or young people on their own and if it is necessary to do so then it needs to be with parent's permission.
- Ensure that if transporting children or young people that you have the correct insurance cover for passengers and have the correct child restraints for the height/age of the child.
- Not share sleeping accommodation with the children/young people if you take a group away.
- Keep a log book; at each meeting enter the names of both children and adults present and anything of note which you observed eg details of any fights broken up by the workers, allegations made by children/young people, incidences where a child/young person is asked to leave. All workers who witnessed, heard or responded in any way should record details, and sign and date the entry.

Using technology safely in our communication with children and young people.

It is not necessary for anyone working with those in year 6 or under to have a child's mobile phone number or email. If you are working with those in years 7-13 (or equivalent) you may only have a young person's mobile phone number or email address with the permission of the young person and their parent or guardian.

Our guidelines are:

- A copy, including the date of all texts and emails sent to and received by a young person must be kept as a record of that communication.
- No phone calls or texts to be made after 21:00 (ages 11-15) or 22:00 (ages 16-18).

- Make sure the language that you use when texting or emailing is appropriate and cannot be misinterpreted e.g. No kisses (x) at the end of a text or email.
- Do not hand out a young person's email or mobile number without their permission.
- Be aware of where your own mobile phone is at all times.
- Do not engage in an instant chat (eg MSN, Facebook) conversation with a young person.
- Be aware of age restrictions on a social networking site (as stated in the terms and conditions of the site) and ensure that a young person is eligible to be using the site should you choose to accept them as a 'friend'. Ensure that your language and photographs/images used on the site are appropriate and any messages; sent or received, involving a young person are kept.

Sexual relationships

A church worker (youth worker or any other person working for or on behalf of the church) is in a relationship of trust both with the young people/vulnerable adults that he or she is responsible for, and with the parents and guardians of these young people/vulnerable adults. No sexual activity is permissible between a church worker and any young person/vulnerable adult in their care. Any behaviour, which might allow a sexual relationship to develop between a church worker and a young person/ vulnerable adult, is unacceptable so long as the relationship of trust continues.

With colleagues

If you see another worker acting in ways which might be misconstrued, be prepared to speak to them or to your supervisor 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.

These measures will also protect workers from false accusations.

In supervision

Meet regularly to review and plan the work (*At least every four months*)

Ask about working and personal relationships with the children.

Take or create opportunities for observing the worker with the children.

If the supervisor has any doubts about the worker's relationship with a child/young person, they should explore further by talking with them, then confidentially with other workers, and with the child concerned. The issue should not be dropped until the leader is sure there is no possibility of abuse.

Watch for any child receiving exceptional treatment, being highly favoured or treated unduly harshly.

PROCEDURES IF ABUSE IS DISCLOSED OR DISCOVERED

The church and all its appointed children's and youth workers are committed to the protection of children from physical, emotional or sexual abuse and also neglect.

Definitions of abuse

Physical abuse

Actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury to a child.

Emotional abuse

The persistent emotional ill treatment of a child that affects the child's emotional and behavioural development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless and unloved, inadequate, or that they are given responsibilities beyond their years.

