



Child Protection Policy

Policy Statement and Procedures

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Christ Church Liverpool

Child Protection Policy Statement and Procedures

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Child Protection Policy Statement

Christ Church Liverpool (CCL) regards child protection and good working practice as of vital importance. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety and well being of children in the care of the church during church activities.

CCL is committed to ensuring that everyone working with children or young people:

- holds a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check less than three years old,
- is adequately trained and supervised,
- understands and follows our child protection procedures and systems.

This policy will be updated whenever our children's ministry changes or develops.

Our current children's work provision is Christ Church Crèche, Christ Church Tots, Christ Church mini-Kids and Christ Church Kids on a Sunday morning during the main Sunday meeting of the church. We also provide a crèche during the mid week ladies bible study. Outside of these groups children attending the meetings and functions of the church remain in the sole care of their parents or guardians, and CCL does not take responsibility of care for them. However under the terms of this policy the trustees and those working with children or young people undertake to be vigilant with regard to the behaviour of members of the congregation at all times and to take seriously and respond appropriately to any concerns raised (see guidance on procedures below).

Our responsibility

CCL is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people. We believe all children have the right to protection from abuse. We recognise our responsibility to take all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and to protect children from harm, abuse and exploitation.

We will:

- develop good practice in relation to the recruitment of all voluntary workers,
- ensure that all procedures relating to the conduct of voluntary workers are implemented consistently and equitably,
- ensure that the designated Child Protection person understands their responsibilities to refer any child protection concerns to the Police and/or Social Services,
- ensure that parents/carers are encouraged to be involved in our work and make all guidelines and procedures easily accessible on request,
- endeavour to keep up-to-date with national developments relating to the care and protection of children and young people.

Guidance on procedures and systems for those working with children or young people

Section 1: Introduction

The purpose of this section is to inform all those working with children or young people in the care of the church during the activities of the church about child abuse, and to advise them of the right procedures if abuse is disclosed to them, or suspected by them. This will assist us in providing a secure environment for children.

CCL are committed to children's right to be protected from harm, abuse and exploitation.

Dr Chris Gregory is responsible for developing and reviewing our Child Protection Policy Statement and Procedures and other care and protection policies and guidelines. Dr Joyce Carter is responsible for checking the current implementation of our policy ensuring compliance and reporting to the trustees.

Points to note

- Christ Church Liverpool will meet in Archbishop Blanch School, Mount Vernon Road, Liverpool, L7 3EA on Sundays.
- During the morning church meeting children will normally be invited to attend one of the following groups; Crèche (age 0-1), Tots (age 2-3), mini-Kids (age 4-6) and Kids (age 7- 14) (ages approximate).
- Children between 15 and 18 years will remain in the main meeting.
- Christ Church Crèche, Tots and mini-Kids meet in the staff room.
- Christ Church Kids meet in classroom A11.
- Christ Church Crèche and Tots (age 0-3) operate at a ratio of 3 children to 1 worker (not including parents)
- Christ Church min-Kids (age 4-6) operate at a ratio of 5 children to 1 worker
- Christ Church Kids (age 7-14) will operate at a ratio of 8 children to 1 worker

Section 2: The recruitment of voluntary workers to Christ Church Crèche, Tots, mini-Kids and kids groups

The church is committed to ensuring that everyone working with children or young people:

- holds a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check less than three years old,
- is adequately trained and supervised,
- understands and follows our child protection procedures and systems.

Anybody whose CRB form discloses cautions or convictions will be interviewed by the church's child protection officers who will make a recommendation to the trustees concerning their involvement in youth and children's work.

Section 3: Types of abuse and a summary of signs and indicators

What is a child?

Any person under the age of 18 years.

What is abuse?

- *Physical abuse* - includes hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning, biting, administering poisonous substances, suffocating/drowning, excessive force.
- *Neglect* - a failure to meet basic essential needs of a child, or if a child is left unsupervised at a young age.

- *Emotional abuse* - children harmed by constant lack of love and affection, or threats, verbal attacks, taunting or shouting.
- *Sexual abuse* - involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children or adolescents, in sexual activity that they do not fully comprehend, or to which they are unable to give informed consent, or which violate the social taboos of family roles.
- A child may suffer more than one category of abuse

Who abuses children?

- Very rarely a stranger.
- Often someone close to a child, e.g. parent, carer, babysitter, sibling, relative or friend of the family.
- Sometimes, paedophiles and others who set out to join organisations (including churches) to obtain access to children.

How might we recognise abuse?

Warning signs: They are *only a guide*, they are not necessarily proof of abuse, but may be an indication of:-

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy.
- Nervousness/watchfulness.
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration.
- Changed or inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults.
- Attention seeking behaviour.
- Persistent tiredness.
- Running away/stealing/lying.

Other areas where leaders should be vigilant are:-

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them, or where differing explanations have been received.
- Injuries, which occur to the body in places, which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- Injuries and illnesses, which have not received medical attention.
- Any signs of neglect, under nourishment or inadequate care.
- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse.
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters, and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age inappropriate sexual play.
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing.
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults.
- Inappropriate bed sharing arrangements at home.
- Severe sleep disturbance with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotation.

One or more warning signs may be evident.

Many symptoms of distress in a child can point to abuse, but there are other explanations too. This (together with conflicting medical opinion) has sometimes been the reason for falsely accusing parents of sexual abuse. It is important that the above signs are not taken as indicating that abuse has taken place, but that the possibility should be considered. They should make us stop and think - not jump to conclusions.

What to do if abuse is suspected

If a child has a physical injury or symptom of neglect:

- Contact Dr Joyce Carter or Dr Chris Gregory immediately.
- Speak with the parent and suggest medical help/attention is sought for the child. The doctor will then initiate further action, if necessary. Alternatively, encourage the parent to seek help from Social Services.
- If a parent is unwilling to seek help, then offer to go with them. If they still fail to act you may need to seek help yourself via Social Services.
- Where emergency medical attention is necessary then this should be sought immediately, informing the doctor of any suspicions you may have.

If there are allegations of sexual abuse:

- Contact Dr Joyce Carter or Dr Chris Gregory immediately or contact Social Services or the Police direct for advice. Do not speak to the parent (or anyone else) if there is a possibility that they could be involved. The fact that you may feel the child's story is unlikely must not prevent appropriate action being taken. For example, a child may say that they have been abused by an older young person. In reality, the perpetrator could be a parent or close relative, but naming another person may be the only way in which this child can seek help.
- It is the responsibility of the church worker to pass on the possibility of abuse to Social Services. The role of the church worker is to accurately pass on details of the allegation made to Social Services whose task it is to investigate.

Further guidance in responding to abuse:

Whilst the church worker will normally consult with a church leader before reporting incidents/suspicions of child abuse to Social Services, the absence of a leader should not delay referral. Exceptionally, should there be any disagreement between the worker and church leader as to the appropriateness of such a referral, the church worker nevertheless retains the right as a member of the public to report serious matters to Social Services.

All children's workers should be aware that any allegations or suspicions are covered by pastoral confidentiality, and that therefore church members have no rights to this information. The sharing of information is therefore limited to those who need to know. This will protect the interests of all concerned.

Third party /anonymous referrals / allegations:

Families not known to the church:

In cases where allegations are made by a third party, the role of the church worker is to elicit appropriate information from the referrer. Wherever possible this should include the referrer's details (name, address, telephone number) and as much factual detail as possible about the child and family concerned (names of family members, address, name /date of birth of subject child, ethnic origin, etc). Information as to the cause of concern/nature of injuries/observations should be included.

The church worker must inform the referrer that information relating to any child at risk, will be shared with their church leader and may result in referral to Social Services, and in this event Social Services may wish to interview the referrer as part of the child protection investigation.

The church worker will then report the information to the church leader, who will then seek the advice from the umbrella organisation (FIEC) and then, if there are sufficient concerns, make a referral to Social Services.

Families known to the church:

In cases where a church worker or leader suspects for any reason that a child has suffered sexual abuse, the matter must be reported immediately to a church leader with a view to referral to Social Services or, if church leaders are implicated, directly to the authorities.

Should a child allege sexual abuse by a parent, the parents should not under any circumstances be informed. Where a parent/carer alleges sexual abuse of their child by another person, they should be advised not to inform the alleged perpetrator. Should the church worker suspect sexual abuse through direct observation, they should discuss this immediately with the church leader, with a view to discussion with Social Services as to how the matter will be dealt with.

Where a church worker observes signs of physical or emotional abuse or neglect they should suggest seeking medical help to the parents. If a parent is reluctant, the worker could consider going with them or, if they fail to co-operate, the matter should be discussed with a church leader, who will refer to Social Services if appropriate. In cases of serious injury the church worker should summon medical help.

Section 4: Procedures for responding to concerns about abuse/neglect**How should we react if a child tells us they have been abused?**

Children's workers are in a unique position and your relationship with children cannot be underestimated. Your group may provide a safe haven, and perhaps be the only place where a child feels comfortable and able to talk to adults. It is therefore possible that a child may approach you to talk about abuse.

The following guidance may be of help:

- Accept what the child says.
- Keep calm, do not appear to be shocked.
- Look at the child directly.
- Be honest.
- Let them know that you will need to tell someone else - don't promise confidentiality.
- Even when a child has broken a rule they are not to blame for the abuse.
- Be aware the child may have been threatened.
- Make notes as soon as possible. Write down exactly what the child said, including the child's name, age, address, relevant family information, and details of the situation and the activity that preceded disclosure
- Never push for information or question the child.

Helpful things to say:-

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

Avoid saying:-

- 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'm shocked, don't tell anyone else"

Concluding:-

- Again reassure the child they were right to tell you and that you believe them.
- Let the child know what you are going to do next, and that you will let them know what happens.
- Immediately refer to Dr Joyce Carter or Dr Chris Gregory.

Even if abuse is no longer happening it is still important to report the matter, as the adult may be abusing other children. It may be that the child will need guidance and help in overcoming past abuse, or the police may wish to prosecute the abuser.

Practicalities and guidance for mutual protection of leaders and children involved in children's work

- Avoid being on your own with any child. This may mean groups working in one large room, or adjoining rooms.
- Never take a child home on your own – transportation is the parent or guardians responsibility. In emergency or unforeseen circumstances preferably have another helper with you, or else ensure that the last two children are dropped off together. (Remember an allegation could also be made against you!)
- Be wise in your physical contact with children.
- Be wise with your relationship with the children - do not have favourites or be over friendly with some at the expense of others.
- Male helpers need to be particularly careful in their speech and behaviour around young females. Female helpers similarly need to be careful with forward young male children.
- Never smack, hit or physically discipline a child except by "holding" which may be used if there is an immediate danger of personal injury to the child or another person.
- In order to help children, we need to develop healthy relationships by listening to them and respecting them.
- We must think of the safety of the children at all times, and in all circumstances.
- Whenever possible have two or more adults present with a group, particularly when it is the only activity taking place on the church premises. A parent may want to accompany their child, however, because of our policy they should either act as observers or only help their own child.
- Children should not be taken on trips or away from the premises without written permission from parents and church leaders.

Boundaries

- Toileting and personal care is the responsibility of the parent or guardian. If a child needs help or assistance the parent/guardian should be notified. Nappies will not be changed by volunteers. Parent/guardians can give written permission to leaders in the Tots/mini-Kids groups which allows them, only when necessary, to enter the toilet if the child requests help.
- Workers should treat all children/young people with dignity and respect in attitude, language used and actions.
- Respect the privacy of children, avoid questionable activity (eg rough/sexually provocative games or comments).

Feedback

It should be accepted that anyone seeing another worker acting in a way which could be misinterpreted should be able to speak to the individual or a church leader about the concern.

- Encourage reporting back to a meeting of children's workers when departure from guidelines becomes necessary - this provides protection to the individual and draws the leadership's attention to shortcomings and problem areas.
- Keep brief records of issues/decisions discussed at workers' meetings.
- Helping children to protect themselves by:
 - teaching safety generally,

- help children develop common sense rules,
- talk about situations where they feel uncomfortable,
- examine the way in which we present Christian truths, eg children obeying parents. This can be a real problem for a child who is being abused - are we telling the child to accept the abuse? Tell children that if they feel uncomfortable or that something may be wrong, they can always check things out with another adult.

Confidentiality

No children's worker is permitted to divulge any information concerning a child, or their family or anything a child may tell them to anyone other than the designated people previously mentioned. This is in order to protect the interests of the child. This confidentiality is a continuing requirement at all times and is required when workers are "off duty" or no longer involved in the work.

Contact Names

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Person responsible for overseeing the development and review of our organisation's Child Protection Policy Statement and Procedures

FIEC (Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches)

Telephone 01858 434540

Web <http://www.fiec.org.uk/>

Umbrella organisation

Liverpool City Council Social services

Careline Children's service

0151 233 3700