

Child Protection Policy - Belvidere Road Church.

General Principles.

1. We, as Belvidere Road Church, commit ourselves, God helping us, to instruct the young in the Christian faith ([Deuteronomy 6:4-7](#)).
2. As befits any work undertaken by Christians, the Bible is to be our rule for both the content of our teaching and for the manner in which it will be conducted.
3. We, as a church, regardless of whether we are directly involved in young people's work or not, strive to set a model of godliness, holiness and love to the rising generation.
4. We undertake to provide a loving and disciplined context in which to teach the young. As part of this commitment, a code of conduct will be used to establish ground rules of permissible and impermissible behaviour (See appendix).
5. Parents entrusting their children to the oversight of the church have a right to expect their children will be safe, will be treated with dignity and respect, and will be taught the basics of the Christian faith including principles of Christian behaviour and conduct.
6. We will make all efforts to ensure the building and premises are safe and suitable.
7. We undertake to regularly pray for the children and their parents, as we do not believe our efforts will avail anything unless the Lord makes our work effective and blesses His word to the rising generation.
8. The term children applies to those under 18 and vulnerable adult is a person who is or may be, for any reason, unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation

Specific Principles Regarding Child Protection

1. We take it upon ourselves to be acquainted with the symptoms of physical, emotional and sexual abuse and to implement guidelines to govern our conduct, should allegations or reasonable suspicions of abuse arise
2. As part of our duty of care for the young, we will observe the statutory requirement to report cases of suspected or alleged sexual abuse and to take any appropriate actions where physical or emotional abuse is suspected or alleged. Any such actions will be undertaken with discretion, urgency, objectivity and compassion, subject to our own fallible condition. This includes the treatment of allegations made against church workers.
3. The church will appoint a Co-ordinator and Deputy Co-ordinator to deal with any allegations or suspicions of abuse. These appointees will act in accordance with agreed guidelines.

Safeguarding Coordinator - Steve Draper.

4. As part of our aim to act responsibly in appointing people to work with children and young people, prospective workers will be required to be subject to DBS checks and fill in the necessary application form. We are aware that we are fallible and that no system we can devise will be perfect.
5. We will ensure that workers with children and vulnerable adults are given appropriate support and training.

6. We will aim to work in cooperation with the relevant statutory authorities and seek to implement 'best practice'.
7. As far as we are able, we will attempt to help families involved in allegations of abuse.
8. We undertake to help those who are sexual offenders and to offer encouragement and counsel while recognising that safeguards need to be in place to avoid future re-offending.
9. We undertake to keep our work and procedures under constant review and will seek all valid and biblical means to increase our competence.
10. If you have any queries relating to the Policy and its application, do not hesitate to contact Steve Draper.

Detailed Provisions

Appointing Workers With Children and Young People

1. Church members or friends of the church wishing to be involved in children and young people's work will be required to be subject to a DBS check. This applies to those teaching in Sunday School, Young People's Meetings, etc.
2. Where child safeguarding issues are raised in the process of application, these will be discussed privately with the Church Elders.
3. Where a person has been guilty of an offence against children, he or she will not be permitted to work with children and young people, irrespective of proven Christian character and testimony.
5. The children and young people's work, including the appointment of workers, will be subject to review, and encouragement will be given to attend any relevant and appropriate training.

Appointment of Co-ordinator And Deputy Co-ordinators.

1. In the event of an allegation or suspicion of abuse this will be brought to the attention of the Coordinator or the Church Trustee / Elder, unless one of them is involved in the complaint.
2. The main contact with the statutory agencies for advice or a referral are as follows:-

Liverpool Careline on 0151 459 2606 (Where you will be asked to complete an on-line referral form) or Merseyside Police on 0151 709 6010 or 999 in an emergency.

**Thirtyone:eight (formerly CCPAS)
PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ.**

Tel : 0303 003 1111.

Allegations of Sexual Abuse

1. If allegations of sexual abuse are made by a child, or a vulnerable adult, irrespective of who the alleged perpetrator is, a procedure is to be followed to record what the child has reported.
2. Handwritten notes should be made, ideally within an hour of speaking with the child, detailing;
 - the time and place of the disclosure;
 - how the disclosure came to be made, including what activities preceded it; and
 - the questions posed by the church worker during the 'interview' and the answers given.

3. Notes that are taken should be kept in a secure place and the originals should not be destroyed even if they have subsequently been typed out.
4. The Co-ordinator should be informed immediately subject to the provisos under ‘Appointment of Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator’ above.
5. The allegation will not be discussed with anyone else.
6. If the allegation is of such pressing urgency that to send the child home would be to court unacceptable risk, the relevant statutory agencies should be informed immediately.

Suspicion of Physical Injury or Neglect

1. It will be the main responsibility of the Co-ordinator or the Deputy to take adequate steps if there is a credible suspicion that a child or vulnerable adult is suffering from neglect or is the subject of physical abuse.
2. The Co-ordinator or his Deputies will be responsible for carrying out the relevant steps including liaising with parents, doctors and statutory authorities.
3. In the absence of the Co-ordinator or Deputy Co-ordinator, the worker discovering evidence of neglect or physical abuse will speak to the Leader of the work or Church Trustee / Elder who will, if considered necessary, contact Social Services and, if urgent attention is needed, call the doctor or paramedics.

Guidelines For Workers

1. Workers with children and vulnerable adults will be issued with this Child Safeguarding Policy and will be expected to follow it.
3. This Policy will be subject to review and may be altered to accommodate ‘best practice’ or changes in legislation.

Pastoral Matters

1. In the event of someone attending the church who has a conviction for offences against children or young people (Schedule One), there is not to be automatic disclosure of this to every church member. Each Office Bearer will be informed, and others on a ‘need to know’ basis.
2. Anyone with a conviction for a sex offence with children is debarred from working with or having unsupervised contact with children.
3. A conviction for such an offence is not an automatic reason to debar from church membership where there is credible evidence of conversion.
4. The Elders will undertake to pray for, encourage and offer pastoral support to any Christians who have been convicted of these offences.

Pastoral support will be offered, as far as is practicable, to families involved in allegations of this nature, or where there is neglect or physical injury caused to children. This will include those who are the victims of a baseless suspicion.

Definitions of Abuse

The definitions of child abuse recommended as criteria for registration by the Department of Health, “Working Together under the Children Act 1989” (2015) are as follows. The descriptors for the types of abuse are taken from the NSPCC definitions (accessed from their website in September

2021). Also the policy has been updated in line with “Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026. In respect of adult abuse the definitions are taken from “Safeguarding Adults; Types and indicators of abuse”, SCIE 2020.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is when someone hurts or harms a child or young person on purpose. It includes slapping or punching, kicking, hitting with hands or objects, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning and scalding, biting and scratching, breaking bones and drowning. It also includes making up the symptoms of an illness or causing a child to become unwell.

Sexual Abuse

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is when a child is forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This may involve physical contact or non-contact activities and can happen online and offline. Children and young people may not always understand that they are being sexually abused.

Sexual abuse in vulnerable adults is the involvement of the vulnerable adult in sexual activities which they do not fully comprehend, to which they are unable to give consent, to which they object or which may cause them harm.

Neglect

Broadly speaking there are 4 types of neglect (although it can be lots of different things which make it harder to spot):

Physical neglect - a child or vulnerable adult's basic needs, such as food, clothing or shelter aren't met or they are not properly supervised or kept safe.

Educational neglect - a parent doesn't ensure that their child is given an education.

Emotional neglect - a child or vulnerable adult doesn't get the nurture and stimulation they need. This could be through ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them.

Medical neglect - a child or vulnerable adult isn't given proper health care. This includes dental care and refusing or ignoring medical recommendations.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is any kind of abuse that involves the continual emotional mistreatment of a child or vulnerable adult. It is sometimes called psychological abuse. Emotional abuse can involve directly trying to scare, humiliate, isolate or ignore a child or vulnerable adult.

Organised Abuse

This is defined as sexual abuse where there is more than a single abuser and the adults concerned appear to act in concert to abuse children and/or where an adult uses an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for sexual abuse.

Financial Abuse

Including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Modern Slavery

This encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Trafficking and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is when a woman or girl's genitals are deliberately cut, injured or changed for no medical reason. It is also known as female circumcision or cutting. It is usually carried out on young girls between infancy and 15 years old, most commonly before puberty starts. It can also be carried out during adolescence or before a young woman gets married. It can also happen to adult women. FGM is a crime and must be reported to the police, including when there is a reasonable suspicion that a girl is going to be taken out of the country to have FGM performed.

How To Respond To A Child Or Vulnerable Adult Wanting To Talk About Abuse

It is not easy to give precise guidance but the following may help:

General Points

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

Helpful Things You May Say Or Show

- I believe you (or showing acceptance of what the child or vulnerable adult says)
- Thank you for telling me
- It's not your fault
- I will help you

Don't Say

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it!
- Are you sure this is true?

- Why? When? Where? How? Who?
- Never make false promises
- Never make such statements as “I am shocked, don’t tell anyone else.”

Concluding

- Again, reassure the child or vulnerable adult that they were right to tell you and show acceptance.
- Let the child or vulnerable adult 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 vulnerable adult returning home if you consider them to be seriously at risk of further abuse)
- Contact the person in the church responsible for co-ordinating church protection concerns. If they are not available and the matter is considered please contact a Church Elder / Trustee who may decide if necessary to contact the relevant agency, Liverpool Care Line.
- Consider your own feelings and seek pastoral support

Make notes as soon as possible (preferably within one hour of the child talking to you), writing down exactly what the child or vulnerable adult said, what you said in reply, and what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. a description of the activity). Record dates and times of these events and when you made the record. Keep all hand written notes, even if subsequently typed. Such records should be kept safely for an indefinite period.

Recognising And Responding To Abuse

The following signs may or may not be indications that abuse has taken place, but the possibility should be considered.

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
- Neglect - under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses and inadequate care
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains.
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc. which do not have an appropriate accidental explanation
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse

Indicators of Possible Sexual Abuse

- 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 connotations
- Eating disorders - anorexia and bulimia.

Emotional Signs of Abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging. Also depression/aggression and extreme anxiety.
- Nervousness and frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

What To Do If You Suspect Abuse Has Occurred

1. In the first instance report your concerns to Steve Draper, Child Safeguarding Coordinator, who is acting as the liaison with the relevant statutory authorities.
2. In the event that the suspicion or allegation relates to the above-mentioned people, then the concerns should be relayed to Pastor Ian Higham, who also has authority to liaise with the relevant statutory authorities. In event of Pastor`s absence then to one of the Elders / Trustees.
3. In the event that the suspicion or allegation relates to all the above-mentioned Church Members, then the concerns should be passed on to Thirtyone: eight (formerly CCPAS), PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ (Tel: 0303 003 1111).
4. Suspicions or allegations regarding abuse should not be discussed with anyone other than those who are named above. This is the ideal procedure to be observed although it is of course within the right of any individual with concerns to approach the relevant child protection agencies or Thirtyone: eight.

Code of Conduct

We expect the children or vulnerable adult we are teaching and caring for to:

- Be polite and considerate to everyone at all times.
- Treat the church premises with respect.
- Not to vandalise any property.
- Respect the safety of others and to act calmly and peacefully toward others.
- Not behave roughly and at any times nor swear or speak violently to anyone.
- Respect the belongings of others.
- Respect the feelings of other people.
- Be obedient at all times and not to answer back.

While being aware that accidents do happen and that children coming from non-Christian homes are not so likely to demonstrate the required standard of conduct, persistent failure to observe the guidelines laid down here will lead, after verbal warning, to the child being 'grounded' for a week.

Rules of Conduct for Workers with Children and vulnerable adult.

It is important that you DO:

- Treat everyone with respect, and respect a child or vulnerable adult`s right to privacy and do not have "favourites".
- Plan activities so that you are not alone with a child or vulnerable adult, or are at least in sight or hearing of others.
- Remember that your actions could be misinterpreted, however well-intentioned. Be aware that people may have different safe boundaries e.g. regarding hugging, touching etc.
- Encourage children and vulnerable adult to feel OK to point out attitudes or behaviour they are not comfortable with.
- Be alert to any possibility of bullying, scapegoating, marginalisation etc within the group and strive to make sure each member is valued and respected.

And DO NOT:

- Make suggestive remarks or gestures, or play excessively rough physical contact
- Must not inflict any kind of psychological abuse or engage behaviour which is intended to demean or degrade children or vulnerable adult such as insulting, shouting, humiliating, teasing, ridiculing in front of others, threatening or any other type of situation or action which may cause moral damage.
- Do things of a personal nature for children and vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves.
- Spend time alone with children or vulnerable adults away from the view of others.

Use of electronic communication and social media

1. Any information being processed or stored electronically must comply with the church's General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Policy.

2. Members of the church are reminded that biblical standards for conduct and speech also apply to any form of electronic communication including comments made on social media pages. Members should always seek to avoid any language which might be unnecessarily provocative or argumentative or not be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

always with grace, seasoned with salt...

speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you...

speak the words of truth and reason... we speak in the sight of God in Christ...

let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour, for we are members of one another...

to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.

3. Furthermore, with regard to communication between adults and children (under the age of 18) the following guidelines must be observed:

- i. No adult member of the church shall use **any** form of electronic/digital media (including telephone calls) to communicate privately, one-to-one, with a child or group of children.
- ii. If any member wishes to establish any form of group communication involving children the prior approval of the church's Safeguarding Team (In addition to the consent of the children's parents) must be sought and any conditions of use must be adhered to.
- iii. If children wish to communicate between themselves it is the duty and responsibility of parents/guardians, not the church, to monitor and supervise such activity.
- iv. No adult members should friend or follow children or young people on social media sites.
- v. No photographs or videos of children or young people will be shared on social media without written consent from the child's parent(s).
- vi. Adult church members will not take photographs or videos of children or young people on their personal phones or devices without written consent from the child's parent(s) during any church activity (i.e. BBB, IMPACT, Sunday school etc).
- vii. If any church member has concerns or suspicions about any breach of these guidelines they must be reported to the church's Safeguarding Team immediately.

4. Permitted exceptions:

- i. If the adult and child are immediately related to each other (eg. parent/child, siblings, cousins) this will be regarded as a family relationship and not a church issue and it is the duty and responsibility of the adults in that family to monitor and supervise such communication.

- ii. If a parent/guardian wishes their child to be able to communicate with an adult in the church, they must give their written approval to the Safeguarding Team who must be satisfied that the parent/guardian will adequately monitor and supervise such communication. In such circumstances, the parent/guardian assumes full responsibility for all future communication. The Safeguarding Team reserve the right to decline such requests.

2nd July 2026.