



Wear Valley Christian Centre
Phoenix Christian Centre

Serving the community of

Bishop Auckland, Willington and Hunwick

Title	Child Protection Policy	
Document status	Approved	
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Reviewed by	Andrea Houlahan / Robert Woods	22 nd October 2014
Approved by	Leadership Group	12 th January 2015
Next review date		1 st October 2016

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Church Details

Name of the charity

Wear Valley Christian Centre (hereafter, “ The Church”) operating from -

Wear Valley Christian Centre (WVCC), South Church Road, Bishop Auckland

Phoenix Christian Centre (PCC), Watling Terrace, Wellington

1.2 Church Statement

The church has a growing children’s and young people’s ministry. The church council of the Church (hereafter, “the CC”) takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people entrusted to the church’s care.

There is a value base within the CC and the wider church that ensuring adequate arrangements are in place to safeguard the children with whom the church comes into contact with are a vital part of demonstrating the love of God. The two main approaches adopted in pursuing these protective aims are a) ensuring safe care arrangements are in place when children are being supervised and cared for and b) by compliant reporting procedures along with the principles of Working together and local interagency protocols. These two elements are key elements within this process.

1.3 Church Mission

As part of the mission, the CC is committed to:

- Listening to, relating effectively with and valuing children and young people whilst ensuring their safety and protection within church activities.
- Encouraging and supporting parents/carers
- Ensuring that children’s/youth workers are given support and necessary training
- Having a system for dealing with concerns about possible abuse
- Maintaining good links with the statutory child care authorities
- Having safe care policies and procedures in place for prevention purposes along with key areas of risk assessment
- Ensuring a vetting process is in place concerning personnel involved in the work of children in the church

2.0 Areas of Policy

The CC recognises that many children and young people today are the victims of neglect, and physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Accordingly, the CC has adopted the policy contained in this document, (hereafter “the policy”). The policy sets out agreed guidelines relating to the following areas:

- Responding to allegations of abuse, including those made against leaders or members of the church
- Appointing children's/youth workers
- Supervision of activities and practice issues

The church recognises that children connected may be knowingly or unknowingly potential victims of abuse. The church cannot offer any services of a specialist nature to children undergoing these difficulties in their lives though will demonstrate sensitivity in such situations arising and will aim to encourage the access of appropriate services wherever possible.

The church will be non discriminatory in its approach and welcoming towards all children, regardless of issues of identity or circumstance. The church recognises, however, that there may be issues or circumstances which arise whereby the effects of looking after some children may pose some degree of risk to others. As such in such instances there may need to be further considerations/safeguards or other measure/resultant action, dependent upon each individual situation.

The church does not undertake any specific work relating to offenders. The church is mindful of offences whereby children would be subject to high levels of risk and will ensure that children are not exposed to situations whereby unacceptable levels of risk will apply. This will be consistent with regulation and national guidance.

The CC recognises the need to build constructive links with the child care agencies. Accordingly, these guidelines will be shared with Durham County Council Safeguarding Services. This guidance is in accordance with the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service, (CCPAS).

The local Social Services office (First Contact) telephone number between 9.00am and 5.00pm is 03000 267 979, email address is scd@durham.gov.uk and fax number is 0191 3835752. The Out of Hours Service number (also known as the Emergency Duty Team) is 03000 267 979 email address is scd@durham.gov.uk and fax number is 0191 3835752.

The content of the policy will form the basis of a seminar for all children's/youth workers in the church which will receive updates whenever necessary but at a minimum of once per year. It will be necessary that all workers involved in the care of children within the church attend Child Protection Training.

3.0 Definitions of Abuse (England & Wales)

The definitions of child abuse recommended as criteria throughout England and Wales by the Department of Health, Department for Education and Employment and the Home Office in their joint document, are defined in the UK Government guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 as follows:

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

3.1 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 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.

3.4 Neglect

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.

3.5 Organised Abuse

Organised or multiple abuse may be defined as abuse involving one or more abuser and a number of related or non-related abused children and young people. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation, or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for abuse. Organised or multiple abuse may be defined as abuse involving one or more abuser and a number of related or non-related abused children and young people. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation, or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for abuse.

Organised and multiple abuse occur both as part of a network of abuse across a family or community, and within institutions such as residential homes or schools.

(A child may suffer more than one category of abuse).

4.0 Recognising and Responding to Abuse

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

4.1 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, inadequate care, etc
- 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 accidental explanation
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse

4.2 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 disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders – anorexia, bulimia

4.3 Emotional signs of abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging. Also depression/aggression, extreme anxiety.
- Nervousness, 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

4.4 What to Do If You Suspect That Abuse May Have Occurred

- 1 You must report concerns as soon as possible to Andrea Houlahan (hereafter the “Co-ordinator”) (01388458630) who is nominated by the CC to act on their behalf in referring allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities. She may also be required by conditions of the Church Insurance Policy to immediately inform the Insurance Company. In the absence of the Co-ordinator the matter should be brought to the attention of the Deputy Co-ordinator.
- 2 If the suspicions in any way involve the Co-ordinator then the report should be made to Reverend David Parry (hereafter the “Deputy Co-ordinator”) (01388 607104). If the suspicions in any way implicate both the Co-ordinator and the Deputy Co-ordinator, then the report should be made in the first instance to the Social Services on 0845 8505010 (Initial Response Team). The **Churches’ Child Protection Advisory Service** (hereafter “CCPAS”), PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ. Telephone 0845 120 4551 or 0845 120 4550 should also be informed
- 3 Suspicions will not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above.
- 4 It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make direct referrals to the child protection agencies or seek advice from CCPAS, although we hope that members of the church will use this procedure. If, however, you feel that the Co-ordinator or Deputy has not responded appropriately to your concerns, then it is open to you to contact the relevant organisation direct. We hope by making this statement that we demonstrate the commitment of the church to effective child protection.

4.5 Allegations of Physical Injury or Neglect

If a child has a physical injury or symptom of neglect, the Co-ordinators will:

- 1 Contact Social Services (or CCPAS) for advice in cases of deliberate injury, neglect or where concerned about the child’s safety. The parents should not be informed by the church/organisation in these circumstances.
- 2 Where emergency medical attention is necessary it will be sought immediately. The Co-ordinators will inform the doctor of any suspicions of abuse.

- 3 In other circumstances speak with the parent/carer and suggest that medical help/attention is sought for the child. The doctor, (or health visitor) will then initiate further action, if necessary
- 4 If appropriate the parent/carer will be encouraged to seek help from the Social Services Department.
- 5 Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, if appropriate, the church Co-ordinators will offer to go with them. If they still fail to act, the Co-ordinators should, in cases of real concern, contact Social Services for advice.
- 6 Where the Co-ordinators are unsure whether or not to refer a case to the Social Services, then advice from CCPAS will be sought and followed. CCPAS will confirm its advice in writing in case this is needed for reference purposes in the future.

4.6 Allegations of Sexual Abuse

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Co-ordinators will:

- 1 Contact the Social Services duty social worker for children and families or Police Child Protection Team directly. The Co-ordinator will **NOT** speak to the parent (or anyone else).
- 2 If, for any reason, the Co-ordinators are unsure whether or not to follow the above, then advice from CCPAS will be sought and followed. CCPAS will confirm its advice in writing in case this is needed for reference purposes in the future.
- 3 Under no circumstances will the Co-ordinators attempt to carry out any investigation into the allegation or suspicions of sexual abuse. The role of the Co-ordinators is to collect and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and to provide this information to the Social Services Department, whose task it is to investigate the matter under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.
- 4 Whilst allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse will normally be reported to the Co-ordinators, the absence of the Co-ordinators or Deputy should not delay referral to the Social Services Department.
- 5 Exceptionally, should there be any disagreement between the person in receipt of the allegation or suspicion and the Co-ordinators or Deputy as to the appropriateness of a referral to the Social Services Department, that person retains a responsibility as a member of the public to report serious matters to the Social Services Department, and should do so without hesitation.
- 6 The CC will support the Co-ordinators or Deputy in their role, and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.

5.0 How to Respond To A Child Wanting To Talk About Abuse

5.1 What To Do Once A Child Has Talked To You About Abuse:

The Procedure

- 1 Make notes as soon as possible (preferably within an hour of being told), writing down exactly what the child said, write what you said in reply to the child, when he/she said it and what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. description of activity, who was present etc). Record dates and times of these events and when you made the record. Keep all hand written notes securely, even if these have been typed subsequently.
- 2 Report your discussion as soon as possible to the Co-ordinator. If it involves them report to the Deputy Co-ordinator. If all are implicated, report to CCPAS or to Social Services if preferred.
- 3 You should not discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone other than those nominated in the above point.
- 4 Once a child has talked about abuse the worker/coordinator should consider whether or not it is safe for a child to return home to a potentially abusive situation. On rare occasions it might be necessary to take immediate action to contact Social Services and/or police to discuss putting into effect safety measures for the child so that they do not return home.

6.0 Working with Offenders

Where someone attending the church is known to have abused children, then whilst extending friendship to the individual, the CC 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. This will aim at ensuring maximum protection and that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks.

7.0 Helping victims of Abuse

As a church we are committed to supporting victims of abuse, and encouraging them in their faith. However, there is no specific church counselling service available to assist children, this being recognised as a very specialised area where a great deal of skill is necessary. However, children's workers within the church will be encouraged to demonstrate the love of God in their contact with children, and workers will be equipped by basic awareness of presenting behaviours and advice upon how to respond.

8.0 Appointment of Workers (voluntary/paid)

This procedure operates in line with advice taken from national guidelines issued Sept 2012

Requirements for a DBS application (Disclosure & Barring System) are: -

General interpretation which is not an exhaustive list:

Child minders, unsupervised volunteers, anyone working in a school, nursery, children's home, childcare premises, anyone providing healthcare, personal care, or who assists with the managing of someone's affairs or finances.

WVCC/PCC relevant:

1. DBS renewals at 3 years
2. Yvonne Etherington will be administrator
3. DBS required for:
 - Leader of each of the Parent & Toddler Groups
 - All schools workers
 - Regular official workers for Youth, Kids Alive, Create, Kids Church.

For these

1. Under the direction of the Church Council relevant DBS submissions will be made.
2. References will be taken up for paid workers
3. Individuals will not carry out duties until satisfactory documents have been received.
4. In the event that the worker is deemed suitable, they will be notified by the appropriate leader. They will be asked to read and formally agree to the terms of this child protection policy and to comply with it.

9.0 Support for children's/youth workers

1. Children's workers or youth workers will be given opportunities to meet together with a leader to discuss their work with children and areas of concern. This will include any issues relating to discipline.
2. Workers will only be left to work on their own when the leader considers they could manage by themselves, and this would be in full discussion with the worker after a period of induction/shadowing
3. The re-appointment of workers will be reviewed at periodic intervals

N.B. The criteria for NOT appointing children's workers are;

- **Any offences against children or any offences of a violent nature.**
- **Any circumstances whereby the DCCR regulations may apply**
- **The church may also as part of this process take into account the reasons why any former period of employment which has involved work with children has come to an end.**
- **Issues which may affect safety and wellbeing such as unreliability, temperament, etc**

10.0 Arrangements For Supervision Of Group/Children's Activities

The activities which currently require supervision are;

WVCC	PCC
Kids Church (Sunday School)	Kids Club (Create)
Kids Alive including activity away weekend	Occasional short trips
Youth Club	Parent & Toddler
Summer Holiday Club	
Occasional short trips	
Parent & Toddler	

The approach to keeping children safe is as follows;

1. There will be two workers minimum involved in each activity and preferably more than this
2. It is aimed for there to be an appropriate gender balance whenever possible
3. Church activity will follow the numbers proposed by CCPAS relating to numbers of children and allocated workers in relation to registered activity i.e. 1 worker to look after up to 8 children 3-8 years.
4. Workers involved with children will be given some basic child protection training which will include some information on safe care guidelines (to include information such as toileting, physical contact with children, discipline, etc), awareness raising and responding to abuse, allegations etc

In respect of any special difficulties which may arise (individual or more general) support will in the first instance be available from the church leader who may seek advice from the co coordinators or CCPAS

Partnership and good communication with parents is an important principle in keeping children safe

The church buildings will receive a full formal risk assessment relating to premises and a COSHH assessment also with any resultant action taken

There will be a risk assessment undertaken in relation to the need for any qualified First Aider

The church will

- adapt and use the forms proposed by CCPAS in relation to Child Protection matters
- use a register and log for each area of activity, accident records etc
- recruit any workers in line with this policy and will ensure that all those currently who are active in work with children within the church or those who have a likelihood of doing so have an up to date DBS check

The buildings of WVCC/PCC are only used by those authorised to do so. There are no overlaps of activities which place children at risk and this would be an important consideration in any proposed future use of the church

CCPAS advice will be sought on any perceived extended area of activity within the church involving children such as Excursions/camps/transport

The charity does not engage children in “high risk” activities

In any activity which involves taking children out of the church the following will be undertaken;

A full written risk assessment of the activity itself with control measures

A form for parents to complete with permission for emergency medical treatment and for workers to administer any routine medication the child may be on

A file of telephone numbers, and important information concerning allergies, health issues, fears etc.

Checks made that transport arrangements are safe and suitable

Checks to ensure that appropriate gender balance is available and that there are enough workers to supervise children in different circumstances, this will require more workers than usual

In the event of staying away from home, checks to make sure that sleeping, sanitary and food arrangements are suitable and do not pose risks.

11.0 Example of parental permission documents

Available with this policy are examples of documents used for

1. Parental permission for their child to attend an away activity weekend
2. Medical consent form for away activity weekend
3. Consent and registration form for summer holiday at WVCC
4. Parental permission for their child to attend a short trip