



SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES

Introduction

It is the duty of each church member and each member of the wider church family to prevent the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children and young people and the duty of all to respond to concerns about the well-being of children and young people and to report any child abuse disclosed, discovered or suspected. The church will fully cooperate with any statutory investigation into any suspected abuse linked with the church.

We all share the responsibility for promoting the welfare of children and Lymm Baptist Church must have procedures in place to show how we are going to achieve this. This is particularly important when it comes to knowing how to respond to concerns about the welfare of children and young people. Without clear procedures for dealing with allegations, staff, volunteers and church members may not know what to do if an allegation is made, or if a child discloses that they are being harmed. This can lead them to do nothing. With procedures in place everyone is clear about what to do and to whom they should speak.

Understanding abuse and its signs and symptoms.

The ways in which children can be harmed through abuse and neglect are numerous. As a church we will seek to ensure that all of those who work with children and young people in the church attend training courses so that they understand the ways in which children can be harmed and are alert to the indicators that a child or young person is being abused.

Such training will help youth workers be aware of the type of people who may bring harm to a child or young person and how that harm might be discovered. This training will be provided in partnership with Urban Saints and The North Western Baptist Association.

Procedures

All children and young people within the church will be made aware of those people within the church who have been given special responsibility to act on their behalf in relation to safeguarding concerns.

The Designated Person for Safeguarding is a post currently held by Emma Hall.

A photograph of Emma and the ways in which she may be contacted will be displayed prominently on the church's Main Noticeboard in the Foyer and in every room occupied by children during their group activities.

Any worker who has a concern about the welfare of a child or young person or the behaviour of an adult has the duty to record in writing that concern and to report it to the Designated Person within 24 hours. If a child is in imminent danger of harm a referral should be made to the police or social services without delay and the Designated Person informed of the action taken.

A sample Incident Report Form is attached at Appendix 1. This must be signed and dated.

On receipt of a report, the Designated Person has a duty to review the relevant information and to decide in consultation with the Safeguarding Trustee and/or the Pastor as to what action should follow. If appropriate, further advice may be sought from The North Western Baptist Association Regional Minister or anonymously from the Social Services. Any formal referral to Social Services should normally be made

within 24 hours of receiving a report. However, if a child is in imminent danger of harm a referral should be made to the police or Social Services without delay.

After the decision has been made as to what action should be taken, the Designated Person, the Safeguarding Trustee and the Pastor may have a duty to support all the parties affected by any safeguarding concerns and when formal referrals are made, reports may need to be made to the North Western Baptist Association, the Independent Safeguarding Authority or the Charity Commission.

Safe recruitment, support and supervision of workers.

The church will exercise proper care in the selection and appointment of those working with children and young people, whether paid or voluntary. All workers will be provided with appropriate training, support and supervision to promote the safeguarding of children.

The official advice given to all organisations that appoint volunteers to work with children and young people is that their recruitment processes should be as rigorous as they would be if they were appointing paid staff.

It is however perfectly acceptable for procedures to be more informal for churches than it would be for those organisations who are seeking volunteers from the general public. However informality should not be confused with being casual about the importance of safeguarding children and young people.

In all cases of recruitment, we will -

- provide a written role description
- ask the candidate to complete an application form and sign a declaration that there is no reason why they should not be working with children and young people. A sample form is attached at Appendix 2.
- conduct a face-to-face interview. A sample proforma is attached at Appendix 3.
- take up references. A sample Reference Form is attached at Appendix 4.
- check the candidate's criminal record using the procedures required by Urban Saints.
- appoint for a probationary period
- require the candidate to sign an undertaking to work within the agreed safeguarding policy and procedures. A sample Volunteer Agreement Form is attached at Appendix 5
- provide an induction programme and initial training.

Further details of these elements are outlined in *Safe to Grow*.

Code of Behaviour

The church will also adopt a code of behaviour for all who are appointed to work with children and young people so that all children and young people are shown the respect that is due to them.

It should go without saying that all children and young people whatever their age, gender, racial background, culture or disability should always be treated with respect and dignity and that their safety and welfare should be a priority.

To this end -

- We will use age-appropriate language and tone of voice.
- We will be aware of body language and the effects that this might have on an individual child or young person.
- We will listen well to children and young people being careful not to assume what a child or young person is thinking or feeling.
- We will listen to what is spoken and how it is said and at the same time observe the body language to better understand what is being said.
- We will not engage in any of the following -
 - invading the privacy of children and young people when they are using the toilet or showering. It is advisable in the case of younger children requiring assistance that the door should be left open.
 - engaging in rough games which involve physical contact between a leader and a child or young person
 - engaging in sexually provocative games
 - making sexually suggestive comments about or to a child or young person even in fun.
 - scapegoating, belittling, ridiculing or rejecting a child or young person.
- When it is necessary to control and discipline children and young people, this will be done without using physical punishment. Although a situation may however arise where a child or young person needs to be restrained in order to protect them or a third person. If the occasion arises where restraint is necessary, then a written record should be made and the Designated Person informed at the earliest opportunity. The child's parent or carer should also be kept informed of the incident.
- We will make sure that another adult is present, if for example a young child has soiled their underclothes and needs to be thoroughly washed. If possible, the child's parents or carer should be called in to carry out such a task.

- We will not respond to or encourage excessive attention seeking if it is overtly sexual or physical in nature.
- Workers should not normally plan to be alone with children and young people. This will mean that a worker should never plan to be alone on church premises with children or young people.
- When there are insufficient leaders and workers to have two for each group, doors should be left open or two groups should work in the same room.
- At least two people should be present on the premises before the doors are open as children and young people arrive for a group and at least two adults should remain until the last child or young person has left the building or room at the end of the meeting.
- Workers should ensure that each parent/carer knows where their child is and what time they should return home.

There may be occasions when despite careful planning, a worker finds him or herself in a situation when they are in sole charge of children or young people in the context of a church activity.

In these situations the workers should -

- assess the risks involved in sending the child or children home against the risks of vulnerability of being alone with them
- wherever possible immediately phone another appropriate person to report the situation. This should normally be The Designated Person for Safeguarding or The Safeguarding Trustee. Failing that then the Pastor may be contacted. The worker should make a written report of the situation immediately afterwards and give a copy to the Designated Person for Safeguarding and The Safeguarding Trustee. This ensures appropriate accountability and monitors situations where workers are on their own with children and young people. If the same situation keeps recurring, working practices will be reviewed.

If a situation arises when a child or young person asks to speak to a worker on their own and where confidentiality is important, the following guidelines should apply -

- In the first instance, the worker should insist that another worker should also be present and someone should be found to fulfil that role
- If this is not acceptable to the child or no other suitable worker is available, but it is possible for the conversation to be held in a quiet corner of the room where others are present and where sufficient privacy can be assured, this option should be taken. If this is not possible, the conversation is best held in a room with a door left open or where there is glass in the door so that others can see inside the room.
- Wherever possible, another adult should be in the building and the young person should know they are there.
- Another adult should know that the interview is taking place and with whom.

- The worker should set an agreed time limit prior to the conversation and stick to it. It is the responsibility of the worker as the adult involved to set the ground rules and to end the session at the designated time. Make another appointed time to continue if necessary.
- A youth worker should not invite a child or young person to their home alone nor go to the child or young person's home if they are alone.

Similar guidelines should be followed in all cases where it is appropriate for one-to-one working with a young person or child. For example in a mentoring situation or in the discipling of that young person through prayer and Bible study.

Vulnerable situations can be created when workers offer lifts to children and young people either to take them to and from church activities or to take them on planned outings.

Workers should avoid being alone in the car with a child or young person who is particularly vulnerable, for example a child with a crush on a leader or a child whose behaviour is difficult to manage.

The following practices can be adopted to minimise the risks involved -

- although it is often impractical, whenever possible two adults should be present in a car with children and young people.
- parents should give written permission for their child to be given transport and should be informed about what time to expect their child home
- where possible workers should avoid giving regular lifts to children or young people on their own to and from church activities
- if the same group of children are regularly given lifts, consideration should be given to picking them up and dropping them off in a different order each week so that the same child is not always the first or the last to be picked up or dropped off
- if a child or young person is travelling alone in the car with a worker, the child or young person should be asked to sit in the back seat of the car
- workers should not spend unnecessary time alone in a vehicle with a child or young person engaging in long conversations either outside the church or outside the child's home

What to do if a child expresses a concern

When a child expresses a concern or talks about harm or abuse that they are suffering:

- create a safe environment in which the child or young person can share their concerns
- react calmly so as not to further distress the child or young person
- listen carefully to what the child or young person has to say

- allow them time to say what they want
- 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
- if you need to ask questions to clarify what the child is saying, always use open questions and not closed questions (e.g. "who is it you are afraid of?" Not "is it Daddy you are afraid of?")
- as soon as you believe there is cause for concern, allow the child to finish, but do not question them any further. Explain that you will have to tell someone who knows what to do next
- accept what the child or young person says and take seriously what you are hearing
- reassure the child or young person and tell them that you know how difficult it must be to confide in you
- tell the child or young person that he or she is not to blame and that he or she has done the right thing in speaking to you
- help the child or young person to understand what is going to happen next – the child should be informed that other people will need to be told about the concerns which have been shared and who those people may be
- ***do not promise or lead a child to believe that any child protection concern which affects them other children or young people will be kept confidential***
- be aware that a child or young person may be frightened and they may have been threatened if they tell of what has been happening to them
- remember that most children feel loyalty to their parents and other significant people in their lives and often find it difficult to say things to their detriment
- make notes as soon as possible afterwards using the child's language and recording any questions that you asked prompt for a response

What to do if abuse is suspected or disclosed.

- If the behaviour of a child or young person gives any cause for concern -
- If an allegation is made in any context about a child or young person being harmed -
- If the behaviour of any adult (including colleagues and members of the public) towards children or young people causes you concern –
- do not dismiss your concerns. In particular do not ignore or dismiss concerns about a professional or a colleague
- do not confront the adult about whose behaviour you have concerns (the exception to this maybe in some situations with colleagues)

- do not take responsibility for deciding whether or not child abuse is actually taking place
- do not investigate allegations
- do not act alone
- do not take sole responsibility for what has been shared or any concerns you may have
- do follow the church's procedures for responding to concerns.

Guidelines for appropriate physical contact with children and young people

It is hard to conceive how you can be a nurturing, caring worker with children and young people without some physical contact happening at least occasionally.

The following guidelines should be applied when considering whether or not touch is appropriate in any given situation.

- For whose benefit is this taking place?
- Is it for the sake of the child or young person or is it for your own benefit?
- If no one else is present, it is always advisable to avoid physical contact
- Use physical contact in a way that conveys appropriate concern but in a way that is least likely to be misconstrued. For example, an arm around the shoulder standing by the side of a child or young person may be more appropriate than a full hug.
- Remember that not everyone expresses friendship or affection in the same way and some people including children find excessive touching an infringement of their personal space.
- If you find that a child or young person is cringing or responding in a negative way to being touched, then stop immediately and find an alternative, non-tactile way to convey your concerns.
- Workers should be prepared to be accountable to fellow workers for their use of touch and physical contact and should listen to the concerns of others if it is felt that boundaries are being crossed.

Abuse of trust

The relationship between the worker and child and young person is one of a leader who is in a position of authority over that child. There is therefore a responsibility to exercise that power responsibly. It is acknowledged that it is wrong for a leader to enter into a sexual relationship with a young person in their care whatever their age. Neither is it acceptable for a leader to form a romantic relationship with the young person with whom they have a relationship of trust even if it is consensual.

Electronic Communication

Electronic communication has become enormously important and popular in recent years and it is an easy way to communicate with young people in particular. However there are dangers associated with it that call for vigilance. We accept that electronic communication is a legitimate means of communicating with children and young people but there must be strict protocols in place.

General Principles

The following general principles should be applied -

- Parents or carers of children and young people themselves have the right to decide if a worker is to have e-mail addresses or mobile phone numbers etc.
- Workers should only use electronic means of communication with those children and young people for whom appropriate consent has been given
- Workers should not put any pressure on children or young people to reveal their e-mail address or mobile phone number etc
- Direct electronic communication with children of primary school age is inappropriate and therefore not permitted. As a general principle workers should avoid communicating electronically with young people before they reach year 10.
- Only workers who have been appointed under the church's agreed safeguarding procedures should use any electronic means of communication to contact children or young people on behalf of the church or one of the church's organisations.
- Contact with children and young people by electronic communication should generally be for information giving purposes only and not for general chat.
- Where a young person in need or at a point of crisis uses this as a way of communicating with a worker, then significant conversations should be saved as a text file if possible and a record kept of when they communicated and who was involved.
- Workers should not share any personal information with children and young people and should not request or respond to any personal information from the child or young person other than that which is necessary and appropriate as part of their role
- Workers should be careful in their communications with children and young people so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives
- Clear unambiguous language should be used avoiding the use of unnecessary abbreviations. Also it is vital to check spelling to ensure that what is being sent is in fact what is intended, especially when predictive text is being applied.
- Electronic communication should only be used between the hours of 8 am and 10 pm
- E-mails to young people should include a footer showing this to be an official communication from a youth team member.

Mobile Phones

- Mobile phone usage should be primarily about information giving
- Text language should be avoided so that there is no misunderstanding of what is being communicated
- Text conversations should usually be avoided - i.e. a series of text messages/e-mails being sent to and fro between mobile phones
- The use of phone camera should comply with the church's policy on photos/videos
- Workers should not retain images of children and young people on their mobile phone

Instant Messenger Services [IMS]

- Instant messenger services should be kept to a minimum
- Where a child or young person in need or at a point of crisis uses this as a means of communicating with a worker then significant conversations should be saved as a text file if possible and a log kept of when they communicated and who was involved.

Social Networking Sites

- If youth leaders are going to communicate via social networking sites, they should do so via the separate profile for the church group and not from their personal account.
- Lower age limits of social networking sites must be adhered to. This varies with each site
- Be aware of the content of photos that may be uploaded onto your site
- Be aware that children and young people could view photos and communications of other people linked to that social networking site.
- All communication with young people should be kept within public domains.
- Workers should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.
- Copies of communications should be retained and where possible other workers should be copied in on communication.

Photography

It is not illegal to take photographs of children, but there are necessary guidelines to be followed:

- Signed consent should be obtained from parents/carers for photographs to be taken at church activities. The consent form should clarify where those photos are likely to be used.
- Photographing children and young people should be conducted with sensitivity and courtesy. Consent of the child or young person is just as important as parental permission.

- When photographs are displayed, children and young people should not be identified by name and nor should it be possible to infer the identity of individual children and young people from the photograph.
- Leaders should not store images of children and young people on their mobile phones and if a leader wishes to store images in any other place, then agreement must be obtained from the Trustees who will minute their decision.
- Parental permission will be sought before any photographs are sent to the press, other media or external organisations.
- Any photographs sent to the press must not identify individual children or young people by name, nor should the names of individual children be able to be inferred from an accompanying caption or story unless specific parental consent has been given.
- Copies of photographs must not be distributed to other individuals without the permission of the parent/carer. This includes digital images.

Safe working practices

The church is committed to providing a safe environment for activities with children and young people and will adopt ways of working with children and young people that promote their safety and well-being.

Parental consent

A key component in developing safe practice with children and young people is to work in partnership with parents/carers. When children and young people are in the care of church organisations it is important:

- to have the consent of the parent/carer
- to have a point of contact in the event of an emergency
- to know key information about the child or young person that may impact on their well-being
- to provide clear information to parents/carers about the organisation and activities the child or young person is involved in and the safeguarding policy of the church.

All children and young people should be registered and parents/carers should be asked for the following details of their child:

- full name and address
- home telephone number and alternative contact numbers in case of an emergency
- date of birth
- details of any medical condition the church should be aware of or of any food or drug allergies
- details of any behavioural issues or other matters that might be relevant.

In addition, consent should be explicitly obtained for the following:

- emergency medical treatment
- travel arrangements when transport is being organised
- taking the child or young person off the church premises for occasional activities
- special consent for any overnight event or activity
- use of the child's photograph in church publicity material or on the church website
- electronic communication with the child/young person
- for children up to the age of 7, consent regarding who is entitled to collect the child from a group.

Parents/carers should be given the following information:

- the name and contact telephone number for the leader of the group activity attended by the child or young person
- outline details of the group activity the child or young person is attending, including the starting time and the time the event ends, together with expectations as to whether children or young people should be collected, or whether they make their own arrangements to go home
- that the church has a Safeguarding Children Policy and that in the event of the parent/carer having any concerns about the welfare of a child in relation to the church, they should contact the Designated Person for Safeguarding
- the name and contact number of the Designated Person for Safeguarding.

The person who is ultimately responsible for obtaining the parental consent forms and how these should be stored lies - in the case of children - with the overall Leader of the Children's Groups and - in the case of young people - with the Youth Deacon.

The information collected should comply with data protection legislation and we should ensure that the information we retain is accurate and held only while the information is necessary and relevant.

Ideally parents should complete the consent form annually, ensuring that the contact information is accurate and that any changes in the child's medical condition are updated.

The records of any children and young people who have stopped attending should be deleted other than the need to retain the group registers which contain only names and dates of birth. This is to keep an accurate record of previous attendance should any safeguarding issues arise in the future.

Risk Assessments

The church has adopted a Health and Safety Policy. The person responsible for ensuring that this is adhered to is the Property Deacon who should work in partnership with the Children's Leader and Youth Deacon to ensure that the policy is implemented with children in mind.

Guidance about some of the issues to be considered is contained in *Safe to Grow* [section 14]. A sample risk assessment form is attached at Appendix 6.

As well as assessing the church premises for risks that they may pose to children, all leaders of children's and young people's groups should assess the risks involved in the programs that they are planning.

A proper risk assessment should be carried out and again further guidance as to how this should be conducted is contained in section 14 of *Safe to Grow*.

Particular care needs to be given when children are on the premises as part of the all age community of the church, for example on Sunday morning.

It is important in such cases that we establish who is responsible for these children before and after the services. The responsibility for the children's well-being lies with the parents at all times when they are not under the direct supervision of group leaders during their own activities – i.e. before and after the church services.