

# *International Baptist Church*

## **Children, young people and the church**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Children are a gift from God to parents. In the local church they are an important part of the congregation who need our special care. Our prayer for them, and the primary aim of the special activities arranged for them, is that they may come to personal saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We take seriously the charge given by Jesus to welcome children, to protect them and to lead them to Him.
- 1.2 The church is committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with children and young people, and to providing appropriate supervision. Each one of us must do all we can to prevent physical, sexual and emotional abuse or neglect of children and young people. Each children's worker, youth worker and helper must know and undertake to observe the church's good practice guidelines and agreed procedures.
- 1.3 The church is committed to following The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Home Office Code of Practice Safe from Harm (Appendix 1). As part of this commitment Advocates for children and young people are appointed. Their role will be regularly explained and their names, addresses and telephone numbers will be publicly displayed.
- 1.4 The child protection guidelines (section 2) and procedures (section 3) attached are to help the church's children's and youth workers. Training in this area will also be given. If you find the subject of child abuse distressing, a Children's Advocate is available to discuss this material with you.

## **2 Good practice guidelines**

### 2.1 General:

- As far as possible ensure that a worker is not alone with a child where their activity cannot be seen. On church premises, this may mean leaving doors open, or two groups working in the same room.
- In a counselling situation with a young person, where privacy and confidentiality are important, try to make sure that another adult knows the interview is taking place and with whom; another adult should be in the building and the young person should know they are there.
- Ensure that access to the building is safe and well lit.

### 2.2 Children's and Youth Workers:

- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity befitting their age; watch your language and tone of voice; be aware of your body language and invasion of personal space.
- Do not engage in any of the following:
  1. Invading the privacy of children when they are washing or toileting;
  2. Physically rough or sexually provocative games;
  3. Making sexually suggestive comments in the presence of, about or to a child or young person, even in 'fun';
  4. Inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form;
  5. Any scapegoating, ridiculing, or rejecting a child or young person.
- Learn to control and discipline children without using physical punishment - a no smacking policy.
- Remember, too, that verbal abuse can be very destructive.
- Make sure another adult is present if, for example, a young child has soiled their underclothes and needs to be thoroughly washed.

- Don't let youngsters involve you in excessive attention-seeking that is overtly sexual or physical in nature.
- Don't invite a child or young person to your home alone; invite a group, or ensure that someone else is in the house. Make sure the parents know where the child is.
- Don't give lifts to children or young people on their own, other than for short journeys. If they are alone, ask them to sit in the rear of the car.
- Don't share sleeping accommodation with children or young people if you take a group away.

### 2.3 Colleagues:

- If you see another member of staff acting in ways which might be misconstrued, be prepared to speak to them or to your supervisor about your concerns.
- Leaders should encourage an atmosphere of mutual support and care which allows all workers to be comfortable enough to discuss inappropriate attitudes or behaviour.

### 3 Procedures if abuse is disclosed or discovered

#### 3.1 Types of abuse:

- *Physical:* Where children's bodies are hurt or injured.
- *Emotional:* Where children do not receive love and affection, may be frightened by threats or taunts, or are given responsibilities beyond their years.
- *Sexual:* Where adults (and sometimes other children) use children to satisfy sexual desires.
- *Neglect:* Where adults fail to care for children and protect them from danger, seriously impairing health and development.

#### 3.2 Signs of abuse:

The following may indicate abuse, but do not jump to conclusions - there could be other explanations:

- *Physical:* Unexplained or hidden injuries, lack of medical attention.
- *Emotional:* Reverting to younger behaviour, nervousness, sudden under-achievement, attention-seeking, running away, stealing, lying.
- *Sexual:* Pre-occupation with sexual matters evident in words, play, drawings; being sexually provocative with adults; disturbed sleep, nightmares, bedwetting; secretive relationships with adults or children; tummy pains with no apparent cause.
- *Neglect:* Looking ill-cared for and unhappy, being withdrawn or aggressive, having lingering injuries or health problems.

#### 3.3 If abuse is disclosed or discovered:

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

- Consult with the person to whom you are responsible, one of the Children's Advocates within the church, or one of the elders.
- If appropriate contact:

Senior Social Worker  
Joint Child Protection Unit  
Phone: (01224) 306879  
Email: [JCProtection@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:JCProtection@aberdeencity.gov.uk)  
Aberdeen City Council  
4 Miltonfold Court  
Bucksburn  
Aberdeen AB21 9DS

If the child is in immediate danger, call the police.  
Grampian Police 0845 600 5700 or 999

#### 3.4 What to do if a child tells about abuse:

The following is a summary only, for reference. It is no substitute for training.

- Look at the child directly.
- Accept what the child says.
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened.
- Do not press for information.
- Reassure the child they are right to tell and that you take what they say very seriously.
- Let them know what you are going to do next, whom you are going to tell and why, and roughly what will happen.
- Finish on a positive note.
- As soon as possible afterwards, make notes of exactly what the child said and the date and time.

3.5 What will happen if/when suspected abuse is reported to Social Services:

The process of professional involvement in cases of suspected child abuse will usually follow this course:

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

## **Appendix 1: The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003**

### **The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003**

The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 aims to increase the safeguards for children by preventing unsuitable people from working with children. The key provisions of the Act are:

- Scottish Ministers will be required to keep and maintain a list of persons unsuitable to work with children (the Disqualified from Working with Children List);
- The legislation covers both paid staff and volunteers. The fact that someone is on the list will be released as part of a Disclosure available from Disclosure Scotland.
- Where a referral is made to the list of Disqualified from Working with Children List, Scottish Ministers will consider the accompanying evidence. Where on an initial assessment it is considered appropriate to include the person on this list, they will be provisionally listed while further consideration is given to their case. Provisional listing will not disqualify the individual from working with children, but Disclosures for child care positions will confirm their Provisional Listing. The referred individual will have an opportunity to respond to the evidence, and the referring organisation will be invited to comment on their response. Scottish Ministers will then decide the case, and a person will be listed if Scottish Ministers are satisfied that the person is unsuitable to work with children.
- Organisations will have a duty to make a referral to the Disqualified from Working with Children List when a person working in a child care position, whether paid or unpaid, harms a child or puts a child at risk of harm, and is dismissed or moved away from access to children as a consequence;
- Organisations will also have a duty to make a referral if a person working in a child care position harms a child, or places a child at risk of harm, and would have been dismissed if they had not resigned, retired, been made redundant or left at the end of a temporary contract;
- An organisation which fails to comply with its duty to make a referral in these circumstances is guilty of a criminal offence, and liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum, or to both; and on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for up to 5 years or to a fine, or to both;
- The Act provides that an individual disqualified from working with children will commit a criminal offence if he or she applies for, offers to do, accepts or does any work in a childcare position. A person guilty of an offence under Section 11(1) will be liable on summary conviction to up to 6 months' imprisonment or to

a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or to both; and on conviction on indictment to up to 5 years' imprisonment or to a fine, or to both.

- Section 11(3) of the Act provides that organisations offering work in a child care position to, or procuring work in a child care position for, a disqualified person, or which fail to remove a disqualified person from a child care position will also commit a criminal offence. A person guilty of an offence under Section 11(3) will be liable on summary conviction to up to 6 months' imprisonment or to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or to both; and on conviction on indictment to up to 5 years' imprisonment or to a fine, or to both. Voluntary organisations will, therefore, wish to check the list by means of a Disclosure check, or risk committing the offence of employing a person disqualified from working with children in a childcare position.
- Access to the list will only be available through the Disclosure process which means that, in effect, it will be mandatory for organisations to register with CRBS for checks on new staff and volunteers.

## **Appendix 2: Safe from Harm: Summary of Recommendations**

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In order to safeguard the welfare of children and young people in their charge, voluntary organisations should consider the issues raised by each of the following statements of principle and then, if they wish to do so, take any action which they deem to be appropriate in the light of their circumstances and structures, and the nature of their activities.

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