



Policy for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Church Statement

Dumfries Baptist Church, Newall Terrace, Dumfries (hereafter – “the Church”) is a Baptist Church affiliated to the Baptist Union of Scotland.

The Church has a growing children’s and young people’s ministry and the Deacons take seriously their responsibility to care for and protect the welfare of the children, young people and vulnerable adults entrusted to the church’s care.

Church Mission

As part of its mission and ministry, the Church, as with Dumfries & Galloway Social Services, is committed to:

- encouraging and supporting parents/guardians/carers
- listening to, relating effectively and valuing children and young people
- ensuring that children’s/youth workers are properly supported and trained

Areas of Policy

The Deacons recognise that many children, young people and vulnerable adults today are the victims of neglect, and physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Accordingly, the Deacons have adopted a policy drawn from source material contained in:

*“Working Together: **Care and Protection**” (Baptist Union of Scotland Children Committee, 1997)*

The following main areas are addressed:

- appointing children’s/youth workers
- supervision of activities and practice issues
- recognising the signs and symptoms of abuse
- responding to suspicions and allegations of abuse or neglect, including those made against leaders or members of the church

The Deacons recognise the need to build constructive links with the statutory child care authorities. Accordingly these guidelines have been prepared in consultation with Dumfries & Galloway Social Services Department.

Child Protection Co-ordinator

The Church has appointed the following to act as Co-ordinator/CRBS Lead Signatory

Child Protection Co-ordinator / CRBS Lead Signatory : **Mrs Jean Muir** Tel No: 840334

Role of Co-ordinator

The Co-ordinator will:

- Facilitate the dissemination of all relevant information to all concerned, i.e. workers/parents and children.
- Implement procedures for application and vetting of prospective workers, including processing Disclosures via CRBS.
- Facilitate training and support for workers.
- Act as a point of contact for children and workers when any suspicion or allegation of abuse is made, which will be dealt with immediately, and passed on, as appropriate, to the statutory authorities. Note: The Co-ordinator will **not** investigate cases of alleged abuse, this is the responsibility of the statutory authorities, though it is recognised that some initial enquiries may have to be made to ascertain the exact nature of the complaint.

Appointment of Children's/Youth Workers

Police Check

All applicants will be required to undergo a Police Check through Disclosure Scotland and will only be appointed upon receipt of a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure.

Selection Process

Workers, both employees and non-remunerative volunteers, will only be appointed to positions of responsibility with children and young people within the Church following successful completion of the selection process.

This is detailed as follows:

- a. The potential worker (applicant) will be interviewed by the Group Leader of the proposed children's/youth group. The interviewer will ensure that the applicant, as well as being suited to the work in terms of skills, desire, and experience, is fully aware of both the guidelines and procedures with respect to Child Protection as outlined in the Children and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy.
- b. The Child Protection Co-ordinator and CRBS Lead Signatory will meet with the applicant and will provide them with the following:
 - i. Application process letter: "Working with Children and Young People"
 - ii. Application form: "Application Form to Work with Children and Young People"
 - iii. Policy for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults
 - iv. Disclosure Scotland Application Form
 - v. Disclosure Scotland Application Guidance Notes

Note: the following additional associated DBC child protection policies are also available, on request:

- i. Policy on the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders.
 - ii. Policy on the Storage, Handling, Use and Destruction of Disclosure Information.
- c. On receiving the completed application forms, references will be taken up and the Disclosure Scotland application processed.
 - d. Completed church application forms and references will be stored confidentially with access on a "need-to-know" basis only. Disclosure Scotland certificates will normally be destroyed within 90 days of receipt, as required by legislation.

- e. On receipt of the references and the Disclosure certificate, the Co-ordinator/Lead Signatory will again meet with the potential worker. Providing the references and Disclosure are satisfactory, the Co-ordinator/Lead Signatory will ensure that the applicant has read and understood the guidelines and procedures with respect to Child Protection as outlined in the DBC Children and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy. The successful applicant will be asked to sign a Volunteer Contract which details both the range of expected tasks and the person to whom they will be responsible within the children's/young people's group. The Contract also includes an undertaking that he/she has both read, and will comply, with the practice guidelines and procedures set out in the Children and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy.
- f. Prior to final appointment the applicant will undergo a three month probationary period where he/she will be under the supervision of a leader who will assess suitability. At the end of this period they will meet with the applicant, provide feedback on their performance, and either confirm appointment, extend the probationary period, or terminate the application giving the reasons for doing so.
- g. Should either references or Disclosure prove unsatisfactory, the application process will not continue and the applicant will not be accepted to work with children or young people within the church. Appropriate discussions will take place with the applicant regarding this decision and the reason for taking it.

Supervision of Activities and Practice Issues

The Church will:

- Provide appropriate levels of supervision for each activity given the age-range of the group and the degree of risk. There will be a minimum of 2 adult workers for each activity
- Provide a safe environment for the activities
- Maintain a record of all activities with children and young people. This will include details of both children/young people and leaders present, as well as any incidents and/or accidents and the response to such

The Worker will:

- Treat all children/young people with respect and dignity befitting their age, in attitude, tone of voice, language and actions
- Learn to control and discipline children/young people without using physical punishment
- Acquire parental consent prior to organised trips detailing as much information as possible
- Transport children/young people, with the knowledge of the team/leadership and parental approval
- Follow set procedures in the event of suspected or alleged abuse
- Adopt strict confidentiality in relation to sensitive information
- Access relevant training opportunities

The Worker will not:

- Invade the privacy of children/young people
- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games or inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child or young person
- Sanction excessive attention seeking that is overtly sexual or physical in nature
- Invite a child or young person to their home alone, without the parents' knowledge of their whereabouts, and only as part of a group with at least two adults present
- Transport lone children unless another adult is present, excepting circumstances where this is unavoidable

The Co-ordinator **will:**

- Promote the highest standards of practice in relation to child protection
- Maintain the strictest confidentiality with any sensitive information, disclosing it only on a “need-to-know” basis

Recognising the Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

Definitions of Abuse

Physical: Actual or likely physical injury, or failure to prevent physical injury or suffering

Emotional: Impairment of emotional and behavioural development caused by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection

Sexual: Exploitation of children/young people to gratify sexual desires

Neglect: Failure to care for children/young people and protect them from danger seriously impairing health and development

Signs and Symptoms

Physical 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
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming

Emotional Abuse:

- Changes or regression in mood and behaviour
- Nervousness, watchfulness
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Running away, stealing, lying

Sexual Abuse:

- Any allegations made by a child/young person concerning sexual abuse
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or regularly engaging in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Sexually provocative or seductive behaviour 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

Neglect:

- Appearing ill-cared for and unhappy
- Withdrawn or aggressive
- Lingering injuries or health problems

Responding to Suspicions or Allegations of Abuse

Priority rests with the interest of the child or young person, their protection takes precedence over any concern regarding the person who might be involved.

Handling *Suspicions* of Abuse

Any Worker who suspects that a child or young person under their responsibility may have been abused or suffered neglect in any way will:

- Inform the Co-ordinator as soon as possible regarding their suspicions
- Maintain confidentiality, discuss the matter with no-one else

The Co-ordinator will seek appropriate advice and take necessary action, if required.

Handling *Allegations* of Abuse

In the event of a child or young person disclosing allegations of abuse the Worker should:

- Accept what the child or young person says (however unlikely the story may sound)
- Listen sympathetically, remain calm
- Look at the child or young person directly, be honest
- Avoid apportioning blame
- Let the child or young person know that the worker will need to tell someone else – do **not** promise confidentiality
- Be aware that the child or young person may have been threatened
- Never push for information. Gently repeat back to the child or young person what they have said and ensure it has been heard correctly. The worker should let them know that they are ready to listen
- Avoid questioning the child or young person, e.g. “Why didn’t you tell anyone before?” “Are you sure this is true?” “Why, where, when, whom?”
- Never make statements such as “I can’t believe it” or “I’m shocked”

When concluding the discussion the Worker should reassure the child or young person and let them know of what will happen next and that they will be informed of the outcome. The Worker should then:

- Immediately contact the Co-ordinator and inform them in as much detail as possible regarding the allegations. If the allegations involve the Co-ordinator then the Senior Pastor or one of the Deacons should be approached. The Worker retains the right to directly contact Social Services or the Police
- Makes notes as soon as possible (preferably within an hour), writing down exactly what the child or young person said, when he/she said it, what was said in reply, and what was happening immediately prior to the disclosure. Record exactly when the report was written and sign and date the notes. If these handwritten notes are subsequently typed up then they should be signed and dated also. All handwritten notes, even if subsequent typed notes have been made, should be kept in a safe place
- Maintain the strictest confidentiality, and discuss with **no-one** the allegations

The nature and gravity of such allegations will determine the detailed response of the Co-ordinator within the framework of the following procedure:

Where a child or young person has a physical injury inconsistent with the explanation given, or displays a clear symptom of neglect, either of which arouse suspicion:

- The Co-ordinator will immediately inform the Senior or Associate Pastor and contact Social Services who will then make an early assessment of the situation and seek medical opinion if need be. In an attempt to work in collaboration, parents will be advised that a referral to Social Services will be made.
- In the event of serious injury urgent medical attention will be sought, and Social Services will be informed immediately. Information disclosed to parents will be left to the discretion of the statutory authorities
- The Co-ordinator will maintain the strictest confidentiality disclosing information on a “need-to-know” basis

Where a child or young person makes allegations of sexual abuse:

- The Co-ordinator will immediately inform the Senior or Associate Pastor and contact Social Services. The Police may want to try and obtain forensic evidence, it would **not** therefore be helpful for the child or young person to change clothing, or have a bath, etc.
- The Co-ordinator will **not** investigate the matter. This is the joint responsibility of the Social Services and the Police
- Information disclosed to parents will be left to the discretion of the statutory authorities
- The Co-ordinator will maintain the strictest confidentiality disclosing information on a “need-to-know” basis

Allegations from third parties or anonymous referrals:

- The Worker or Co-ordinator will elicit as much information as possible regarding the allegation from the referrer, i.e. the cause of concern and nature of injuries, and unless they wish to remain anonymous this should include their name, address and telephone number.
- The referrer will be told that any information relating to any child or young person at risk may result in referral to Social Services who may wish to interview them (if known) as part of their investigation

The Church and Social Services will seek to offer appropriate support to all involved in the situation.

This Policy was adopted by members and associates of the Church at the Church Meeting on May 12th 2004 and an updated version accepted by the Pastors and Deacons on 26th March 2008.