

Dumfries Baptist Church

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Safeguarding Policy for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Church Statement

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

The Church has a wide range of ministries to people of all ages including children and young people and the Leadership Team takes 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 to effectively, and valuing children and young people
- ensuring that children’s/youth workers are properly supported and trained

Areas of Policy

The Leadership Team recognises that many children, young people and vulnerable adults today are the victims of neglect, and physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Accordingly, the Leadership Team 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 work volunteers, DBC staff & DBCC staff
- 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 Leadership Team recognises 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.

Dumfries Baptist Church, Gillbrae Road, Dumfries, DG1 4EJ

Charity Number SC021258

Tel: 01387 268926 office@dumfriesbaptistchurch.org.uk www.dumfriesbaptistchurch.org.uk

Company number SCO 534991;

Registered office: 123 Irish Street, Dumfries DG1 2PE

Safeguarding co-ordinator and additional signatories

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The Church has appointed the following:

Safeguarding Co-ordinator / Disclosure Signatory: **Mrs Jean Muir** Tel: 01387-840334;

Disclosure Signatory: **Mrs Heather McCombe** Tel: 01387-253416; *Disclosure Signatory:* **Mrs Heather Kneeshaw** Tel: 01683-221128

Role of Co-ordinator

The Co-ordinator will:

- Facilitate the dissemination of all relevant information to all concerned, i.e. volunteers/staff, signatories, parents, youth, children & vulnerable adults.
- Implement procedures for application and vetting of prospective workers, including processing Disclosures via Volunteer Scotland.
- 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 Work Volunteers, DBC Staff & DBCC Staff

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 PVG Disclosure. (All DBC & DBCC Staff will be required to obtain a satisfactory PVG disclosure for both children & vulnerable adults.)

Selection Process for Children's/Youth Volunteers

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 appropriate selection process.

The process for volunteers 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 DBC Safeguarding Policy.

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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/vulnerable adults to gratify sexual desires

Neglect: Failure to care for children/young people/vulnerable adults 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/vulnerable adult concerning sexual abuse
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and (if a child) detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or regularly engaging in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual activity through words (if a child), play or drawing
- Sexually provocative or seductive behaviour
- 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/young person/vulnerable adult, 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/young person/vulnerable adult under their responsibility may have been abused or suffered neglect in any way will:

- Inform the Safeguarding 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, young person or vulnerable adult 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, young person or vulnerable adult directly, be honest
- Avoid apportioning blame
- Let the child, young person or vulnerable adult know that the worker will need to tell someone else – do **not** promise confidentiality
- Be aware that the child, young person or vulnerable adult may have been threatened
- Never push for information. Gently repeat back to the child, young person or vulnerable adult 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, young person or vulnerable adult, 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”

Allegations from third parties or anonymous referrals:

- The Worker or Safeguarding 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, young person or vulnerable adult 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 the latest updated version accepted by the Leadership Team on 31st May 2023.