

# **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

## **Introduction**

## **Church Details**

**New Life Community Church (South Gillingham)** (hereafter, “The Church”)

Location: Meets in Rainham School for Girls on Sunday Mornings and in homes and other locations as the elders may arrange.

Denominational (or other) details: The church is independent of denominational groups but retains strong links with most churches in the greater Medway area through Churches together and Ministers fraternals.

## **Church Statement**

The church has a growing children’s and young people’s ministry. The Church leaders take seriously their responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people entrusted to the church’s care. The leaders acknowledge that child protection is everyone’s responsibility.

## **Church Mission**

As part of the mission, the Church leaders are committed to:

- Listening to, relating effectively and valuing children and young people whilst ensuring their protection within church activities.
- Encouraging and supporting parents/carers
- Ensuring that children’s/youth workers are given support and training
- Having a system for dealing with concerns about possible abuse
- Maintaining good links with the statutory child care authorities where appropriate

## **Areas of Policy**

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

1. Responding to allegations of abuse, including those made against leaders or members of the church
2. Appointing children’s/youth workers
3. Working with offenders
4. Helping victims of abuse
5. Supervision of activities and good working practice

The Church leaders recognise the need to build constructive links with the child care agencies. Accordingly, these guidelines have been prepared in consultation with Thirtyone:eight (formerly the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service), who hold a copy of this policy.

Medway Council’s Customer First office telephone number between is 01634 334466, the out of hours number known as the Emergency Duty Team is 0845 7626777.

The content of the policy has formed the basis for training all children’s/youth workers in the church using materials supplied by Thirtyone:eight. The Church leaders are committed to a training programme for all such workers.

## **Definitions of Abuse**

For definitions of Abuse see Appendix 1

## **Recognising and Responding to Abuse**

For signs which may be indicators that abuse has taken place see Appendix 2

## **Responding to allegations of abuse, including those made against leaders or members of the church**

### **1 What To Do If You Suspect That Abuse May Have Occurred**

1.1 You must report concerns as soon as possible to PAM BELLCHAMBERS (hereafter the “Co-ordinator”) telephone number 01795 228610 who is nominated by the Church leaders to act on their behalf in referring allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities. He or 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.

1.2 If the suspicions in any way involve the Co-ordinator then the report should be made to BELEN ANDERTON (hereafter the “Deputy Co-ordinator”) telephone number 075080 169573. 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 **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at Medway Council**. Thirtyone:eight, PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ. Telephone 0303 003 1111 should also be informed.

1.3 Unless there is good reason not to, the Church leaders will be informed by the Co-ordinator or the Deputy Co-ordinator that a concern has been raised. They will not be permitted to discuss this with anyone else, including the person raising the concern.

1.4 Suspicions will not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above.

1.5 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 Thirtyone:eight, 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.

### **2 Co-ordinator’s Response to Allegations of Abuse**

#### **2.1 Allegations of Physical Injury or Neglect**

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

2.1.2 Contact Social Services for advice in cases of deliberate injury or where concerned about the child’s safety. The parents should not be informed by the church/organisation in these circumstances.

- 2.1.3 Where emergency medical attention is necessary it will be sought immediately. The Co-ordinator will inform the doctor of any suspicions of abuse.
- 2.1.4 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
- 2.1.5 If appropriate the parent/carer will be encouraged to seek help from the Social Services Department.
- 2.1.6 Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, if appropriate, the church Co-ordinator will offer to go with them. If they still fail to act, the Co-ordinator should, in cases of real concern, contact Medway Council's Children's Team for advice.
- 2.1.7 Where the Co-ordinator is unsure whether or not to refer a case to Medway Council's Social Services team, then advice from Thirtyone:eight will be sought and followed. Thirtyone:eight will confirm its advice in writing in case this is needed for reference purposes in the future.

## **2.2 Allegations Of Sexual Abuse**

- 2.2.1 In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Co-ordinator will:
- 2.2.2 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, except the Church leaders where this is appropriate).
- 2.2.3 If, for any reason, the Co-ordinator is unsure whether or not to follow the above, then advice from Thirtyone:eight will be sought and followed. Thirtyone:eight will confirm its advice in writing in case this is needed for reference purposes in the future.
- 2.2.4 Under no circumstances will the Co-ordinator attempt to carry out any investigation into the allegation or suspicions of sexual abuse. The role of the Co-ordinator 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. The Co-ordinator will instruct any person raising a suspicion not to investigate.
- 2.2.5 Whilst allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse will normally be reported to the Co-ordinator, the absence of the Co-ordinator or Deputy should not delay referral to the Social Services Department.

2.2.6 Exceptionally, should there be any disagreement between the person in receipt of the allegation or suspicion and the Co-ordinator 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.

2.2.7 The Church leaders will support the Co-ordinator or Deputy in their role. They accept that any information which the Co-ordinators may have in their possession will only be shared with them in a strictly limited way on a 'need to know' basis.

### **2.3 How to Respond to a Child Wanting to Talk About Abuse**

2.3.1 For guidance on this see Appendix 3

## **Appointing children's/youth workers**

### **3 Appointment of Workers**

3.1 All those appointed to work with children and young people in our care will be required to apply for an enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau before duties commence.

3.2 Any children's workers under the age of 16 will be accompanied in their work by an adult who has completed a check with the Criminal Records Bureau.

3.3 Children's workers will be given opportunities to meet together with their group leader to discuss areas of concern including discipline. Any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of abuse will be reported to the child protection co-ordinator immediately.

3.4 Currently the Church does not employ a youth worker, but in the event of this happening, we will review this policy and seek and follow advice from Thirtyone:eight prior to recruitment.

3.5 The appointment of workers is reviewed on an ongoing basis.

## **Working with Offenders**

### **4 Working with offenders**

4.1 Where someone attending the church is known to have abused children, then whilst extending friendship to the individual, the Church leaders in their commitment to the protection of all children will meet with the individual and discuss boundaries that the person will be expected to keep. Mark Anderton is

designated to liaise with the Police Child Protection team when necessary. An appropriate written contract will be formulated using guidelines given by Thirtyone:eight.

## **Helping Victims of Abuse**

### **5 Helping Victims of Abuse**

5.1 As a church we are committed to supporting victims of abuse, and encouraging them in their faith. We acknowledge that supporting victims of abuse can be complex and, while offering our own pastoral support, we will seek professional advice where appropriate from those with relevant expertise.

## **Arrangements For Supervision of Group / Children's Activities**

### **6 Arrangements For Supervision of Group / Children's Activities**

6.1 For a detailed list of all regular Church groups and activities for children, see Appendix 4.

6.2 In addition to those groups listed in Appendix 4, various day, evening or weekend activities may be organised. At the time of planning the event, the leader of the activity should discuss this with the child protection coordinator, who will offer good practice guidelines relevant to the chosen activity.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **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, Working Together to Safeguard Children (1989) are as follows:*

#### **Abuse and Neglect**

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 a stranger.

#### **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 feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as fictitious illness by proxy or Munchausen syndrome by proxy\*.

#### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment 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 feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve 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 ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

#### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

#### **Neglect**

Neglect is 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. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

**(Appendix 1 Cont..)**

**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).

**\*Munchausen's Syndrome by proxy**

The Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry defines Munchausen's Syndrome by proxy as: *"A form of child abuse in which the parents, or carers, give false accounts of symptoms in their children and may fake signs of illness (to draw attention to themselves). They seek repeated medical investigations and needless treatment for their children."*



## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Recognising Abuse**

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

#### **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

#### **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

#### **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

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **How to Respond to a Child Wanting to Talk About Abuse**

It is not easy to give precise guidance, but the following may help:

#### **GENERAL POINTS**

- Show acceptance of what the child says (however unlikely the story may sound)
- Keep calm
- Look at the child directly
- Be honest
- Tell the child you will need to let someone else know – don't promise confidentiality
- Even when a child has broken a rule, they are not to blame for the abuse
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened or bribed not to tell
- Never push for information. If the child decides not to tell you after all, then accept that and let them know that you are always ready to listen.

#### **HELPFUL THINGS YOU MAY SAY OR SHOW**

- I believe you (or showing acceptance of what the child says)
- Thank you for telling me
- It's not your fault
- I will help you

#### **DON'T SAY**

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it!
- Are you sure this is true?
- Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- Never make false promises
- Never make statements such as "I am shocked, don't tell anyone else"

#### **CONCLUDING**

- Again reassure the child that they were right to tell you and show acceptance
- Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens (you might have to consider referring to Social Services or the Police to prevent a child or young person returning home if you consider them to be seriously at risk of further abuse)
- Contact the person in your church/organisation responsible for co-ordinating child protection concerns or contact an agency such as Thirtyone:eight for advice or go directly to Social Services/Police/NSPCC
- Consider your own feelings and seek pastoral support if needed

**(Appendix 3 cont..)**

**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). **Record dates and times of these events and when you made the record.** Keep all hand written notes securely for an indefinite period, even if these have been typed subsequently.
- 2 **Report your discussion as soon as possible to the Co-ordinator.** If the latter is implicated report to the Deputy Co-ordinator. If both are implicated, report to Thirtyone:eight 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/co-ordinator 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.

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Arrangements For Supervision of Group/Children's Activities**

During Sunday morning services, the children's Sunday School takes place in the Dining hall under the supervision of at least two adults