

Bethel Evangelical Church, Otley
Child Protection Policy
Originally Adopted 3 October 2002
Amended 3 October 2016

Church Details

Name of the church: BETHEL EVANGELICAL CHURCH
 (hereafter, "The Church")

Location: Myers Croft, Otley, West Yorkshire. LS21 3JG

The above Church meets at a number of locations in Otley. The following policy applies to all Church activities.

1. Church Statement

The Church has a developing children's and young people's ministry. The Church takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people entrusted to the church's care.

2. Church Mission

As part of its mission, the Church is committed to:

- Listening to, relating effectively to 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

3. Areas Of Policy

The Church recognises that many children and young people today are the victims of neglect, and physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Accordingly, the Church has adopted the Policy contained in this document, (hereafter "the Policy"). The Policy sets out agreed guidelines relating to the following areas:

- Responding to allegations of abuse, including those made against leaders or members of the church
- Appointing children and youth leaders
- Supervision of activities and practice issues

4. Definitions of abuse

The definitions of child abuse recommended as criteria for registration by the Department of Health, "Working Together under the Children Act 1989" are as follows:

PHYSICAL INJURY

Actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) to a child, including deliberate poisoning, suffocation and Munchausen's syndrome by proxy.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent. The child may be dependent and/or developmentally immature.*

** Sexual exploitation represents the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate social taboos or family roles (Kempe and Kempe 1978). Kempe, T.S. & Kempe, C.H. (1978) Child Abuse. London: Fontana Open Books)*

NEGLECT

The persistent or severe neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment. This category is used where it is the main or sole form of abuse.

The following additional category has been added to the new Working Together to Safeguard Children.

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 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.

5. Recognising And Responding To Abuse

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

PHYSICAL SIGNS OF POSSIBLE 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 POSSIBLE 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

6. 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 Church Child Protection Co-ordinator or go directly to Social Services/Police/NSPCC
- Consider your own feelings and seek pastoral support if needed

7. What To Do Once A Child Has Talked To You About Abuse:

- 7.1 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, even if these have been typed subsequently. Form A (See Appendix)
- 7.2 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 CCPAS or to Social Services if preferred.
- 7.3 You should not discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone other than those nominated in the above point.
- 7.4 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.

8. What To Do If You Suspect That Abuse May Have Occurred

- 8.1 You must report concerns as soon as possible to the Church's Child Protection Co-ordinator: Richard Hughes (hereafter the "Co-ordinator") who is nominated by the Church to act on their behalf in referring allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities. In the absence of the Co-ordinator the matter should be brought to the attention of the Deputy Co-ordinator: Caroline Haley.
- 8.2 If the suspicions in any way involve the Co-ordinator then the report should be made in the first instance to PCCA Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (hereafter "CCPAS"), PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ. Telephone 01322 660011 or 01322 667207. Alternatively contact Social Services on 0113 247 7715.
- 8.3 The local Social Services office telephone number between 9.00am and 5.00pm is 0113 247 7715, the out of hours number known as the Emergency Duty Team is 0113 240 9536.
- 8.4 Following a referral being made to the Social Services, the Elders will be informed that a referral has taken place. This is for information only and they will take no action. If the referral in any way involves an Elder, then that specific Elder will not be informed

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

8.6 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 CCPAS, 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.

9. Allegations Of Physical Injury Or Neglect

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

9.1 Contact Social Services (or CCPAS) 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.

9.2 Where emergency medical attention is necessary it will be sought immediately. The Co-ordinator will inform the doctor of any suspicions of abuse.

9.3 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

9.4 If appropriate the parent/carer will be encouraged to seek help from the Social Services Department.

9.5 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 Social Services for advice.

9.6 Where the Co-ordinator is unsure whether or not to refer a case to the Social Services, then advice from CCPAS will be sought and followed. CCPAS will confirm its advice in writing in case this is needed for reference purposes in the future.

10. Allegations Of Sexual Abuse

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Co-ordinator will:

10.1 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).

10.2 If, for any reason, the Co-ordinator is unsure whether or not to follow the above, then advice from CCPAS will be sought and followed. CCPAS will confirm its advice in writing in case this is needed for reference purposes in the future.

10.3 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 record 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.

10.4 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.

10.5 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.

10.6 The Church will support the Co-ordinator or Deputy in their role, and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.

11. Working with Offenders

Where someone attending the church is known to have abused children, then whilst extending friendship to the individual, the Church in its commitment to the protection of all children will require an Elder and the Co-ordinator to meet with the individual and discuss boundaries that the person will be expected to keep.

12. Helping victims of Abuse

As a church we are committed to supporting child and adult victims of abuse, and encouraging them in their faith.

13. Appointment Of Workers

There will be two types of children's worker, 'Leader' and 'Helper'. A person must be involved in the church for 6 months before being considered for either of these roles.

The procedure for their appointment is as follows:

13.1 Leader

- i) Leaders must be church members
- ii) Once it has been identified that a person wishes to be considered for the role of Leader they will:
 - (a) Complete Form B (See Appendix)
 - (b) The application form will be read by the Child Protection Co-ordinator who will alert an Elder and the group Leader to any concerns that they have about the application.
 - (c) Two character references will be asked for which will be checked verbally
 - (d) The Disclosure process will be followed
- iii) An interview will take place with an Elder and the group's Leader at which their form, the Policy and the role they will undertake will be discussed.

13.2 Helper

- i) Helpers will not lead groups alone
- ii) Once it has been identified that a person wishes to be considered for the role of Helper they will:
 - (a) Complete Form C (See Appendix)
 - (b) The application form will be read by the Child Protection Co-ordinator who will alert an Elder and the group leader to any concerns that they have about the application.
 - (c) A brief interview with an Elder and the group's Leader will take place

For both Leaders and Helpers following completion of the above processes, if it is decided that the applicant is accepted, a probationary period of one term will be set after which a review will take place.

14. Arrangements For Supervision Of Group/Children's Activities

These recommendations are for children generally. Children with special needs will be considered on an individual basis.

14.1 General

- i) There must be a phone on the premises or on trips.

- ii) Occasional help will be required to cover illness etc. This must be provided by someone within the church of Leader \ Helper status.
- iii) An open door policy to operate which means that although the meeting is held in a private home access will be granted to a parent/guardian in the same manner as would be available in a public building and this will be made known and visitors welcomed. No such visitor however will be alone with any children except their own at any time.
- iv) If a home is being used for an organised Church activity involving children then the toilet door must have a lock.
- v) If private cars are being used to transport children from one of the church's groups each child must wear a seat belt.
- vi) Registration forms and accident/incident forms must be kept safely and confidentially.
- vii) Training /supervision needs to be provided on a regular basis for all children's workers for the maintenance of high standards and for the protection of the children.

14.2 Miniature Heroes (ages 0-6)

- i) Minimum staffing levels are 1 Leader for up to 2 children, for 3 -7 children a Leader and a Helper are required. Extra help can be asked for at the discretion of the Leader.
- ii) Nappies and potty to be available. Parents/Carers to be asked if they wish staff to change their child's nappy or if they wish to be contacted.
- iii) When children are brought to Miniature Heroes, the name of the person who will collect the child will be stated.
- iv) Form D (See Appendix) needs to be completed for each child in Miniature Heroes.

14.3 Heroes (ages 6-11)

Minimum staffing requirements: 1 Leader. Minimum staff to child ratio is 1:10 Extra staff may be requested at the Leader's discretion

14.4 Tots & Toys (pre-school children)

- i) Parents are responsible for the care and supervision of their own children at all times.
- ii) There will be a designated Leader at all sessions who will have overall responsibility.

15. Accidents and Incidents

Should an accident or untoward incident involving Leaders, Helpers or children occur Form E (See Appendix) should be completed and handed to the Co-ordinator. The Co-ordinator will take any action they believe to be appropriate, and keep the report on file.

16. Guidelines for Discipline

- Discipline is the education of a person's character. It includes nurturing, training, instruction, chastisement, verbal rebuke, teaching and encouragement. It brings security, produces character, prepares for life, is evidence of love and is God's heart. (Hebrews 12:5-12 and Proverbs 22:6)
- Ask God for wisdom, discernment and understanding and pray for the child.
- Work on each individual child's positives, do not compare them with each other, but encourage and build them up, giving them responsibility for simple tasks.
- Build healthy relationships with children and be a good role model, setting a good example. You can't expect children to observe ground rules if you break them yourself.
- Take care to give quieter and well behaved children attention and don't allow some children to take all your time and energy.
- Be consistent in what you say and ensure that other team members know what you have said – this avoids manipulation.
- Look honestly at your programme – if children are bored, they misbehave. Is the programme at fault?
- NEVER smack or hit a child and don't shout – change voice tone if necessary.
- Discipline out of love NEVER anger. (Call on support from other leaders if you feel you may deal with the situation unwisely in your anger.)
- Each child is unique, special and individual, and each child needs a different method of being dealt with. We need to ask why the child is behaving that way.
- Separate children who have a tendency to be disruptive when together. Give them a chance, warn them and only separate if they are disruptive as a last resort.
- Have the child sit right in front of you or get a helper to sit next to the child.
- Be pro-active and encourage helpers to be pro-active and not wait to be told to deal with a situation.
- Take the child aside and talk to them, challenge them to change, whilst encouraging them on their strengths.
- Warn a child that you will speak to their parents and do so if necessary.

- If a child's behaviour is constantly disruptive, seek advice and guidance from a leader. (See church policy on Child Protection)
- Pray before you meet and talk over the session before you leave.
- Don't label children even in jest
- Establish age appropriate ground rules
- Tell children what to do, not just what not to do

17. Boundaries

- The level of personal care, e.g. toileting, must be appropriate and related to the age of the child whilst also accepting that some children have special needs.
- Touch – e.g. physical contact between adults and children – can be quite healthy and acceptable in public places, but discouraged in circumstances where a child is on their own with an adult/adults. Touch will usually be initiated by the child
- Workers should treat all children/young people with dignity and respect in attitude, language used and actions.
- Respect the privacy of children, avoid questionable activity, eg rough/sexually provocative games and comments
- If you invite a child to your home, ensure this is with the knowledge of the team/leadership and that a parent is aware. (This will not necessarily mean that a child will be safe.)
- Ensure that arrangements for transporting children are with the knowledge of the team/leadership and have parental approval. It is unwise to transport a child on your, or their own.

This policy is based on a model child protection policy supplied by the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service – a project of PCCA Child Care. A copy of the policy and all amendments will be filed with CCPAS. This policy must not be copied by other churches/organisations without the written agreement of CCPAS.