

BETHLEHEM CHURCH LIFE CENTRE



SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Bethlehem Church Life Centre Policy for Safeguarding Children 2008

Introduction

We want to welcome children and young people into BCLC and give them time and attention. All children and young people, whatever their age, gender, racial background, culture or disability should have the opportunity to grow up safe from harm, as valued members of the BCLC community. They should be treated with respect, listened to and kept safe.

This policy recognises and reflects:

- ☀ The UN Convention on the rights of the Child
- ☀ The Children Act 1989 & 2004
- ☀ All Wales Child Protection Procedures
- ☀ Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children Act 2004
- ☀ Safe From Harm: a code of practice for safeguarding the Welfare of children in Voluntary Organisations in England and Wales

Scope and Definitions

The following policy and procedures apply to children and young people associated with BCLC.

“Children and young people” means a person under the age of 18 years.

“Associated with BCLC” means:

Attendance at services, meetings and activities organised or promoted in the name of Bethlehem Church Life Centre wherever held.

Definitions of Child 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 may be described as fabricated or induced illness by carer

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 and behavioural development.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is 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 including:

- ▣ physical contact, including penetrative or non penetrative acts.
- ▣ non contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic material or in watching sexual activities
- ▣ encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent or severe neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold, 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.

Abuse of Trust

A relationship of trust can be described as one in which one party is in a position of power or influence over the other by virtue of their work or the nature of their activity. The individual in the position of trust could use that position to put a child or young person in a position of advantage or disadvantage.

BCLC believes that where there is a relationship of trust, allowing that relationship to develop into a sexual relationship is wrong. In this case, a sexual relationship is defined as any activity that would normally be recognised as sexual in all circumstances without knowledge of the intentions of the parties involved.

Safeguarding Children Policy

BCLC commitment to children and young people

As active participants of BCLC, we commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all children and young people associated with the BCLC.

Abuse prevention

It is the responsibility of each active participants of BCLC to prevent the neglect, physical injury, sexual and emotional abuse of children and young people associated with BCLC.

See procedures 1 to 7

Abuse reporting

It is the duty of each active participants of BCLC to report any child abuse disclosed, discovered or suspected.

See procedure 8

Health and Safety

BCLC will adopt and implement a Health and Safety policy as part of its commitment to the protection and safekeeping of children and young people.

See procedure 9

Training and Supervision of workers

BCLC is committed to supporting and training those who work with children and young people, and to providing supervision.

See procedure 10

Recruitment of workers

BCLC will exercise proper care in the selection and appointment of people who work with children and young people, whether paid or volunteer.

See procedure 11

Commitment of workers

Each worker with children and young people will be given a copy of the Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures, and will be required to follow them.

Including Teenagers in children's work

See procedure 12

Outside Groups who hire our rooms

See procedure 13

Known Offenders in the Church

See procedure 14

Designated people

BCLC has appointed Mike Holmes as the designated person and Heulwen Webb as the deputy designated person to:

- Advise BCLC on any matters of child protection arising;
- Take the appropriate action when abuse is disclosed, discovered or suspected

See procedure 8

Advocates

Since every active participant of BCLC has responsibility for the protection and safekeeping of children and young people associated with BCLC, it is recognised that each active participants should be prepared to act as an advocate of a child's or young people's best interests where abuse is disclosed, discovered or suspected.

Availability of policy and procedures

A copy of the first part of the Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures will be displayed permanently on the BCLC notice-board and a full copy will be made available on request to any person associated with BCLC, their parent or their carer.

Pastoral care

BCLC will ensure that in cases where abuse is disclosed, discovered or suspected, appropriate pastoral care is provided

(either from within BCLC or externally) for both alleged victim(s) and alleged abuser(s).

Insurance

BCLC will provide insurance cover for its active participants and workers who demonstrate compliance with the Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures against the cost of defending any claims against them concerning abuse of children or young people.

Signed

Mike Holmes

Date July 2008

Review date July 2009

Bethlehem Church Life Centre

Safeguarding Children Procedures

Many people say that good practice in this area of activity is just common sense. However, the variation in what is considered to be common sense in childcare terms is enormous. It is because of this that we have to make a special effort to try and define good practice. Sometimes good practice needs to deal with issues that we may take for granted, but because we are dealing with other people's children, we have to be especially careful. Good practice is not a straightjacket, designed to stop you doing things. On the contrary, it is to enable you to do the things children and young people enjoy in a safe environment.

Indeed much of what is presented as good practice is good practice irrespective of child protection issues. These are the standards we want to operate because we strive to do the very best for children and young people.

These procedures are first and foremost about protecting children and young people. However, they will also help to protect workers from false accusation or unnecessary and unwarranted suspicion.

Good Practice Headings

1. Ratios
2. The way we work
3. Can I touch a child?
4. Transporting children and young people
5. Keeping parents/carers informed
6. Looking after children overnight
7. Abuse of trust
8. What we should do if abuse is suspected or disclosed
9. Health and safety
10. Training
11. Recruitment
12. Including teenagers
13. Hiring out rooms
14. Known offenders in the Church

1. Ratios

- As far as possible, a worker should not be alone with a child or children, where their activity cannot be seen. On BCLC premises, this will mean avoiding areas with no CCTV coverage or leaving doors open where there is no glass in the door to see through, or two groups working in the same room.
- Do not invite a child or young person to your home alone. It is acceptable to invite a group if you ensure that another adult is in the house. Establish that each parent/carer knows where their child is and at what time they should return home. (see later procedures re transport of children)
- In a 'counselling' situation with a young person, where privacy and confidentiality are important, ensure 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. It is good practice to set an agreed time limit prior to the 'counselling' session and to stick to it. It is your responsibility as the adult involved to set this ground rule and to end the session at the designated time. Make another appointed time to continue if necessary.
- Children and young people must not be given access to BCLC premises unless responsible adults are present.
- At no time should one adult be alone on BCLC premises with a child or group of children and young people.
- Make sure you have a suitable ratio of staff to children and young people. For example, think about how you will manage if someone has an accident and needs immediate attention. These ratios may vary according to the age of the

children concerned and whether or not the activity is taking place indoors or outside. Alongside this, we need to consider the gender balances of our workers in relation to the children and young people with whom we are working.

Recommended ratios are as follows:

Indoor Activities

Age	Ratio
0 – 2 years	1:3
2 – 3 years	1:4
3 – 8 years	1:8
8 years and over	2:20 (male and female) plus 1 extra adult for every 10 children.

Outdoor Activities

Age	Ratio
0 – 2 years	1:3
2 – 3 years	1:4
3 – 8 years	1:6
8 - 13 years	2:15 (male and female) plus 1 extra adult for every 8 children
13 and over	2:20 (male and female) plus 1 extra adult for every 10 young people.

2. The way we work

- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity. Use age appropriate language and tone of voice. Be aware of your own body language and the effect you are having on the individual child or young person.
- Listen well. Be careful not to assume you know what a child or young person is thinking or feeling. Listen to what is spoken and how it is said. At the same time, observe body language to better understand what is being said.
- Do not engage in any of the following:
 - Invading the privacy of children or young people when they are using the toilet or shower.
 - Rough games involving physical contact between a leader and a child or young person.
 - Sexually provocative games
 - Making sexually suggestive comments about or to a child or young person, even in fun.
 - Scapegoating, belittling, ridiculing, or rejecting a child or young person.
- When it is necessary to control and discipline children and young people, this should be done without using physical punishment. (However, a situation may arise where a child or young person needs to be restrained in order to protect them or a third person).
- Make sure another adult is present if, for example, a young child has soiled their underclothes and needs to be thoroughly washed. If possible, the child's own parent or carer should be called in to carry out such a task.

- Do not respond to excessive attention seeking that is overtly sexual or physical in nature.

3. Can I touch a child?

It is hard to conceive how you can be a nurturing caring worker with children and young people without some physical contact happening at least occasionally. For example if a child is upset it is natural to want to put an arm around their shoulder. It could even be thought as abusive not to respond by touching a child in such circumstances. However, you must be conscious that what to you is an innocent touch may have another, more sinister meaning for children who have experienced abuse. If you find that the child is cringing or responding in a negative way to being touched then stop immediately and find an alternative, non-tactile way to convey your concern.

Be aware of your own and other workers behaviour in terms of touching. Always be prepared to answer the question, “For whose benefit is this taking place?” It is advisable to avoid touching a child when no one else is present in the room. If you see another worker acting in ways that might be misconstrued, speak to them or to a leader 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.

4. Transporting children and young people

- If they are alone, ask them to sit in the rear of the car. Ask parents/carers to sign a consent form in respect of travel arrangements, if a regular agreement.
- All private transport must have correct insurance cover for passengers.
- Always insist that seatbelts be worn when travelling.

- If you use a minibus and people are making a contribution to its use, you are required to get a Section 19 permit from the DETR.
- When using coaches, ensure that the company has full insurance cover. Check on the limit of passenger numbers and do not exceed this number. Children should remain seated and wear seatbelts provided.
- On every trip, an adult should be allocated a group, with a written list of those children or young people for whom they have responsibility, even if the whole group is to remain together.
- If travelling in several small groups, it is good practice to insist that the same group of children travel on both the outgoing and return journeys with the same adult. This minimises the possibility of children going astray because of false assumptions that someone else has taken them.

5. Keeping parents/carers informed

- ✿ All children and young people will be registered and parents/carers asked for details of full name, date of birth, address and contact telephone number(s).
- ✿ Consent forms for emergency medical treatment and for travel arrangements will be completed if children are being cared for in the absence of their prime carer, whether on or off church premises. This information will be readily available to workers. Be aware that in some families, there are legal constraints on contact with children by absent parents.
- ✿ There should be a clear understanding of what sort of activities the child or young person will be doing and the time limits of these.

- ✿ Arrangements for returning children to their parents care should be clarified. Where children are collected from activities, (Which will normally be the case with children up to 11 years of age) nominated persons should be identified by the parent/carer as acceptable to carry out this task

6. Looking after children overnight

It is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules that will cover every situation. However, sensible precautions will minimise the risk for workers, children and young people.

- Males and females should sleep separately. If the group of children has both boys and girls, then it is important to have a mix of male and female workers.

There will be differences in the most appropriate way to deal with the overnight care of children and young people in light of the venue, the children's ages and other prevailing conditions. What is important is that the situation is discussed by the workers and an agreement reached together as to how they will proceed. Children are best protected in an environment where the adults concerned are aware of the issues of child abuse and there is an acceptance of the need to be watchful.

Particularly when taking away a mixed age group it is important to remember that some children are abused by other (often older) children or young people.

- All parents/carers will be given written details of an identified contact worker, with an address and telephone number of the overnight location. Parents/carers must be advised in writing of how their children will be cared for in their absence.

- Parents/carers must complete suitable consent forms in respect of their child's medical care; travel and collection arrangements; sleeping conditions; food; other specific activities; etc.
- All medical information, plus emergency contact names and numbers must be taken with the group to the location of the overnight care.
- A reliable mobile phone is a useful tool in working away from the usual church base.

The following checklist will help to identify a number of important issues that should be considered for the safety and well being of the children and young people.

1. Make sure that at least one adult is in charge of specific aspects of the programme, e.g. Cooking, first aider etc. The person with overall responsibility must check that the person designated as the first aid officer holds an appropriate valid certificate. The person responsible for catering will need to hold a Basic Food Hygiene Certificate.
2. Check the insurance cover of any building in which you are sleeping. There may be a limit on numbers it accommodates. If you exceed these, insurance can be invalid.
3. Check the building and know where water, electricity and gas can be turned off. Know the fire drill for the building, and make sure you have a fire drill as soon as possible after entering the premises. Know where the fire extinguishers are. A Location Specific Plan should be displayed alongside the Fire notice in each room.
4. Halls and rooms used for sleeping large numbers of people **MUST** have **TWO** means of exit.

5. Know where the nearest hospital and doctor are and inform the local doctor if you are sleeping there. It is also a good idea to notify local police. This applies if you are sleeping in any building, even if only for one night, even if it is your own church. Also it is helpful to inform the fire brigade.
6. Ensure that parents/guardians have returned a health form stating any special dietary requirements and current medication, and also giving the name and telephone number of the child's doctor.
7. Residential activities must have safety rules/boundaries. E.g. letting adults know where you are, not entering the kitchen, etc.
8. Make sure the children have correct clothing for whatever activity they are taking part in. It is useful to issue a "kit list" for residential activities.
9. Where outdoor activities are concerned, either leaders should have appropriate qualification, or if the activity is being provided by an outside organisation, then the leaders should check that this organisation is registered with the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority and have appropriate insurance. Current guidelines suggest that for any camping or hill walking activity, the basic qualification that should be held is the Basic Expedition Leader Award (BELA) or an equivalent.

7. Abuse of Trust

- It is always wrong for a leader to enter into a sexual relationship with a young person. Whilst young people aged 16 or 17 can legally consent to sexual activity, they may still be emotionally immature. Their vulnerability could be exploited either deliberately or unwittingly. In these circumstances it does not make any difference whether or

not the sexual relationship is consensual. The imbalance of power makes it an abuse of trust.

- It is not acceptable for a leader to form a romantic relationship with a child or young person with whom they have a relationship of trust. Such a romantic relationship (even if consensual) would not be a relationship of equal partners – the leader is always in a position of power over the young person and exploitation is almost inevitable, even if unintentional.
- The inappropriate nature of romantic relationships is obvious where the leader is an adult, but less so when the leader is also a young person. However, if such a romantic relationship did occur, there would still be a confusion of the roles of the leader and romantic partner. Normally in these circumstances the leader should cease either the relationship of trust or the romantic relationship with the young person.

8. What should we do if abuse is suspected or disclosed?

It is important to remember the welfare of the child is paramount. Protecting children from harm is of primary importance and confidentiality cannot be maintained if to do so places a child or young person at risk. However in situations where a parent or carer is implicated in the abuse, and where there is doubt about whether, by informing the parent or carer the child or young person might be placed at increased risk, the advice of Social Services staff should be sought about how best to proceed. In cases of disclosure of a sexual nature parents or carers should not be informed.

The nature and severity of concerns that a child, young persons or an adult may share will vary considerably. The response to concerns expressed by a child, a young person or a worker in the church will be determined by the seriousness of what has been shared.

In some instances, the issue of concern raised may be such that, with the child's knowledge, an appropriate way of resolving the issue can be worked out. In cases of minor concerns, this would involve informing the child's parent and seeking with them a resolution of the issues raised. This can be done by the worker, the leader, the church's designated person, the minister or a combination of the above.

In other circumstances any adult who has a concern about a child may wish to discuss their concerns about what they have observed or heard with the designated person within the church in order to decide the most appropriate action to take.

Individuals Should Not

- Promise confidentiality
- Ask leading questions
- Take responsibility for deciding whether or not child abuse is actually taking place
- Act alone
- Take sole responsibility for what has been shared, or any concerns they may have

But must

- Discuss concerns without delay with the designated person so as to begin to protect the child or young person and gain some support for all those involved in what could be a difficult situation.
- Listen carefully
- Write down what the child said in his or her own words. A 'responding to abuse' form is available and kept with the full Safeguarding Children policy and procedures document in the filing cabinet in the Admin Office to help this procedure if appropriate.

If the concerns in any way involve the designated person, the deputy designated person needs to be informed. In those cases where abuse is suspected or disclosed, even if it involves a member of the church, the matter must be referred to Social Services (telephone number: between 9.00am and 5.00pm 01656 642200; the out of hours telephone number known as the Emergency Duty Team is 01443 204010) by the designated person or their deputy. Where there is doubt as to the course of action needed, the 'Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) can be contacted (BCLC pays an annual subscription for this service). Their telephone number is: 0845 1204551 or 0845 1204550. The telephone number for South Wales Police is 01656 655555.

9. Health and Safety

Bethlehem Church Life Centre will ensure that;

- **Furniture** – is in a safe condition, child sized, etc.
- **Equipment** – and potentially hazardous tools, cleaning fluids, etc are stored in a safe place.
- **Electrical** – Regular electricity checks will be carried out. Socket covers will be used as appropriate.
- **First Aid** – a first aid box is provided in reception and the back kitchen. The incident/accident book, which should be filled in as necessary.
- **Fire Equipment** – fire extinguishers are provided throughout the building and are checked regularly. Leaders should ensure that all children/young people are aware of the fire drill/exits.
- **Lighting** – that the building is well lit internally and externally – especially around the entrance points.
- **Travel** – vehicles are equipped with seat belts and properly insured. Leaders will get written permission from parents/carers to take children out. (See Procedure 4).
- **Insurance** – the centre insurance is adequate to do work with children and young people on and off site.

Leaders of BCLC run organisations will ensure that;

- **Security** – they have a safe procedure for the dropping off and the collection of children and young people who attend events/meetings. (This is age appropriate). Leaders will also ensure that children/young people cannot leave the building unnoticed, and also be aware of strangers having access unnoticed.
- **Accident and Emergency** – records of contact names, address and telephone numbers are held for every child on site, and are available at meetings. This should also include any medical information and consent for the leader(s) to administer emergency treatment if necessary.

10. Training

- All BCLC workers who have responsibilities involving children or young people will need to undergo Safeguarding Children training relevant to BCLC.
- Training must be updated regularly and records kept of the date of the course, the subject covered and those who have attended.
- All new workers involved in children or youth work associated with BCLC must receive appropriate Safeguarding Children training as part of the induction process.
- The church is committed to supporting the training for those who work with children and young people on behalf of BCLC.

11. Recruiting

The importance of taking proper care when appointing people to work with children or young people cannot be minimised. Churches are often tempted to appoint the first person to put their

hand up regardless of their gifts and with a casual lack of concern about anything in their past that might suggest that they are unsuitable to be entrusted with the care of children.

These are the steps that BCLC are setting in place that will begin to give the best protection possible.

- Step 1
 - Write a simple job profile.
- Step 2
 - Ask the candidate to complete an application form.
- Step 3
 - Take up references
- Step 4
 - Interview the candidate
- Step 5
 - Make the appointment decision.
- Step 6
 - Undertake an enhanced CRB disclosure. *This will need to be renewed every three years*
- Step 7
 - Ask the person appointed to agree the volunteer profile
- Step 8
 - Give appropriate training in the church's Safeguarding Children policy.
- Step 9
 - Support, develop and supervise the person appointed throughout their involvement with children's work in the church.

12. Including Teenagers in children's work

Careful consideration needs to be given to the work teenagers will be doing with children and young people and the degree of supervision and support they will receive.

To this end, the minimum age that a teenager will be allowed to work within a group is 14 years. They will not be allowed to be in a leadership position, but can have a helper role.

They will be expected to go through the recruitment process as detailed in section 11.

The over-riding principle throughout is that children and the vulnerable will be protected from those seeking to take advantage of their position and the opportunities available to them for significant contact.

13. Hiring out the rooms

Whilst our Safeguarding Children Policy and procedures will not apply to non-church groups, our tenancy agreements with those who use our premises will require these groups to have a suitable policy.

14. Management of Known Offenders within the Church

Occasionally BCLC may find that someone attending church activities has been convicted in the past of abusing a child.

First, it should be made clear that those with convictions for harming children will not be seen as 'beyond redemption'. We will resist the tabloid reaction to demonise those who harm children. However, our love will be shaped by wisdom. If welcoming them

into the fellowship of the church is appropriate, we will ensure the safety of children.

Therefore, for the sake of the protection of children and for the sake of an offender's journey towards forgiveness and restoration those who have offended against children in the past will not be given positions of responsibility (for children) within the church.

When the past offence has been of a sexual nature, we need to go further. Those who abuse children in this way are often very skilful in finding ways of building relationships with children that appear to be quite innocent. They know how to gain the confidence of adults and win the trust of children.

Given the emphasis on Children and Youth work at BCLC and the number of children attending our main church service, BCLC is considered an inappropriate environment for someone who has sexually abused a child.

Please note: if such information is known to the church only because it was revealed as a result of a Disclosure by the Criminal Records Bureau it would be a criminal offence for that information to be passed on to others.

Responding to abuse – Worker’s action Sheet

CONFIDENTIAL

Name of Group _____

Name of Child/Young Person: _____

Address _____

Date of Birth ____/____/____

Name of Person Reporting Event _____

Date ____/____/____ Time _____

Sequence of Events/Actual Words Used/Observations
(Draw a diagram overleaf when appropriate)

Action Taken

Name of Person Contacted:

Date ____/____/____ Time _____

Notes:

