

Fyfield Baptist Chapel

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is the responsibility of us all

Policy Statement on Safeguarding Children and vulnerable adults in Fyfield Baptist Chapel

In the Policy Statement:

- 'Fyfield Baptist Chapel' is referred to as the 'church'
- 'members' refers to those who belong to, and are in regular fellowship with, the church

Fyfield Baptist Chapel recognises its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within the legal framework of the Children Act 1989. Anyone under the age of 18 is considered to be a child/young person.

It is difficult to acknowledge sometimes that abuse can happen within a church but any group or organisation working with children needs to be alert to the possibility of abuse occurring. It is the responsibility of us all to put the welfare of children and young people first and to recognise behaviours that can put children at risk.

We are aware that many children and young people are the victims of different kinds of abuse and that they can be subjected to social factors that have an adverse impact upon their lives, such as domestic abuse or substance misuse.

We aim to create a safe and respectful environment within which children and young people can thrive and churches can operate with the help and security of clear guidance.

These guidelines are for the use of all members, volunteers, paid staff and visitors. The guidelines can be shared with the parents and carers of the children and young people to whom we offer a service.

We are committed to:

- The care, nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children and young adults
- The safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable
- The establishment of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is a culture of 'informed vigilance' as to the dangers of abuse

Working with children

As a general rule within the church, only members of the church will be allowed to work with children, and only after they have been in fellowship for a minimum of six months (the 'six month rule'). Consideration must always be given to ensure sufficient members are present with the children.

Good practice

On the premises

- Everyone is responsible for children while on these premises and must make sure that health and safety guidelines are adhered to
- With the exception of normal Sunday activities (for example, Sunday School or young people's groups), at any children's activities organised by the church, it is church policy that there shall always be a minimum of two responsible adult members, one male and one female, present; and wherever practical steps should be taken that a worker is not left alone with a child.
- Under no circumstances should visitors be allowed to wander around the premises unaccompanied when children and young people are present
- Appropriate adult child ratios should be observed at all times
- People working with children should be alert to strangers frequently waiting outside a venue with no apparent purpose. Children should not be collected by people other than their parents unless notification has been received
- If a child is not collected after a session it is reasonable to wait approximately half an hour for a parent or carer to arrive. If the parent or carer cannot be contacted, Social Services or the police should be contacted and asked to assist.
- Careful consideration will need to be given to ensure the safety of children as they leave the premises

Visits and Trips

- Appropriate Health and safety guidelines must be adhered to for all visits and trips
- All activities must be risk assessed and properly insured
- All vehicles hired for outings must be insured, roadworthy and fitted with seatbelts;
- All drivers should travel with at least one escort. Drivers and escorts should have up to date CRB checks and been subject to appropriate recruitment procedures. All drivers and escorts should agree to abide by these guidelines
- A roll call will be taken at the start of the journey and again before commencing the return journey; if travelling in more than one vehicle, children will be encouraged to travel in the same vehicle there and back
- The leaders of trips will carry the contact numbers for the home organisation and emergency services in the event of an alert being necessary
- If a child goes missing on a trip, staff should instigate an immediate search. If the child cannot be found within half an hour, the appropriate security staff and police should be notified
- If, having notified the security staff and police, the child cannot be found, the parents/carers will be notified immediately
- The care of the remaining children is paramount. It is imperative that they return to the home site as quickly as possible, while a senior leader remains at the visit to coordinate contact between security staff and the child's parents/carers

Use of premises by other organisations

In the event that a room or rooms on the premises are used by other organisations, the letting agreement should ensure that the hiring organisation works to approved child protection procedures and/or that they read and agree to abide by these guidelines.

Recognising signs of abuse

It can often be difficult to recognise abuse. The signs listed in these guidelines are only indicators and many can have reasonable explanations. Children may behave strangely or seem unhappy for many reasons, as they move through the stages of childhood or their families experience changes. It is nevertheless important to know what could indicate that abuse is taking place to be alert to the need to consult further.

Someone can abuse a child by actively inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse can take place within a family, in an institutional or community setting, by telephone or on the Internet. Abuse can be carried out by someone known to a child or by a complete stranger.

If you are worried about a child it is important that you keep a written record of any physical or behavioural signs and symptoms. In this way you can monitor whether or not a pattern emerges and provide evidence to any investigation if required.

What to do with your concerns

- In the event that a child makes an allegation or disclosure of abuse by an adult or another child or young person, it is important that you:
- Listen to them and/or closely observe their presentation and behaviour
- Let them know that you take what they are saying seriously
- **Do not** attempt to question or interview them yourself
- Let them know that you will need to tell someone else in order to help them. **Do not promise to keep what they tell you secret**
- Inform your Designated Person as soon as possible
- Make a written record of the incident or events

Sometimes you may just feel concerned about a child but do not know whether to share your concerns or not. In this situation you should always raise your concerns with your Designated Person, who will decide what to do next.

The responsibility for investigating allegations of abuse, whether they result from the disclosure of a child or the concerns of an adult, lies with social workers and the police.

It is normally the responsibility of your Designated Person to make a referral to these agencies, but if you judge the situation to be an emergency and/or you require advice in the absence of the Designated Person, you must report your concerns directly.

Social Services will advise you when or whether to inform the child's parents or carers about any concerns. If they decide to pursue a child protection investigation, you should:

- Work closely and collaboratively with all professionals involved in the investigation, in order to keep the child safe
- Attend a child protection conference if you are invited. You will be asked to provide information about your involvement with the child, which is why it is important to keep records of your concerns
- Attend any subsequent child protection review conferences

Allegations made against those working with children

Organisations that work or come into contact with children and young people need to be aware of the possibility that allegations of abuse will be made against those working with children. Allegations can be made by children, young people, parents and they can be made by other concerned adults.

Allegations can be made for a variety of reasons. Some of the most common are:

- Abuse has actually taken place
- Children can misinterpret your language or your actions because they are reminded of something else

All allegations should be brought to the notice of the Designated Person immediately. In cases where the allegation is made against this person, the complainant should approach a Church Officer or take the following action him or herself:

Make sure that the child in question is safe and away from the person alleged to have abused a child

Contact social services

Contact the parents or carers of the child if advised to do so by the social worker/officer in charge of allegations

Irrespective of any investigation by Social Service or the police, you should follow the appropriate disciplinary procedure; consideration must be given as to whether the member of staff or volunteer should be suspended from duty while the investigation is carried out

Consider whether the person has access to children anywhere else and whether those organisations or groups need to be informed

Act upon the decisions made in any strategy meeting

All incidents should be investigated within the organisation after any external investigation has finished, reviewing practice and putting in place any additional measures based on lessons learned.

Support

It is important that support is given to the person who faces an allegation.

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

All child protection concerns should be acted upon immediately. If you are concerned that a child might be at risk or is actually suffering abuse, you should tell the Designated Person within your church.

Your Designated Person is: the Minister Rev W A Carter

Telephone number: 01865769473

Your Church Officers are:

- Mr Angus Popplestone**
- Mr Gordon Perry**
- Mr David Hambleton**

**In the event that the Designated Person is not available, please refer to a Church Officer
In an emergency situation, contact Social Services or the police directly**