

# **Child Protection Framework - CP3**

## **Hope Hall - Bridge of Weir**

### **Child Protection Procedures**

The Christians at Hope Hall, Bridge of Weir seek to maintain the evangelical principles of the Christian faith. For many years we have been involved in children's and young peoples work in Bridge of Weir and the surrounding villages. The work includes activities such as Bible Clubs, Bible Classes, Girls' classes, Scripture Union, RE classes and assemblies in schools and Sunday School. Trips, visits, and outings are arranged from time to time.

These various activities have three main objectives:-

- To lead children and young people to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and Lord
- To help them grow in their faith and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ
- To develop Christian character and to give training for Christian service and Leadership.

To fulfil these objectives children and young people are taught the truths of the Word of God by experienced leaders and youth workers. Given the nature of the work, it follows that at the very heart of the work there is a concern for the physical, mental, moral and spiritual well being of each child and young person.

### **1 Introduction**

1.1 In its work with children and young people the Christians at Hope Hall, Bridge of Weir aim to attract, support and encourage children to appreciate and understand the basic doctrines contained in the Bible. To achieve this, we believe that the children deserve a secure and safe environment where they can be taught the Bible. As part of that aim, we have developed Child Protection Procedures in line with recognised national guidelines.

1.2 Where individuals are working with children and young people, it is important to recognise that there will always be the possibility that youth workers\* will encounter situations where they become aware that a child or young person or children or young people are being abused or mistreated. In order to assist youth workers to respond to these concerns the following guidance and advice is provided.

1.3 The purpose of these guidelines is primarily to protect the children, young people, youth workers and the reputation of the Christians in Hope Hall.

1.4 These procedures reflect current legislation and will be reviewed and revised when necessary.

Please note:-

"Youth Worker" is used to describe all involved with young people who attend Hope Hall

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## 2. Forms of Abuse

2.1 The concerns may relate to neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, or sexual abuse of a child or young person.

Neglect is the persistent or severe failure to protect a child or young person from exposure to danger, including cold or starvation, or failure to carry out important aspects of care. An example may be the persistent leaving of a child or young person alone in a house or the persistent failure to provide appropriate clothing.

Physical abuse is actual or likely physical injury to a child or young person, or failure to prevent physical injury to a child or young person including deliberate poisoning and suffocation.

Emotional abuse may take a number of recognisable forms including verbal assault including threats of sexual or physical abuse, close confinement, such as locking a child or young person in a room, and other abusive treatment such as withholding food.

Sexual abuse occurs when there is the actual or likely exposure of a child or young person to inappropriate sexual activity. This could include activities ranging from inappropriate touching to sexual intercourse. This also involves exposure to pornographic material and sexual exploitation (such as prostitution).

2.2 Collectively, these terms are referred to as Child Protection issues. Concern may be felt after one incident emerges, or over a period of time following a series of events / concerns. Information leading to the concern can come from various sources - observation, statements made by a child or young person, by another member of the family, a friend or by another member of the Children's/Youth work.

## 3 Responsibility for Responding

3.1 The responsibility of responding to situations where children or young people are thought to have been abused, or may be at risk of abuse, lies with the Police and the Local Authority Social Services / Social Work Department. In every area these agencies have well-established procedures and staff who are experienced in responding to child protection issues. Youth workers must refer their child protection concerns, where possible via the designated child protection officer, to the Police or the Local Authority Social Services Work Department who will then take responsibility for any further action

3.2 Youth workers, along with members of the public, have a responsibility to take action if the welfare of a child or young person causes concern. The action to be taken will vary with the circumstances (see below) but must always be taken as soon as possible. Delay in contacting Social Services/ Social Work Department or the Police can put a child or young person in serious danger. It should be remembered that there might be siblings or other children or young people at risk. It is often said that children must be believed. It is perhaps more realistic to say that children and young people should always be listened to and their comments should never be dismissed without proper investigation by experts.

3.3 Consequently it is not the role of the youth worker to investigate or assess whether an allegation of abuse is true. Once aware of the information their responsibility is to consider the question "if this is true, is this or any other child or young person potentially at risk of abuse or neglect?" If the answer is yes, then take the action described in the section of procedures (section 4)

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## 4. Procedures when abuse is disclosed or suspected

4.1 At the point of disclosure or allegation, it is important to make clear to the child, young person or adult that any information they are about to give cannot be kept secret.

4.2 Any youth worker concerned about a child protection issue **must report** this to the designated Child Protection Officer.

4.3.1 Where there is a need for urgent medical attention; this should be the first priority. The child or young person should be taken to the nearest Casualty Department and the situation explained to the medical staff. The medical staff will then usually contact Social Services / Social Work Department or Police. The youth worker must check that they have agreed to do so and make sure that they have the name and contact telephone number of the youth worker to pass on. In the unlikely event that the staff does not agree to contact Social Services / Social Work Department or Police then contact must be made by the youth worker, as indicated in para 4.3.3

4.3.2 A note must be made by the youth worker of any information volunteered by the child or young person or others present. Without questioning the child or young person or parents, the youth worker should gather as much information on the child or young person as possible, such as full name, date of birth, address, the names of family members and G.P.s details, if available. Wherever possible a written record of events should be made by the youth worker at the time they occur or immediately afterwards. This should never be done in front of the child or young person or parents and should not take precedence over being with and supporting the child or young person. The written record should identify sources of information and attempt to separate fact from opinion. This information should be stored securely and confidentially.

4.3.3 If immediate medical treatment is not necessary, then the designated child protection officer should telephone the nearest Social Services Social Work Department and ask for the Duty Social Worker. State clearly that you need to talk to someone about child protection concerns. Explain who you are and your concerns to the Duty Social Worker. All information that you have should be shared with the Duty Social Worker. The Duty Social Worker will tell you what action they will take and any further action to be taken by you.

Note:-

An out of hours Duty Social Worker can be contacted by telephoning the regular Social Services / Social Work Department.

4.4 Where the concerns are identified whilst on a trip away from Hope Hall there are a number of other factors to be considered:-

4.4.1 Where there is a need for urgent medical attention, this should be the first priority. The child or young person should be taken to the nearest Casualty Department and the situation explained to the medical staff. The medical staff will then usually contact Social Services /Social Work Department or Police. The youth worker must check that they have agreed to do so and make sure that they have the name and contact telephone number of the youth worker to pass on. In the unlikely event that medical staff does not agree to contact Social Services/Social Work Department or Police then contact must be made by the youth worker as indicated in para 4.3.

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4.4.2 If the nature of the complaint relates only to the home area (i.e. a child or young person suggests that he / she is being abused or neglected in the parental home), the home Duty Social Worker or Out of Hours Service must be contacted as in para. 4.3.

4.4.3 If the nature of the complaint has potential implications for the area in which the trip has been taken (eg. a child or young person alleges that he/she has been abused on that trip) then contact must be made with the Police or local Social Services/Social Work Department for that area. At the same time the home Social Services/Social Work Department must be informed.

4.5 In any of the above situations support of the child, or young person, who is involved is important. Youth workers should be helped to maintain appropriate contact with the child or young person both to provide support if necessary or appropriate and to provide some stability to the child or young person who may be facing many changes including removal from the family home.

4.6 The Child protection officer and the assembly elders are responsible for ensuring the provision of ongoing support and guidance to any Youth worker or young person who received the disclosure.

### **5. Confidentiality**

5.1 All youth workers must respect the need for confidentiality. The child protection issues that come to light should be kept confidential. The matter should only be discussed with appropriate representatives of the Social Services / Social Work Department, Police, Health Services and the designated child protection officer within the Church.

### **6. When abuse by a Youth Worker is disclosed or suspected**

6.1 Where allegations are made against a youth worker or there are suspicions about a youth worker's behaviour, which may meet the criteria for abuse then:-

- The recipient of the complaint or the concerned youth worker must report this to the designated child protection officer. The child protection officer is responsible for informing the Elders of the Church.
- If the designated child protection officer is the alleged perpetrator or the suspected abuser, the youth worker should inform the elders of the church immediately.
- If one of the Church elders is the alleged perpetrator or suspected abuser, the youth worker should inform the designated child protection officer who will inform the other church elders.

6.2 The procedures to be followed for the protection of the child or young person are as outlined in section 4.

6.3 The youth worker who is alleged to have abused or is suspected of abuse should be suspended immediately from any youth work activity. It is important to explain to that individual that such action is neutral and does not assume that the allegations are true. The action is designed both to protect the children or young people allegedly involved and also to protect the alleged perpetrator from any further allegations of harassment - intimidation of the children or young people or other witnesses.

6.4 Any internal investigation by the elders or discipline procedure should be held in abeyance until the Police or Social Service / Social Work Department has indicated they have no further involvement.

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### **7. When abuse by a child or young person is disclosed or suspected**

7.1 When a child or young person is suspected or alleged to have been the perpetrator of abuse that child or young person should be removed from the situation immediately.

7.2 One youth worker should be allocated to provide support to the child or young person or children or young people who are in danger of abuse. The procedures to be followed for the protection of the child or young person are those outlined in Section 4.

7.3 A separate youth worker should provide short-term support to the suspected or alleged perpetrator. In the long term it may be appropriate to seek advice from the designated child protection officer.

7.4 A report should be completed and filed securely and confidentially.

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## **Hope Hall, Bridge of Weir**

### **General Guidelines**

The Christians at Hope Hall, Bridge of Weir, are fully committed to safeguarding the well being of children and young people. Church members, youth workers, children and young people should, at all times, show respect and understanding for the rights, safety and welfare of children and young people, and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the teaching and Biblical principles upheld at the above Church.

#### **YOU SHOULD**

- Treat everyone with respect and provide an example you wish others to follow
- Plan activities, which involve more than one person being present, or at least which are within sight or hearing of others.
- Learn to control and discipline children without using physical punishment
- Respect a young person's right to personal privacy.
- Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes of behaviour they do not like, and to talk to others about any concerns they may have.
- Avoid physical horseplay such as wrestling, tickling or inappropriate touching.
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- Recognise that caution is required even in sensitive moments of counselling, such as dealing with bullying, bereavement or abuse.
- Ensure that the ratio of Qualified / Experienced Leaders to Members is appropriate to the activity

#### **YOU SHOULD NOT**

- Permit abusive youth peer activities (e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing, bullying)
- Have any inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others.
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts.
- Allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviour eg tantrums or crushes, show favouritism to any individual or make suggestive remarks or gestures.
- Rely on just your good name to protect you. Believe "it could never happen to me".
- Exaggerate or trivialise child abuse.

#### **CARING FOR COLLEAGUES**

If you see a fellow youth worker acting in a way that might be misconstrued, be prepared to speak to them, to the Child Protection officer, or to the elders about your concerns. The elders and child protection officer should encourage an atmosphere of mutual trust and care which allows all youth workers to discuss these issues.

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## **Hope Hall – Bridge of Weir**

### **Transport / Travel Guidelines**

The transportation of children and young people is an area of risk that youth workers should consider and manage. Circumstances will vary according to the children or young people being transported, means of transportation, and activity. Youth Workers will need to adapt their focus to circumstances as they arise. If children persistently act in an unsafe manner, parental help should be sought to remedy the situation. If the situation cannot be remedied, the child or young person should be excluded temporarily / permanently from transportation and youth activities.

#### **ENTERING / LEAVING HOPE HALL, OTHER BUILDING OR TRANSPORT**

- Plan routes so that children do not have to cross the road. Where this is not possible ensure the crossing is safe, or they are near a crossing, or are guided across the road
- Ensure entrance and exit of transport, buildings and stairways is orderly

#### **TRANSPORTATION BY BUS**

- Seek to keep to timetable so children and young people are not kept waiting unduly
- Two or more Youth Workers should accompany the children on the bus
- The bus should, where possible, exit children on the kerbside

#### **TRANSPORTATION BY CAR**

- Cars should be free from serious defects and driven in a safe, considerate manner.
- The numbers in each vehicle should be limited to the number of seats, and seatbelts worn.
- On outings an appropriate number of adults should be present.
- Drivers should, where possible, seek to avoid being alone in the car with a single child or young person. Where this is not possible try to ensure a girl is not left with a male driver, or a boy with a female driver.

#### **OCCASIONAL OUTINGS**

- A note should be sent to parent / guardian outlining planned activities etc, and seeking their approval
- An appropriate number of adult helpers should be available to help.
- Dangerous activities such as rock climbing, parachuting etc. should not be undertaken.