

Christ Church Sparkbrook Policy

On the Protection of Children and Young People



INTRODUCTION

The Parochial Church Council of Christ Church Sparkbrook recognises the unique status of children and young people. We will therefore seek to ensure that they are treated as individuals and with respect.

We require that all our church workers and volunteers accept the principle enshrined in the Children Act 1989 that the welfare of the child is paramount and will seek to offer them the best possible nurture and care, protecting them in their vulnerability.

We will work within the framework and principles of The Diocese of Birmingham's Policy on Child Protection.

We affirm these principles by adopting the following policy

The Policy

1. CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

We will always work within a safe environment for children, young people and those working with them. To achieve this we will ensure that children and young people will be helped to feel safe and secure at all times, and their concerns listened to and wherever possible acted upon by an appointed Child Advocate within the church. The Child Advocate is someone outside of the formal leadership of the church who should be made known to children as available to talk to about any concerns, notably at the beginning of the annual Holiday Club and in the safeguarding posters in the building. Specifically:

- access to any site/meeting place used by children & young people will always be supervised by a responsible adult.
- all steps will be taken to ensure that the site/meeting place is safe for children and young people
- workers/volunteers will be especially vigilant when supervising outside/external activities,

- there will always be a minimum of two approved adult workers/volunteers present at any activity, and statutory child:adult ratios will be maintained
- a child will never be left alone with an adult unless they can be easily observed or heard by others nearby
- lifts will not be given to a lone child or young person in a vehicle unless at least two adults are present, or exceptionally by private agreement with the child/young person's parents
- a Child Protection Coordinator will be appointed by the church (see flow chart)
- this policy will be reviewed annually by the steering group for Christ Church Sparkbrook
- further reviews will be carried out if necessitated by new legislation or Diocesan policies.

2. CHECKING VOLUNTEERS AND WORKERS

We require that all of those who have regular contact with children and young people under the age of 18 in a paid or voluntary capacity in the name of Christ Church Sparkbrook are recruited, selected and work according to best practice. We therefore require that all volunteers and workers who would have regular contact with children and young people:

- complete a Confidential Self Declaration (Form 6) stating if they have ever been convicted of a criminal offence with regard to children or accepted in this regard an official caution from the police
- be subject to a background check through Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) procedures at the outset of their work with children and thereafter every three years
- be interviewed before appointment by the priest in charge (or during an interregnum the Area Dean), or his appointed deputy from within Christ Church
- provide, if requested by one of the above officers, current proof of identification with attached photo (i.e. passport, new driving licence) for inspection
- provide two written references (referees) if requested by one of the above officers
- on their appointment be given a copy of this policy and the flow chart of action in case of abuse
- on their appointment receive and sign either a role description or a written outline of what is expected of them
- be subject to a probationary period of six months: at the end of this six months they should have an interview with the supervisor of the relevant event or activity to talk through what has been learned and to verify that the volunteer is clear on good practice as regards reporting any concerns and in implementing safe and appropriate boundaries. During the six months probation period the volunteer should not be allowed unsupervised time with children or vulnerable adults without the supervisor having observed good practice and specifically directed to do so accordingly. Such supervision and the permission to do so should be recorded and any comments about good practice and learning should constitute part of the review at the end of the probationary period
- short term workers and volunteers coming from overseas will, in addition to their two written references, supply:
 - (i) a letter of reference from their church leader or Bishop confirming that they do not have a record of offences against children. (If this can not be supplied in English then a validated translation must be provided)
 - (ii) a letter of reference from their sponsoring agency confirming that they do not

have a record of a criminal offence which would prevent them from working with children and young people, or (in the case where there is no sponsoring agency) police clearance from their home country which is translated into English and validated.

If a person should be found to be unsuitable for the work either through the information they give on their form or through the results of a check, they will not be allowed to work with children or young people and the Bishop's Advisor will be informed.

Records (including DBS checks) will be kept indefinitely in a locked file by the Incumbent/Priest in Charge (or Area Dean or his deputy during an interregnum) and treated as strictly confidential. Except under compulsion of law, they will only be seen by those acting on the Bishop's behalf.

Note: The Diocese requires that the following are all checked through Enhanced Checks:

1. Churchwardens (& Deputies)
2. sidespeople,
3. Church officers,
4. those who handle parish finances
5. all those who may care for, supervise, train or be responsible for those under the age of 18, or vulnerable adults

3. WORKER AND VOLUNTEER TRAINING

The church will provide training in child protection procedures using various resources including those provided by the Diocese and other agencies. In-house training will be provided for all workers and volunteers at least once a year and most notably during the training sessions before the annual Holiday Club.

4. REPORTING

The protection and safety of children is a major concern to all and we recognise that a serious incident of child abuse is most upsetting to everyone concerned. As it is vitally important that the procedures to cope with the situation are understood and properly handled we require that:

- All allegations or reports of abuse will be taken seriously
- Group Co-ordinators (i.e. leaders of Groups within the church) will be briefed as to their responsibilities on appointment and again annually
- All volunteers and workers be aware of the reporting procedures and given a copy of the reporting flow chart on appointment. They will also be informed as to where copies of the current procedures are available.
- A copy of the Protection Flow Chart will be on clear display in the church
- If a suspected case of abuse comes to light, workers and volunteers must keep accurate factual written records of all their actions, observations and conversations. This record must be dated, signed and treated as confidential.
- In a suspected case of abuse, workers and volunteers must also carefully make an accurate written record of the condition of the child when the complaint is made and

include in this any observation of obvious signs which would indicate harm or abuse. Leading questions must not be asked, nor requests made to see marks on the body hidden by clothing. This record must also be dated, signed and treated as confidential.

- If an allegation is made against a worker, volunteer or Group Co-ordinator, then the Incumbent must be immediately informed (unless the allegation is against them). The best practice in child protection will be followed including reporting to Social Services or the Police. The Incumbent (or during an interregnum the Area Dean or his deputy), or if not available then a Group Co-ordinator will inform the Bishop's Office and the advice of the Bishop's Advisor for Child protection will be sought.
- If an allegation is made against a worker or volunteer, they will be immediately suspended from work amongst children and young people. They will remain suspended until such time as the investigations are satisfactorily completed. This will assist and protect both parties. It is recognised that they will need support without collusion. The Incumbent (during interregnums the Area Dean) will seek advice on how this will be practically managed in each individual situation.
- In the event of a press inquiry, the media will be directed to the Director of Communications of the Diocese. Under no circumstances should a worker/volunteer speak directly or indirectly to the media
- Records of any allegations will be kept indefinitely in a locked file by the Incumbent/Priest in Charge (or Area Dean during an interregnum) and treated as strictly confidential.
- All information regarding any allegations of abuse will be treated as strictly confidential and only shared with others on a 'need to know' basis: written records will be kept in a locked cabinet when not in use.

Guiding Principle: - do not delay - act on the same day

6. INFORMING EVERYONE

- this policy will be fully explained to all workers and volunteers appointed by Christ Church Sparkbrook regardless of whether their positions entail direct contact with children or not
- a copy of this policy and procedures will be on display at all times on the notice board in the Church Office
- there will be notices on the entrance boards to church stating that 'this church has a child protection policy'
- from time to time notice will also be given in the weekly new sheet and other church publications that the church has a child protection policy.
- In order that they should feel safe, the children and young people will be informed through their various groups, and age appropriately, that they are protected by this policy

7. SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO ARE ALLEGED VICTIMS OF ABUSE

An abused child is likely to be under severe emotional stress. When information is offered in confidence the worker or volunteer will need tact and sensitivity in responding to the disclosure. They will need to reassure the child, and retain his or her trust while explaining the need for action, which will necessarily involve other adults being informed.

Pastoral care for those affected will be arranged by the parish clergy (or in an interregnum the Area Dean or his deputy). The person responsible for the pastoral care of the accused person and his or her family will ideally be different to the person who offers pastoral care to the person making the allegation or the victim of the alleged abuse and his or her family. If

this division of responsibility proves difficult, or if any other related difficulties arise, then the advice of the Bishop's Advisor will be sought.

Public prayers should be extremely cautious in respect of information surrounding any allegations.

8. SUPPORTING ADULT SURVIVORS

If a case of child abuse comes to light it will raise particularly difficulties for any members of the congregation who are themselves survivors of abuse.

- Great sensitivity will be needed in the reporting of matters to the congregation and in the support of survivors
- the Incumbent (or in his/her absence the Area Dean or his deputy) will make the final decision as to what and if any information is reported to the congregation
- Information about support agencies and organisation will be kept on file in the Church Office and if a case of abuse occurs it will be made known that this information is available from the clergy
- A list of support groups and local Social Services telephone numbers will be displayed on a church notice board

9. A KNOWN ABUSER IN THE CONGREGATION

If at any time a known child abuser attends the Church or any of its ministries the advice of the Bishop's Advisor will be sought. The safety of children/young people will always come first.

10. CONFESSION

Disclosure may take place in any pastoral setting, formal or informal. While a persons right to confidentiality is of the highest importance, it is not absolute: if it appears to the confidante that the welfare or safety of a child may be or have been in jeopardy, confidentiality should not be maintained and a report must be made to social services or the police. The incumbent, Area Dean or his deputy should consult the Bishop's representative at an early stage in order to obtain ongoing expert professional advice throughout the ensuing investigation, including how to support the alleged victim and how to deal with any alleged perpetrator.

11. OTHER ORGANISATIONS USING THE CHURCH PREMISES

All organisations using church property for any purposes where children under the age of eighteen may or will be present must at the time of booking, hiring or making of leasing arrangements give a copy of their child protection policy and procedures for inspection by the Incumbent and retention on file. The booking/hire/leasing will only be accepted after the priest in charge is satisfied that the policy is sufficiently comprehensive.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Christ Church:

Child Protection

Coordinator: Mike Hodges 07913 442760

Child Advocate & Domestic Violence Officer: Liz Hodges 07528 697151

Parish Missioner: David Brogan 07575 238885

Birmingham Diocese:

Area Dean: Andrew Bullock 07982 623105

Child Protection:

(Pastoral Issues): Kate Stowe 427-1163

(Policy) Claire Wesley 426-0432

Statutory/Voluntary Agencies:

Birmingham LADO Safeguarding Concern Team = 0121 6751669

West Mids. Police (general): 0845-113-5000 or 101

Child Protection Unit,

Kings Norton: 626-1727

Birmingham Children's Trust 303-1888

**Emergency Duty Team (Social
Services Out-ofHours)**

675-4806

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline 0800-800-5000

Childline 0800-1111

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