



NEW LIFE CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. ORGANISATION DETAILS:

New Life Church
Danesford Community Centre
West Road
Congleton Cheshire
CW12 4EY
01260 297 961

New Life Church provides an environment where there is a focus on people and an encouragement to seek out the promises of Jesus through our relationship with God, with each other and with our local community. We love and care for people around us in relevant and real ways so that they can experience the love God has for them. We offer support, facilities and resources to the children and young people of our town and into our community. If someone is finding it increasingly difficult to cope with many of the challenges of modern life, they may benefit from receiving help from our Caring Ministries.

The following Policy has been agreed by the Elders and Trustees of New Life Church who are committed to supporting children, parents and families. The importance of providing a safe and nurturing environment is recognised by all of the leaders of the church.

The church also promotes the principle that child protection is everyone's responsibility.

2. SCOPE

2.1 This Policy addresses all aspects of child protection within the work of New Life Church.

2.2 For the purposes of this Policy, the term "workers" is used to describe anyone at the Church who is engaged in working with children, whether as an employee or volunteer.

2.3 For the purposes of this Policy, the term "child" or "children" refers to a person or persons under the age of 18 years (as defined in the Children Act 1989, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989).

2.4 For the purposes of this Policy a child is abused when an individual exposes the child to neglect, physical injury, sexual and/or emotional abuse (defined in Appendix 1 to this Policy).

2.5 New Life Church uses the definition of abuse commonly used by the World Health Organisation:

‘Child abuse’ or ‘maltreatment’ constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power’

3. APPROACH

3.1 The Church wishes to ensure that it maintains the highest possible standards to meet its social, moral, spiritual and legal responsibilities to protect and safeguard the welfare of children with whom the Church’s work brings it into contact.

3.2 The view of the Church is that everyone is responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children irrespective of individual roles: it requires everyone to be watchful, prayerful and spiritually discerning. The Church puts this into practice through the following actions:

3.3 New Life Church will ensure that workers and volunteers are fully briefed and/or trained on the implications of this Policy. Workers, trustees, elders and leaders will be expected to abide by this Policy.

3.4 The Church will define codes of practice for children and youth work. These codes of practice will be consistent with this policy and be the primary outworking of this policy. The church will use such codes of practice to induct, train and supervise workers with respect to best practice in safeguarding and protecting children from abuse and in minimising risk of false accusation to themselves. Codes of practice will be kept alongside this policy.

3.5 All incidents of alleged misconduct concerning children and/or abuse of children will be taken seriously by the Church and responded to swiftly and appropriately in accordance with this Policy.

3.6 Where appropriate, breaches of this Policy and/or allegations of misconduct concerning children and/or abuse of children may result in the Church taking the matter further to the appropriate organisation.

3.7 The Church will appoint a Safeguarding Officer who will be responsible for:

- Acting as the primary contact within the Church for the protection of children;
- Advising any member of staff / volunteer on safeguarding
- Securely recording and collating all safeguarding information and concerns
- Assisting the church leader in meeting with external agencies, incl. police, with regard to safeguarding
- Initiating, completing and recording DBS checks
- Working closely with Trustees and elders to ensure robust safeguarding within the Church
- Assisting the safeguarding trustee in ensuring that Policy is current with regard to legislation and best practice guidance on the protection of children;

3.8 A Deputy Safeguarding Officer will be nominated to act as a point of contact within the Church in the absence of the Safeguarding Officer.

3.9 The trustees will appoint a trustee who will act as champion for safeguarding. Ideally the trustee will also be on the eldership team. The "Trustee" will be responsible for

- Monitoring of overall safeguarding on behalf of Trustees
- Ensuring review of safeguarding procedures occurs annually. Ensuring safeguarding policies are actively implemented
- Discussing individual strategies with elders and obtaining agreement on how to implement
- Supporting and advising Safeguarding Officers and Elders

3.10 It is recognised that the church leader will often be the first point of contact for safeguarding concerns and will often be the key knowledge owner of people and situations throughout the weekly life of the church. The church leader therefore has a key role in safeguarding, including responsibility for

- Informing Lead Safeguarding Officer / Trustee of any and all safeguarding matters (potential or actual), as and when they happen
- Acting as the external face of New Life Church, and therefore often point of contact with police, providing validated information to the Lead Safeguarding officer / Trustee on anyone who is potentially at risk or anyone who potentially poses a risk.
- Supporting for safeguarding initiatives by staff and volunteers

3.11 The Church will refer concerns that a child might be at risk of significant harm to Social Services and/or the Police.

3.12 All personal data will be processed by the Church in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 until 25/05/2018 and thereafter the General Data Protection Regulation Act 2018.

4. PURPOSE OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

4.1 Its purpose is to help develop a common understanding of child protection issues, develop good practice across the diverse and complex areas in which we operate and thereby increase accountability in this crucial aspect of our work.

4.2 This policy, when put into practice, will help make sure that children are protected. It also ensures that church staff and volunteers are protected from false accusation.

5. PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

5.1 A number of key principles underpin the provisions of the Child Protection Policy. These include:

- **Best interests of the child are paramount and shall be the primary consideration** in our decision making.

- **Child centred and rights based** approach in order to keep children sharply in focus in all our planning and direct work. Some of the worst child protection incidents have happened when staff have lost sight of the child and their rights to be protected.
- **Equality of opportunity** to ensure that all children have the opportunity to enjoy our activities safely regardless of their gender, ability, race, ethnicity, circumstances or age. Vulnerable children will require particular attention in order to optimise their safety needs and promote their access to important opportunities.
- **Taking responsibility** in order to meet our obligations regarding our duty of care towards children, and **taking action** where we believe that a child is at risk or is actually harmed.
- **Recognising** and acknowledging that an element of risk exists, and while we may never be able to totally remove this, we need to do all we can to reduce it or limit its impact.
- **Honesty and transparency** by informing those we work with, including children, about our Child Protection Policy, and the way we work to try and protect children.
- **Confidentiality** to protect sensitive personal data. Information should only be shared and handled on a *need to know basis*, that is, access to the information must be necessary for the conduct of one's official duties. Only individuals who have legitimate reasons to access the information are allowed to receive it.
- **Supporting and training** those working with children to recognise and respond to child protection risks and incidences.
- **Working with others** to protect children. This includes involving law enforcement and specialist child welfare agencies where necessary.
- **Monitoring** the implementation of the Child Protection Policy. The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed annually.

6. GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO SUSPICIONS OR ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

6.1 All church workers must be alert to the possibility that the children they are working with may have been, or may be, at risk of being abused. Abuse may be at the hands of the child's family or friends or others outside of the Church. All complaints/allegations of such abuse must be taken seriously and dealt with in accordance with the policy.

6.2 Child protection is a tricky and complex area. Speaking out when there is child abuse can be difficult. The nature of child abuse means that it is hard to acquire concrete evidence.

6.3 Staff and volunteer are more likely to be faced with indirect statements from children, non-verbal clues and signs which can be inconsistent.

6.4 When actual disclosures of abuse are made they are often retracted. For this reason, when faced with child abuse, staff and volunteers are more likely to have feelings of concern; an intuition or suspicion that something is happening but doubt their judgement and/or feel uncomfortable about saying anything or raising the concern as they do not believe they have enough evidence. Because of the often secret and intimidating nature of abuse and the severe impact it can have on children, however, it is essential that people speak out.

6.5 What to do if a child talks to you about abuse:

If a Church Member receives from a child an allegation that that child or another child is being abused, has been abused, or is at risk of abuse he/she should:

- **Listen carefully and stay calm.**
- **Ensure that he/she does not interview the child. However, if necessary, he/she may seek to clarify, using open questions and without putting words into the child's mouth, in order to be sure that they understand what the child is telling them.**
- **Reassure the child that by telling him/her they have done the right thing.**
- **Inform the child that he/she must pass the information on, but that only those that need to know about it will be told.**
- **Inform the child to whom he/she will report the matter.**
- **Make a detailed note of the date, time, place, what the child said and did and the questions asked of the child etc.**
- **Report the disclosure to the Safeguarding Officer or the deputy Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible**
- **If the child is considered to be in immediate danger the Safeguarding Officer should be contacted immediately. If this is not possible the individual has a responsibility to report the concern themselves to the local social services or the police if necessary.**

6.6 It is not the responsibility of staff or volunteers to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. All staff and volunteers, however, have a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the Safeguarding Officer or deputy Safeguarding Officer. They are appointed for staff and volunteers to talk to about any concerns, no matter how small and insignificant they may seem, and will provide advice and support and decide what action to take.

6.7 To ensure that all such situations are handled appropriately and effectively, a reporting mechanism has been created:

6.8 All allegations and concerns of abuse must be taken seriously, irrespective of the identity of the alleged perpetrator and victims, and regardless of how 'unbelievable' the situation may seem.

6.9 All staff and volunteers must report any of the following situations in relation to:

- Any allegation of or concern about actual or suspected situations of abuse involving a child or children known to New Life Church
- Any allegation of or concern about actual or suspected staff, volunteer or church member misconduct and/or criminal activity involving the abuse of a child or children.

6.10 No staff member or volunteer can agree to keep information regarding actual or suspected abuse 'private' as a personal confidence. In general, the Church will seek to discuss our concern with the child in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and understanding, and with their parents/guardians, and seek their agreement if making a referral to a specialist agency (local social services). However, there will be situations where this may place the child in danger in which case a decision to refer to a specialist agency without informing the child and without obtaining the consent of their parents/guardians should

be taken by the Safeguarding Officer or the deputy Safeguarding Officer. However if neither are available an individual with a concern should report their concern directly to the relevant agency using the contact details provided in appendix 2.

6.11 It is not the responsibility of New Life Church to investigate suspicions or allegations of child abuse. It is essential that concerns are reported to the relevant child welfare and law enforcement agency to ensure that appropriate protection and support is given to the child, and that any evidence is collected in accordance with the law.

6.12 A written record of all child protection reports, including any decisions made, must be kept up to date by the Safeguarding Officer. This should include details of any referrals made to specialist agencies.

6.13 All sensitive and personal data must be kept confidential (including the names of anyone who makes a report of abuse), and be shared on a strictly '*need to know basis*'.

6.14 Reporting of concerns must be made to a specialist child welfare and law enforcement agency when sufficient evidence exists that an allegation or concern is a serious welfare and/or criminal matter. Apart from referrals to child welfare and law enforcement agencies, no details regarding the circumstances of children and their families will be passed to other individuals or organisations without the express permission of the child and their parents / guardians.

6.15 Names of those who are alleged to be a risk to children will also be passed on to law enforcement agencies where it is suspected that a crime may have been committed, for investigation in accordance with relevant legislation. This will normally be the local police or relevant agency.

6.16 If a child protection investigation involving a staff member concludes, decisions and actions must be taken by the trustees to ensure the safety of all children is maintained.

6.17 It is understood that there will be unanticipated situations where staff and volunteers will have to apply their independent judgment. They should do so in a way that is consistent with the principles of the policy and in consultation, when possible, with the Safeguarding Officer or Deputy Safeguarding Officer. Where staff and volunteers do have to apply their own judgement in relation to a child protection issue, and it is not possible to consult with the Safeguarding Officer, the Safeguarding Officer should be advised of the situation as soon as possible.

6.18 Any difficulties or confusion regarding how to apply the child protection policy should be referred to the Safeguarding Officer or Deputy Safeguarding Officer for further assistance and guidance.

7. RECRUITMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

7.1 The Church will take all appropriate steps to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. For positions that involve regular contact with children and where individuals have access to children, the following procedures will be completed:

7.2 All staff and volunteer applicants will be requested to complete an application and self-declaration form. The purpose of the self-declaration form will be to invite applicants to disclose information in relation to any past criminal behaviour that is relevant to the position.

7.3 References will be sought from all applicants who have been not been regular attendees at New Life Church for less than two years.

7.4 The Church is registered with The Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) and will ensure that any staff and volunteers who have substantial contact with children will be checked for relevant criminal convictions. The following types of checks will be requested for positions requiring contact with children:

- Enhanced Disclosure (DBS check): Enhanced disclosures will be requested for positions which normally involve duties that include caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children or vulnerable adults.

8. GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN

8.1 Members are reminded that it is a criminal offence for an adult to engage in sexual activity with a person under the age of 18 where the adult is in a position of trust in relation to the under 18 year old.

8.2 The Church recommends that all Members take steps to ensure that they do not put themselves in a position where an allegation of abuse can be made against them. Such steps include, but are not limited to:

- Maintaining a register of children they are working with;
- Always working in an open environment with children;
- Avoiding unnecessary physical contact with children;
- Avoiding working alone with a child in a closed environment; Where confidentiality is important (e.g. counselling) and a child or young person is being seen on their own, then ensure that others know the interview is taking place and that someone else is close by;
- Always acting upon and recording allegations/reports of abuse made by children;
- Always reporting potential concerns/allegations/reports of abuse made by children to the Safeguarding Officer or in his/her absence the Deputy Safeguarding Officer.

Further guidance is given in the respective codes of practice documents for children and youth.

8.3 In appropriate cases and in accordance with the law, the Church will report to the appropriate authorities any concerns it has that a Member ought to be included in any list of people who should be restricted from working with children.

CONTACTS

A list of contact names and telephone numbers for use by members, which shall be amended and updated by the Safeguarding Officer when necessary; is attached to this Policy at **Appendix 2**.

APPENDIX 1 - Definitions of the different forms of abuse:

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse causes harm to a child or young person. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning or suffocating. It may be done deliberately or recklessly, or be the result of a deliberate failure to prevent injury occurring. It can also occur when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent or severe failure to meet a child or young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a failure to provide adequate food clothing or shelter, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also involve neglect of, or inadequate response to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves a child or young person being forced or coerced into participating in or watching sexual activity. It is not necessary for the child to be aware that the activity is sexual and the apparent consent of the child is irrelevant. The acts may involve physical contact including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may involve non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse occurs where there is persistent emotional ill treatment or rejection such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's or young person's behaviour and emotional development, resulting in low self-worth. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all forms of abuse.

Other types of abuse commonly recognised, such as commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking, are complex manifestations of a combination of the above four categories. It is important to highlight that bullying is also a form of abuse as it is an act of aggressive behaviour in order to intentionally hurt another person or persons, mentally, physically and/or sexually.

Abuse can take place in many forms and anywhere, that is, in the family, community or on the Internet.

Abuse is also manifesting itself in digital and augmented technologies such as smart phones. This can be virtual or real and can take many forms including sexual harassment and child pornography.

It should be remembered that although we commonly think of adults as those who abuse children, children can also be the perpetrators.

APPENDIX 2 - Contact details:

Safeguarding Officer: Margaret Sanders

Email: margaret.sanders@nlchurch.org.uk

Telephone: 01260 295927 (nursery)

Deputy Safeguarding officer: Catherine Morris

Email: Catherine.Morris@nlchurch.org.uk

Telephone: 01260 297961 (church)

Further contact details are displayed on safeguarding posters in the building

Cheshire East Consultation Service (CHECS): 0300 123 5012 (Out of Hours 0300 123 5022)

Cheshire East Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 01270 685904 or 01606 288931 (for Reporting allegations regarding professionals)

For children or young people living in Staffordshire contact details are;

Staffordshire County Council First Response Service 0800 131 3126 (Mob: 07773 792016)

Emergency Duty Service (out of hours) 0845 6042886 (Mob: 07815 492613)

Email: firstr@staffordshire.gov.uk

Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS): 0845 120 4550

NSPCC: 0808 800 500

Police: 101, or for immediate concern, 999