



The Well
community church

Child Protection Policy

Introduction

The trustees and staff of The Well Community Church fully recognise the contribution they make to safeguarding children. We recognise that all staff, including volunteers have a full and active part to play in protecting children from harm.

We accept that we have a duty to provide a caring, positive safe and stimulating environment, which promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual child in line with the Children's Act 2004:

- Being Healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Economic well-being

This Policy exists for the safeguarding needs of the children and young people we come into contact with at The Well.

The Aims of the Policy:

- To support the child's development in ways that will foster security, confidence and independence.
- To raise the awareness of both staff and volunteers to the need to safeguard children and of their responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse.
- To emphasise the need for good levels of communication.
- To develop a structured procedure which will be followed by all staff and volunteers in cases of suspected abuse.
- To develop and promote effective working relationships with other agencies, especially the Police and Social Services as necessary.
- To ensure that all adults within our church who have volunteer or work with children have been checked as to their suitability.

Procedures

Our church procedures for safeguarding children will be in line with local recommendations. We will ensure that:

- We have a designated member of staff and/or volunteer as the named Child Protection Officer (CPO), supported by the named church trustee. The CPO will undertake training approximately once a year.
- We have a named trustee of the church who will be responsible for safeguarding, supporting the CPO, promoting and reviewing safeguarding at meetings.
- Via regular training (approximately once a year):
 - All members of staff and volunteers will develop their understanding of the signs and indicators of abuse.
 - All members of staff/volunteers will know how to respond to a child who discloses abuse.
- All parents/carers are made aware of the responsibilities of staff and volunteers with regard to child protection procedures by way of a written notice in the building and on the church website.
- Our procedures and policy will be regularly reviewed and updated at least every 2 years.
- All new members of staff and volunteers will be given a version of our child protection procedures and guidelines as part of their induction into the church.

CPO Responsibilities

The Child Protection Officer is responsible for:

- Adhering to government and local procedures with regard to referring a child if there are concerns about possible abuse.
- Recording disclosures
- Keeping written records of concerns about a child even if there is no need to make an immediate referral.
- Ensuring that all such records are kept confidentially and securely.

Supporting Children

We recognise that a child who is abused or witnesses violence may find it difficult to develop and maintain a sense of self-worth. We recognise that a child in these circumstances may feel helpless and humiliated. We recognise that a child may feel self-blame.

We recognise that the church may provide some stability in the lives of children who have been abused or who are at risk of harm.

We accept that research shows that the behaviour of a child in these circumstances may range from that which is perceived to be normal to aggressive or withdrawn.

Our church will support children by:

- Encouraging self-esteem and self-assertiveness whilst not condoning aggression or bullying.
- Promoting a caring, safe and positive environment.
- Liaising and working together with other support services and those agencies involved in the safeguarding of children.
- Notifying Social Services as soon as there is a significant concern.

Confidentiality

We recognise that all matters relating to Child Protection are confidential. The Child Protection Officer will disclose any information about a child to other members of staff on a need to know basis only.

All staff and volunteers must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children. All staff and volunteers must be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets.

Recruitment

The following procedure is to be used when appointing staff/volunteers who wish to work with children at The Well.

Interview

All new team members must have an informal interview with the team leader and another suitable person. They should be known to the church and in good standing with the church. If, as new members, they have similar experience from a previous church, a reference from their previous minister may be required. New volunteers must share the Church's ethos in regard to Working Together Guidance 2015, the Children's Act 1989/2004 and cooperation with local Children's Services (MASH). They will be required to have an up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service check, although we will accept those which have been taken out by other organisations, if they are current and in order. Junior helpers (under 18) will not be asked to work on their own without the support of a nearby adult. and are therefore not required to fulfil the DBS criteria.

Probation

All new volunteers and members of staff will be asked to assist in groups for at least the first 3 months, followed by an informal assessment by the co-ordinator and feedback from other volunteers, before they will be expected to take a lead in groups.

Good practice in child protection

Work with children and young people should be with a co-worker in the same room where possible or nearby.

If a young person wants prayer, 2 workers should see the young person together.

We have a no-smacking policy (see also physical intervention)

Take all appropriate steps to make sure the environment is safe for children, particularly on Sundays, as the church is open to visitors

Make sure you take children under five back to their parents when sessions are over

Sleep-overs, trips etc; Make sure arrangements are gender appropriate, that there are enough volunteers to supervise and that the conditions above are met. Consent forms must always be obtained from parents for one-off events.

Photography: Parents are required to give their consent to their children's photographs being taken as part of the registration process. Parent's and child's permission should be sought prior to any photographs being used by the church in any publicity. See Photography Guidelines.

Definitions of Abuse

Child abuse falls into 4 categories:

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is where a child has been intentionally hurt by an adult or other child. It can be one incident or could be a series of events over time. Physical abuse is often inflicted on areas of the child's body that will not be seen.

Emotional abuse

This is where a pattern of criticism, threats, rejection and controlling behaviour impairs a child's emotional well-being. This can include bullying, online bullying and adult domestic abuse. Emotional abuse is hard to prove, but it is always present when any of the other forms of abuse take place.

Neglect

Neglect can be both physical (food, warmth, safety, health, exposure to drugs/alcohol) and emotional (lack of emotional connection, developmentally appropriate care, lack of education, rejection, failure to provide what the child needs).

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves exposing children to adult sexual activities, through force, manipulation or threats. These may be both physical and non-physical contact. Non-contact activities include making children watch inappropriate materials or sexual activities or photographing children in sexualised poses etc.

Responding to a disclosure

When a child or young person confides in an adult that (s)he has been abused the following guidelines should be used:

1. When a child says they want to tell about a secret, always make it clear to them that you **must tell** people who can help if they or another child are being hurt.
2. Where practical, have another person with you if the child/young person agrees.
3. Listen carefully but do not ask leading questions. Use open statements. "I heard you say...do you want to say anything else about that?"
4. Don't make judgmental comments; don't show shock, horror or anger about what has happened, as children often take this reaction to confirm that it is they who are at fault.
5. Show that you care about them, are trying to understand and will take everything they say seriously.
6. Reassure the child that they did the right thing in telling and they themselves are not to blame.
7. As soon as you can after the child has spoken to you, record what was said. Make sure someone else looks after the child while you are doing this. This should be in your own words (verbatim account) but it should **not** have any of your thoughts or opinions about what the child told you. Just record the facts of the conversation. Put your name clearly at the end. Sign and date anything you write.
8. Once this has happened, explain to the child what will happen next. You will talk to (CPO) and they will help decide what to do. Give the CPO your report. As a volunteer, your part is now over. You are not responsible for any of the follow-up investigations, or further reporting. The Child Protection Officer deals with this. Following any such disclosure, it is important that you continue to support the child or young person.
9. If the child or young person is in need of immediate medical care, the CPO should contact the emergency services or take them to a hospital, ideally with another worker known to the child or a parent if not implicated in abuse.
10. The CPO must assess whether the child or young person would be in immediate danger if they were to return home. If so, they should call the police and ask to speak to their Child Protection Officer.

Supporting staff

We recognise that staff/volunteers in the church who have become involved with a child who has suffered harm, or appears to be likely to suffer harm, may find the situation stressful and upsetting. We will support them by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties and to seek further support as appropriate.

Allegations against staff

We understand that a child may make an allegation against a member of staff/volunteer. If such an allegation is made, the member of staff receiving the allegation will immediately inform the CPO.

The CPO on all such occasions will discuss the content of the allegation with a Leadership team member and/or a Church Trustee. If the allegation made to a member of staff concerns the CPO, the member of staff/volunteer should inform a Leadership Team member who will consult with a Church Trustee. The church will follow the Local Education Authority procedures for managing allegations against staff/volunteers (see below LADO).

Physical Intervention

Our policy is that staff must only ever use physical intervention as a last resort, and that at all times it must be the minimal force necessary to prevent injury to another person. We understand that physical intervention of a nature that causes injury or distress to a child may be considered under child protection or disciplinary procedures.

Prevention

We recognise that the church can play a part in the prevention of harm by providing children with good lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends and an ethos of care.

The church community will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are always listened to.
- Ensure that all children know there is an adult in the church whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty.

Named Church staff:

Child Protection Officer: Steph Marriott

Youth and Children's Director: Jonathan Harris

Trustee Responsible for Safeguarding: Shona Elliott

Local Services

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub in Southwark:

MASH, Sumner House

Sumner Road SE15 5QS

020 7525 1921

020 7525 5000

mash@southwark.gov.uk

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

For allegations against people who work with children in Southwark

Based in Quality Assurance Unit (QAU)

QAU duty number: 020 7525 3297

QAU Service Manager (LADO): 020 7525 0689

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