

## St Andrew's Cheadle Hulme Child Protection Policy

The church subscribes to the guidelines for Child Protection of the Diocese of Chester, last published in April 2004. This is based firmly on the principles first set out in A Code of Practice for Safeguarding the Welfare of Children in Voluntary Organisations in England and Wales, published by the Home Office in 1993, entitled Safe from Harm and the House of Bishop's policy document on Child Protection published in 1999 and revised in 2004.

The Chester Diocesan Policy places a lot of emphasis on maintaining a safe environment and the principles of recruiting and supporting those who work with children and young people. Every group leader at St. Andrew's should have a copy and be familiar with the process of ensuring that the procedure of recruiting people to work with children is fully complied with.

All those 18 years of age and over, who wish to work with children in any capacity, will need to be officially screened by the Criminal Records Bureau. As this is often a rather lengthy process, sometimes involving sensitive and confidential matters, it will be necessary for this procedure to be initiated by the Vicar, some weeks ahead of the anticipated appointment. Having a previous criminal conviction should not deter anyone from volunteering to serve, because it is only convictions involving the abuse or mistreatment of children which would be likely to preclude anyone from working with them.

Young people under the age of 18, who assist in activities will not need to apply to the CRB but they must not be put in sole charge of any activity.

We would like to emphasise how important it is that all volunteers are aware of the issues involved in child protection and how to recognise and respond to any suspicion of abuse. We would strongly recommend that everyone involved attend one of the courses run by the Diocese as soon as possible after appointment.

Derek Guest

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<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/papers/protectingchildren.pdf>

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## INTRODUCTION

As Christians we are called to respect children as individuals and to further their well being in every way. Jesus warned that those who exploited or abused children deserved profound condemnation. There is a special need to respect them as individuals and protect them in their vulnerability. Within the Kingdom of God, children matter in their own right and are to be taken seriously.

As a church we seek to foster relationships of the utmost integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness. It is important, therefore, that everyone who works with children, even in a voluntary capacity, should behave responsibly and understand the need to operate within a carefully worked out framework of good policy and practice.

Before you take on your position as leader or assistant in any organisation dealing with children under 18, we would ask you to read this document carefully, ask questions if you do not understand anything and then sign the form containing your job description provided by your leader.

## INTERVIEWS

Everyone who works with children or young people should have an interview with their leader before they begin to work with them. If you are unsure whether or not the work is right for you, it may be suggested that you attend the group as an observer for 3 or 4 weeks. It should be no longer than this and you should not be required to take on any responsibility.

If you are wanting to continue and feel it is right, your leader will then discuss with you what you are expected to do and arrange for you to see the Vicar. He will talk to you about the responsibilities of the job. If you are 18 or over it will be necessary for you to apply to the Criminal Records Bureau for an Enhanced Disclosure. These disclosures, which are to be processed through the Diocesan Office at Church House will reveal any criminal convictions which you have had in the past, regardless as to whether they are spent or not. It would, therefore, be wise for you to declare these at this point, as this will not necessarily mean that you will be considered unsuitable. Only offences against children will be an automatic bar to work with children and young people.

We are assured that all the disclosure information sent to Church House will be treated as extremely confidential and you will receive a copy of the disclosure information, which you are at liberty to show to the Vicar or to query, if you feel it is not accurate.

You will be asked to fill in an application form and to provide the names of 2 referees. We suggest that your referee is someone who has knowledge of your previous work with children. Previous experience of work with children is always helpful but nobody should be deterred by lack of experience. It is, however, helpful for your leader to know what experience you have had.

## SUPPORT

Each leader is expected to meet regularly with their group and you should feel able to ask for support and further training in all aspects of the work you are involved in. The PCC is willing to respond to requests for finance for training courses and there are several organised in the Diocese. There are also courses run by CPAS, Scripture Union, North west Partnership and others. The Children's and Youth Worker and the clergy are available to help should you have any difficulties. It is always helpful to be able to talk over any problems that you may be having

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with the children with someone of greater experience. You should also be provided with a short job description, countersigned by a member of the PCC, which should be reviewed annually.

Sometimes children's and youth workers feel rather isolated from the general congregation. This does not need to be so. Try to attend at least some of the main services of the church (preferably weekly) for your own spiritual growth. Also join a House Group or Young People's Bible Study Group and let the specific needs of your youngsters' group be made known there.

The PCC always has an item on the agenda for organisation reports and would be happy to receive them more often than it does. An item in Newslines is also a good way of keeping the congregation informed about your activities and items for prayer.

### **A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

It is possible to be lulled into a false sense of security by thinking that church people will never be guilty of abusing children because they are part of the Christian community. Sadly this is not so. Nevertheless the best way of preventing abuse and also of protecting our workers from false allegations of abuse is to plan the work so that opportunities for abusive situations to arise are minimised.

#### **1. Adult/child ratios**

The minimum required staffing levels for children's groups are given below. More help may be required if children are being taken out or undertaking physical activities.

0–2 years	1 person for every 3 children	1 : 3
2–3 years	1 person for every 4 children	1 : 4
3–8 years	1 person for every 8 children	1 : 8
Over 8 years	1 person for the first 8 children and then one extra person for every extra 12 children	

Each group should have at least two adults and it is recommended that a gender balance is maintained in mixed sex groups .

If groups are in the same room or adjoining rooms with doors open one person per group is allowed.

Young people aged between 14 and 18 may help with groups but should be supervised by an adult helper who will be responsible for ensuring that good practice and the child protection procedures are followed.

Adults asked to help on a very occasional basis may be seen as visitors but must be responsible to an appointed worker. If they become part of a regular rota they should become part of the team, be properly appointed with references taken up and the Confidential Declaration form completed.

#### **2. Time alone with children**

This needs to be kept to a minimum and whenever someone needs to talk to a child confidentially it should be in the sight of others or in a room where others can see inside. If you find yourself in the situation of being alone with a child, tell your Leader as soon as possible. Difficulties can arise when children are not collected on time or arrive too early. Your group should make it clear to parents when the group begins and ends and 2 adults should be present

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until they have all been collected. Main entrances/exits will need to be safe so that children cannot go out without leaders noticing and strangers cannot get in. Always ensure that if children are to be collected that they do not go home on their own.

### **3. Good practice in managing behaviour**

All children and young people need to be treated with respect and dignity as is appropriate to their age. Learn their names as quickly as possible and try to make them feel welcome. Look out for those who are shy and timid and occupy those who are easily bored! Most children will behave reasonably well if your activities are stimulating and interesting. Good preparation is the key to success.

Under no circumstances should a child be smacked and verbal sanctions need to be given sensitively. Do not scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child, even in fun. Seriously unruly behaviour needs to be discussed with a parent, preferably by the Senior Leader.

Always look out for a child who is being bullied by another child. Often this is quite subtle and needs to be taken seriously, as both the victim and the bully may have problems.

Excessively attention seeking or sexually provocative behaviour is often a sign that something is wrong at home. If you find that you are the object of such attention discuss this with your Leader, as soon as possible. Do not invite a child or young person into your home alone. If you invite a group, make sure there is another adult around and the parents know where they are.

### **4. Touch**

A good principle is that touch should be related to the child's needs not yours. It should be age appropriate. Obviously young children need a lot more physical contact than older ones. A small child who hurts herself may need a cuddle, likewise an older child who is seriously upset for some reason. 2 small boys fighting may need to be separated. Remember that a hug in public is very different from one behind closed doors. What might be considered acceptable "horse play" in the context of a family relationship is unacceptable between a young person and a youth club leader. Team members should take responsibility for monitoring each other in this area.

### **5. Confidentiality**

It is very important never to assure confidentiality to a child/young person until you are sure about what they want to tell you. It is always possible to assure them of your help and support whatever they have to say. If they begin to tell you that they are being abused, or if you suspect that abuse has taken place, you will need to inform your Leader, the Vicar or the Child Protection Resource person.

### **6. Health and Safety**

All leaders should know where the nearest telephone is or have access to a mobile phone. You should be aware of the safety/fire procedure. Fire Extinguishers should be in place and checked regularly. A First-Aid kit should always be available and checked regularly. The rules for its use should be known by all leaders and helpers. Ideally one of the leaders should have completed a basic First-Aid course. Accidents should be recorded with a note of any action taken.

When transporting children, make sure that the driver is properly insured, that seat-belts are worn and that the child is not left alone with the driver at the end of the journey. Ideally 2 adults

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should be present. If a driver is used regularly for transporting children, they should have signed the Declaration form.

### HELP IN RECOGNISING ABUSE

Those working in the statutory agencies of Health, Social Services, Police and Education are specially trained to identify child abuse. However, they often have to rely on people close to the children spotting signs that something is wrong.

Professional workers use the following definitions of abuse:

- a) **Neglect:** The persistent or severe neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.
- b) **Physical Injury:** Actual or likely physical injury to a child or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) to a child including deliberate poisoning, suffocation and Munchausen's syndrome by proxy.
- c) **Sexual abuse:** Actual or likely exploitation of a child or adolescent. The child may be dependent and/or developmentally immature.
- d) **Emotional abuse:** Actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment.

Where abuse occurs, someone known and trusted by the child usually perpetrates it. The incidence of abuse by someone unknown is extremely low.

You may begin to suspect that a child is being abused for a number of reasons.

The child may tell you outright.

You may notice bruises which cause you concern.

Another child may tell you that their friend is being ill treated.

An adult may admit to you that they have harmed a child in some way.

An allegation may be made on the child's behalf by a parent or carer.

You may notice a sudden change in a child's behaviour.

### MAKING A RESPONSE

These guidelines are primarily directed at dealing with situations that may arise in a church setting. However, there may be occasions when you become concerned about possible abuse at home.

The Church is committed to taking seriously any report of suspected abuse, while realising that the personal cost to someone of making such a complaint may be high. The tendency must be resisted to become defensive about the person being accused or about the Church's reputation. It is particularly important to let the child know that he or she is being listened to .

Speak at once either to the person to whom you are responsible for work with children or the Vicar. If you are not sure or your suspicions have been aroused, still seek advice from one of the leaders named above, or the Child Protection Resource person.

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If a member of the Clergy is suspected of abusing a child, this should be reported to one of the Archdeacons or Suffragan Bishops.

If you are a Senior Leader in any organisation or a member of the Clergy and receive a report of suspected abuse, you will then follow the guidance given in the Diocesan Handbook on Child Protection. You should remember that it is important that you do not begin to carry out an investigation yourself into what should be a matter for the Social Services and Police to decide whether to take any further.

### **AN INDEPENDENT PERSON FOR CHILDREN**

It is a common feature of situations where children have been abused that an adult has exploited their power to gain submission or silence. It is hoped that one of the benefits of establishing good practice and a safe environment for children is that they feel safe to talk about any concerns they have to their teachers or leaders within church groups. Children will talk to those people with whom they feel safe and if that is you, you may not feel particularly well-equipped to deal with the matter. This is one of the reasons why at St. Andrew's we have a child Protection Resource Person who is more than willing to discuss with you any concerns you have about a particular child. If she is not available, consult the Vicar. However some children are unwilling to confide in anyone they know and that is why in all our groups we display the poster for Childline.

### **RECORD KEEPING**

Whenever there is an incident that causes you concern about possible abuse be sure to take a brief factual note of the incident or concern, the action taken and the date it occurred. This note may be of vital importance at a later date, even if nothing is resolved at the time.

### **WHY DO WE NEED ALL THIS?**

People who work with children are sometimes vulnerable to false allegations. One of the reasons for working in accordance with the Guidelines initially recommended in the Home Office document, Safe From Harm 1991, is not only to minimise the incidence of abuse, but also reduce the likelihood of false accusations.

When people work together as a team, supporting each other, understanding what is expected of them and keen to learn about how they might make the group even more effective, the children will thrive. As a church we pray that the main purpose of our youth activities is to bring children and young people to know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. They will be influenced not only by what we say but who we are.

