

Bethany Church
Policy on Protection of
Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults
30th May 2012

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INTRODUCTION

The Lord Jesus said “Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them” (Luke 18:16). What a privilege we have, providing activities through our many youth ministries which offer enjoyment, social contact and opportunities for personal and spiritual development, and most importantly, to show these children and young people who join us, that God loves them, so much in fact that He said we needed to have faith like to that of a little child – trusting, dependant, needy, to avail of the great salvation He has provided for us.

We are also warned of the seriousness of harming children (Matthew 18:6). What a responsibility we have to keep these little ones safe in a world which does not always place the same value on children and on occasions seeks to violate and harm them. There are many reminders in God’s Word of how good parents are to provide for, train up and discipline their children. We are living in a world where not all parents carry out their responsibilities, and so we must lead by example and on occasions may have to refer to outside agencies, which can provide the care these children and young people need.

Throughout the Old Testament and especially in the Gospels, we see repeatedly how those who had special physical and mental needs were treated with dignity and compassion. We too must follow this example as we work with children, young people and adults who need our help in a wider context, and to ensure their safety. “Children are a heritage from the Lord” (Psalm 127:3) and must be shown respect and care; our “Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost” (Matthew 18:14).

The protection and well-being of children and young people is not only a Biblical imperative, it is a national and international requirement. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child upholds the best interests of children and young people. It stipulates that “children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence. They must be kept safe from harm. They must be given proper care by those looking after them”.

This manual will help equip all Workers and members of Bethany Church Finaghy to work appropriately with the children and young people within our youth ministries. They will also be alerted to signs of distress and symptoms which may indicate that a child or young person may have been mistreated in some way. We will be operating in this way, knowing we are fulfilling our legal obligations, and upholding the standards the Bible reveals. Parents can have the confidence in us that we will keep their children and young people safe in our care as we adhere to carefully planned procedures for safe recruitment of Workers and demonstrate what is considered to be good practice. Children and young people should therefore be able to enjoy their activities with optimum physical safety, free from the threat of personal abuse.

“Whoever welcomes one of these little children in My name welcomes Me” Mark 9:37.

SECTION 1 - POLICY

The Section includes the following topics,

- 1.1 Church Policy Statement
- 1.2 Aim of Policy Section
- 1.3 Our Responsibilities
- 1.4 Church Mission Statement
- 1.5 Policy Document
 - Responsibilities of our Elders
 - 1.5.1 Responding to allegations of abuse
 - 1.5.2 Responding to allegations of physical injury or neglect
 - 1.5.3 Responding to allegations of sexual abuse
 - 1.5.4 Appointment, support, supervision and training of Workers and Key Workers
 - 1.5.5 Supervision of group activities for children, young people and vulnerable adults
 - 1.5.6 Support to those affected by abuse
 - 1.5.7 Working with offenders
- 1.6 Website Policy Statement

1.1 BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY POLICY STATEMENT FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

- We are committed to supporting parents and families.
- As leaders of the church we are committed to the nurturing, protection and safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- We recognise that child protection is everybody's responsibility.
- We are committed to following the agreed procedures and following statutory, and specialist guidelines.
- We seek to support all in the Church affected by abuse.
- We review this policy every two years.

If you have any concerns for a child, young person or vulnerable adult, or any questions in relation to any child protection matter, then speak to one of the Child Protection Co-ordinators for this Church. (See Appendix for list of current co-ordinators)

A copy of the full policy can be seen in the Church Office.

The following policy was agreed by the Elders

Signed (by Elders)

.....

.....

Date

Agreed Review Date

CHURCH DETAILS

Name: Bethany Church Finaghy (hereafter, the Church")

Address: 135 Upper Lisburn Road, Belfast BT10 0LN

Church website: www.bethany.org

Denomination: Christian Brethren

1.2 AIM

This section aims to make you aware of our Church Policies in relation to the Protection of Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults. It emphasises that it is not just the Elders or those involved in youth activities, but every Church member, who has a responsibility to ensure that procedures and good practice are followed in order to keep our children, young people, vulnerable adults, Workers and Key Workers safe. **This is a corporate responsibility.**

1.3 OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Leaders and Workers have a major role to play in protecting and safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults with whom they come into contact. It is also important everyone understands their role in receiving information and passing it on to the appropriate person without delay. As an essential part of its mission, our church must:

- Implement a formal Child Protection Policy and regularly review its policies and procedures by way of an audit.
- Appoint an appropriate / experienced person and at least one deputy within the church to receive concerns and be responsible for deciding what action needs to be taken.
- Listen to, relate effectively and value children and young people whilst ensuring their protection within church activities
- Encourage and support parents and carers
- Ensure that children's/youth Workers are given support and training
- Develop good practice guidelines for working with children and young people
- Agree and implement procedures for dealing with concerns about possible abuse
- Minimise the risk of false allegations
- Establish links with statutory child care agencies
- Respond effectively to the needs of children and adults who have been abused

1.4 MISSION STATEMENT

The Elders of the Church recognise the importance of its ministry to children, young people and vulnerable adults and its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people entrusted to the church's care.

As part of its mission, the Church is committed to:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting children and young people as well as promoting their welfare and protection.
- Safe recruitment, supervision and training for all the children's/youth Workers within the church.
- Adopting a procedure for dealing with concerns about possible abuse.
- Encouraging and supporting parents/carers.
- Supporting those affected by abuse in the church.
- Maintaining good links with the statutory childcare authorities and other organisations.

1.5 CHURCH POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & VULNERABLE ADULTS

The Elders recognise the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children and young people. They also acknowledge that children and young people can be the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and neglect. The Elders have therefore adopted the procedures set out in this document (hereafter "the policy"). They also recognise the need to build constructive links with statutory and voluntary child protection agencies. The policy and attached practice guidelines are based on a model published by the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) and prepared in consultation with DHSSPS guidance documents. The Elders undertake to file a copy of the policy and practice guidelines with CCPAS and social services, and any amendments subsequently published. The Elders agree not to allow the document to be copied by other organisations.

The Elders are committed to on-going child protection training for all children/youth Workers and will regularly review the operational guidelines attached.

The Elders also undertake to follow the principles found within the Abuse of Trust guidance issued by the Home Office and it is therefore unacceptable for those in a position of trust to engage in any behaviour which might allow a sexual relationship to develop for as long as the relationship of trust continues.

1.5.1 RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

Under no circumstances should a church worker carry out their own investigation into the allegation or suspicion of abuse. The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse will do the following:

- Concerns must be reported as soon as possible to the Child Protection Co-ordinator who is nominated by the Elders to act on their behalf in dealing with the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including referring the matter on to the statutory authorities.
- The Co-ordinator may also be required by conditions of the Church Insurance Policy to immediately inform the Insurance Company.
- In the absence of the Co-ordinator, or if the suspicions in any way involve the Co-ordinator then the report should be made to the Deputy Co-ordinator.
- If the suspicions implicate both the Co-ordinator and the Deputy Co-ordinator, then the report should be made in the first instance to the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ. Telephone 0845 120 4550 or alternatively contact Social Services. The local Social Services office telephone number between 9.00am and 5.00pm is 028 90565555. The out of hours emergency Social Services number is 028 90565444. The Police Child Protection Team telephone number is 028 90259856.
- Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. A written record of the concerns should be made in accordance with church procedures and kept in a secure place.
- Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Co-ordinator, the absence of the Co-ordinator or Deputy Co-ordinator should not delay referral to Social Services.
- The Elders will support the Co-ordinator / Deputy Co-ordinator in their role, and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.
- It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make a direct referral to the child protection agencies or seek advice from CCPAS, although the Elders hope that members of the church will use this procedure. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Co-ordinator/Deputy Co-ordinator has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Co-ordinator(s) as to the appropriateness of a referral they are free to contact an outside agency direct.

The role of the co-ordinator/deputy co-ordinator is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information on to Social Services. It is Social Services task to investigate the matter under Article 66 of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

1.5.2 RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF PHYSICAL INJURY OR NEGLECT

If a child has a physical injury or symptom of neglect, the Co-ordinator/Deputy Co-ordinator will:

- contact Social Services (or CCPAS) for advice in cases of deliberate injury, if concerned about a child's safety or if a child is afraid to return home.
- not tell the parents or carers unless advised to do so having contacted Social Services.
- seek medical help if needed urgently, informing the doctor of any suspicions.
- for lesser concerns, (e.g. poor parenting), encourage parent/carer to seek help, but not if this places the child at risk of injury.
- where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, offer to accompany them. In cases of real concern, if they still fail to act, contact Social Services direct for advice.
- seek and follow advice given by CCPAS (who will confirm their advice in writing) if unsure whether or not to refer a case to Social Services.

1.5.3 RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Co-ordinator/Deputy Co-ordinator will:

- contact the Social Services Department Duty Social Worker for children and families or Police Child Protection Team direct. They will NOT speak to the parent/carer or anyone else.
- seek and follow the advice given by CCPAS if, for any reason they are unsure whether or not to contact Social Services/Police. CCPAS will confirm its advice in writing for future reference.

1.5.4 APPOINTMENT, SUPPORT, SUPERVISION & TRAINING OF WORKERS & KEY WORKERS

The Elders will ensure all Workers will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with the principles set out in government guidelines. See reference list.

1.5.5 SUPERVISION OF GROUP ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & VULNERABLE ADULTS

The Elders will provide details of the supervision for each specific activity in the Church practice guidelines attached.

1.5.6 SUPPORT TO THOSE AFFECTED BY ABUSE

The Elders are committed to offering pastoral care, working with statutory agencies as appropriate, and support to those attending the church who have been affected by abuse.

1.5.7 WORKING WITH OFFENDERS

When someone attending the Church is known to have abused children, the Elders will supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but in its commitment to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults, set boundaries for that person which they will be expected to keep.

1.6 WEBSITE STATEMENT REGARDING THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & VULNERABLE ADULTS

Bethany Church Finaghy regards child protection and good working practice as a priority. In the interests of the safety and well being of all children and young people, it has developed and operates a formal child protection policy, which is registered with the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service.

The church is committed to ensuring that everyone working with children or young people:

- has undergone a Criminal Records Bureau check at enhanced level,
- is adequately trained and supervised,
- understands and follows the church's child protection policy.

The child protection policy may be viewed and/or a copy obtained from the church office at **135 Upper Lisburn Road, Finaghy, Belfast, BT10 0LN.**

As part of this Church's commitment to children and young people it has an appointed Child Protection Co-ordinator and Deputy Child Protection Co-ordinator (see Appendix 1 for current details). All the children and young people involved in activities within the church will be informed as to who they are and how they can be contacted.

Should the Church have any child protection concerns it will seek the advice of the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service and if appropriate contact the statutory authorities.

Bethany Church Finaghy

- recognises that child protection is everyone's responsibility.
- is committed to supporting parents and families.
- recognises the unique and individual worth of each child.
- is committed to nurturing, protecting and safeguarding children and young people.
- exercises care in the appointment of all those working with children and young people in the church, working to 'Safe from Harm' principles.

- is committed to following statutory, denominational (if relevant) and specialist guidelines in working with children and young people.
- seeks to support all those affected by abuse.
- is committed to supporting, training and resourcing those who work with children and young people and provide regular supervision.
- is committed to the management and supervision of known offenders in the church.
- will review its child protection policy annually and register it with CCPAS.

If you have any concerns for a child or in relation to any child protection matter then please speak to one of the Child Protection Co-ordinators.

Further details about child protection policies, training in child protection, the Criminal Records Bureau and the quality assurance review can be obtained from the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service, P O Box 133, Swanley, Kent BR8 7UQ telephone 0845 120 4550. Email info@ccpas.co.uk Web: www.ccpas.co.uk

SECTION 2 - PROCEDURES

The Section includes the following topics:

2.1 Aim of this Section

2.2 Caring for children, young people and vulnerable adults

2.3 Establishing Effective Procedures

2.4 The Child Protection Team

2.5 Dealing with Child Abuse

2.5.1 Definition of Abuse of a 'Child'

2.5.2 Recognising Possible Signs of Abuse

2.5.3 Dealing with Disclosure

2.5.4 Recording the Conversation

2.5.5 Do's and Don'ts

2.5.6 Flow chart of Process

2.5.7 Response of the Child Protection Co-ordinator:

- **Where a child has a physical injury or symptom of neglect**
- Where allegations or concern about sexual abuse
- To allegations against Workers
- Contacting Social Services
- Sharing Information

2.6 Recruiting Workers

- Government Guidance
- Church Recruitment Procedure

2.7 Handling, Storage and Access of Disclosure Information

2.8 Risk Assessment

- What Hazards
- Who Harmed
- Evaluating Risks
- Recording
- Reviewing

2.1 AIM

This section aims to detail procedures that Bethany Church Finaghy should follow to implement our Policy for the Protection of Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults, so that all young people in our care and their Workers are kept safe. It explains the correct thing to do if we have a concern about a child, young person or vulnerable adult or if they make a disclosure to or allegation against a Worker. The Elders must ensure that appropriate procedures are followed recruiting new Workers. There are also procedures to follow to ensure that premises are fit for purpose so that all using them can do so safely. Church website complies with current good practice and legislation as we seek to display what our Church offers to those in the community and to the wider world, but doing so without putting any child, young person or vulnerable adult in a position of potential risk.

2.2 CARING FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & VULNERABLE ADULTS

The primary responsibility for the care of children, young people and vulnerable adults rests with their parents, guardians and carers, but the community as a whole has a responsibility to ensure their well-being and protection. All our Church members should remain alert to circumstances in which the children, young people and vulnerable adults in our care may be harmed.

2.3 ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE PROCEDURES

As a voluntary organisation working with children, young people and vulnerable adults, we in Bethany Church Finaghy should:

- Promote the general welfare, health and full development of children and protect them from harm of all kinds.
- Recognise that children have rights as individuals and treat them with dignity and respect.
- Raise awareness about what children are entitled to be protected from.
- Adopt and consistently apply a thorough and clearly defined method of recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers.
- Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise opportunities for children to suffer harm.
- Develop effective procedures in responding to accidents and complaints and to alleged or suspected incidents of abuse.

2.4 THE CHILD PROTECTION TEAM

Within Bethany Church Finaghy, a team of people oversee child protection – its policies, procedures, identifying and supporting good practice, administration and training (see Appendix 1 for current details).

2.5 DEALING WITH CHILD ABUSE

2.5.1 DEFINITION OF ABUSE OF A 'CHILD'

Everyone who is working with children as part of the ministries of Bethany Church should be aware of what child abuse is. Here is the guidance which we follow.

The following definitions of child abuse are recommended as criteria in Northern Ireland by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in the document 'Co-operating to Safeguard Children (2003). Everyone who is working with children as part of the ministries of Bethany Church should be aware of what child abuse is.

Definition of a Child

For the purposes of this guidance a child is a person under the age of 18.

Forms of Child Abuse

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional setting by those known to them or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them.

Physical Abuse

Physical Abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and continuous adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose children to emotional abuse.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include 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*.

**Sexual activity involving a child who is capable of giving informed consent on a matter, while illegal, may not necessarily constitute sexual abuse as defined for the purposes of this guide. One example, which would fall into this category is a sexual relationship between a 16 year old and her 18 year old boyfriend. The decision to initiate child protection action in such cases is a matter for professional judgement and each case should be considered individually. The criminal aspects will, of course, be dealt with by the police.*

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive.

Significant Harm

The legislation defining the circumstances in which compulsory intervention in family life is justified in the best interests of children is based on the concept of 'significant harm'. The relevant Articles in the Children Order are Articles 2(2) and 50(3). There are no absolute criteria for judging what constitutes significant harm. However, they may include the degree, extent, duration and frequency of harm. Sometimes a single traumatic event may constitute significant harm e.g. violent assault, sexual assault, suffocating or poisoning. More often, significant harm is a series of events, both acute and longstanding, which interrupt, change or damage the child's physical and/or psychological development. Some children live in family and social circumstances where health and development are neglected. For them, it is the corrosiveness of long term emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse that causes impairment, sometimes to the extent of constituting significant harm. It is based on the child's health or development compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child. e.g. severity of ill treatment, degree and extent of physical harm, duration and frequency of abuse and neglect, premeditation. Department of Health guidance suggests that 'significant' means 'considerable, noteworthy or important.'

Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy

The Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry defines Munchausen's Syndrome by proxy as: "A form of child abuse in which the parents or carers give false accounts of symptoms in their children and may fake signs of illness (to draw attention to themselves). They seek repeated medical investigations and needless treatment for their children." The government issued guidance for professionals working in situations where Munchausen's is suspected in 'Safeguarding Children in whom Illness is Fabricated or Induced' (2002).

Spiritual Abuse

Linked with emotional abuse, spiritual abuse could be defined as an abuse of power, often done in the name of God or religion, which involves manipulating or coercing someone into thinking, saying or doing things without respecting their right to choose for themselves. Some indicators of spiritual abuse might be a leader who is intimidating and imposes his/her will on other people, perhaps threatening dire consequences or the wrath of God if disobeyed. He or she may say that God has revealed certain things to them and so they know what is right. Those under their leadership are fearful to challenge or disagree, believing they will lose the leader's (or more seriously God's) acceptance and approval.

Domestic Violence

The Home Office definition of domestic violence is "Any violence between current or former partners in an intimate relationship, wherever and whenever the violence occurs. The violence may include physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse." (Home Office Research Studies. Domestic Violence: Findings from a new British Crime Survey self-completion questionnaire 1999). In 2004 the Government's definition of domestic violence was extended to include acts perpetrated by extended family members as well

as intimate partners. Consequently, acts such as forced marriage and other so-called 'honour crimes', which can include abduction and homicide, can now come under the definition of domestic violence. Many of these acts are committed against children

Organised Abuse and Child Prostitution

Organised abuse means abuse that may involve a number of abusers, a number of abused children and often encompasses different forms of abuse. A range of abusing activity is covered by this term:

Paedophile Networks

Where several individuals create access to relatively large numbers of children. A network may be confined to a neighbourhood, may spread over a wide geographical area or even across national boundaries. Some members may be known to each other while others remain anonymous.

Institutional Abuse

Is abuse by adults working in an organisation that has responsibility for children. The institution acts as an organisational base bringing adults and children together and offers the opportunities for the abuse to take place. Often a series of children are abused over a long period.

Family Based Abuse

Children are abused within an extended family network often crossing generations and involving several households. Adults outside the extended family may be drawn in and children may sometimes be prostituted. It differs from paedophile or child prostitution networks, not least because the victims are rarely recruited from outside the extended family and family contacts.

Child Prostitution and Pornography

Involves the sexual exploitation of children ranging from organised crime syndicates to young people who operate independently, although the latter would not be viewed as organised abuse.

2.5.2 RECOGNISING POSSIBLE SIGNS OF ABUSE

The following signs may or may not be indicators that abuse has taken place, but the possibility should be considered.

Physical Signs of Abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries that occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc
- Injuries that have not received medical attention
- Neglect - under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care, etc
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc which do not have an accidental explanation*
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse*

Indicators of Possible Sexual Abuse

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders - anorexia, bulimia*

Emotional Signs of Abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging. Also depression/aggression, extreme anxiety.
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

*These signs may indicate the possibility that a child or young person is self-harming, mostly by cutting, burning, self-poisoning. Approximately 20,000 are treated in accident and emergency departments in the UK each year.

Race, Culture and Religion

Crucial to any assessment is a knowledge and sensitivity to racial, cultural and religious aspects. Remember also that differences exist not only between ethnic groups but also within the same ethnic group and between different neighbourhoods and social classes. While different practices must be taken into account, it is also important to remember that all children have basic human rights. Differences in child-rearing do not justify child abuse.

2.5.3 DEALING WITH DISCLOSURE

When a child wants to talk about abuse, it is important for the worker to listen carefully to what the child says without prompting or using leading questions. The following is the procedure and guidelines for our Workers to follow.

Respond to the child wanting to talk

General Points

- Above everything else listen, listen, listen
- Show acceptance of what the child says (however unlikely the story may sound)
- Keep calm
- Look at the child directly
- Be honest
- Tell the child you will need to let someone else know - **don't** promise confidentiality
- Even when a child has broken a rule, they are not to blame for the abuse
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened or bribed not to tell

- Never push for information. If the child decides not to tell you after all, then accept that and let them know that you are always ready to listen.
- As soon as possible write down what has been shared

Helpful Responses

- You have done the right thing in telling
- That must have been really hard
- I am glad you have told me
- It's not your fault
- I will help you

Don't Say

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it!
- Are you sure this is true?
- Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- Never make false promises
- Never make statements such as "I am shocked, don't tell anyone else"

In Conclusion

- Again reassure the child that they were right to tell you and show acceptance
- Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens (you might have to consider referring to Social Services or the Police to prevent a child or young person returning home if you consider them to be seriously at risk of further abuse – see paragraphs below)
- Contact the Child Protection Co-ordinator or others (see Section 1.5)
- Consider your own feelings and seek pastoral support if needed

Referrals and Third Party Allegations

Where a third party alleges abuse towards a child, the role of the Church worker is to gather as much information as possible from this person. They should be advised the information they have provided will be shared with the child protection co-ordinator and may result in a referral to the Social Services Department with their details. This is so that Social Services can contact them if necessary.

Reasons for Not Contacting the Parent or Alleged Abuser

A child might make an allegation naming someone as an abuser. The allegation might be the absolute truth or it could be that a child feels safer to name someone else because they are being told not to tell. Alternatively, the child may be presenting the situation in a confused way. The danger is, if a parent/carer is told about the allegation, a police investigation could be ruined if by their reaction they inadvertently alert the abuser or take matters into their own hands and confront a person under suspicion. There is also the risk the parent/carer might even physically assault the alleged perpetrator, which would not be helpful, particularly if they turn out to be innocent! In fact any reaction could alert an alleged perpetrator even if it isn't threatening. So, it is vital no one from the church informs the parent of the allegations at this stage. The decision to advise the parents/carer should be left to Social Services or the Police.

If contacted, the alleged abuser (if guilty) might try to silence the child with bribery or threats. He or she could dispose of any incriminating material - books, videos, photos, computer

files. If he or she is not guilty, their initial reaction (e.g. shock, horror) could be indicative of their innocence. If they have already been 'tipped off' less credence can be given to their initial reaction.

2.5.4 RECORDING THE CONVERSATION

The Worker should make a careful written record of what has been observed as follows:

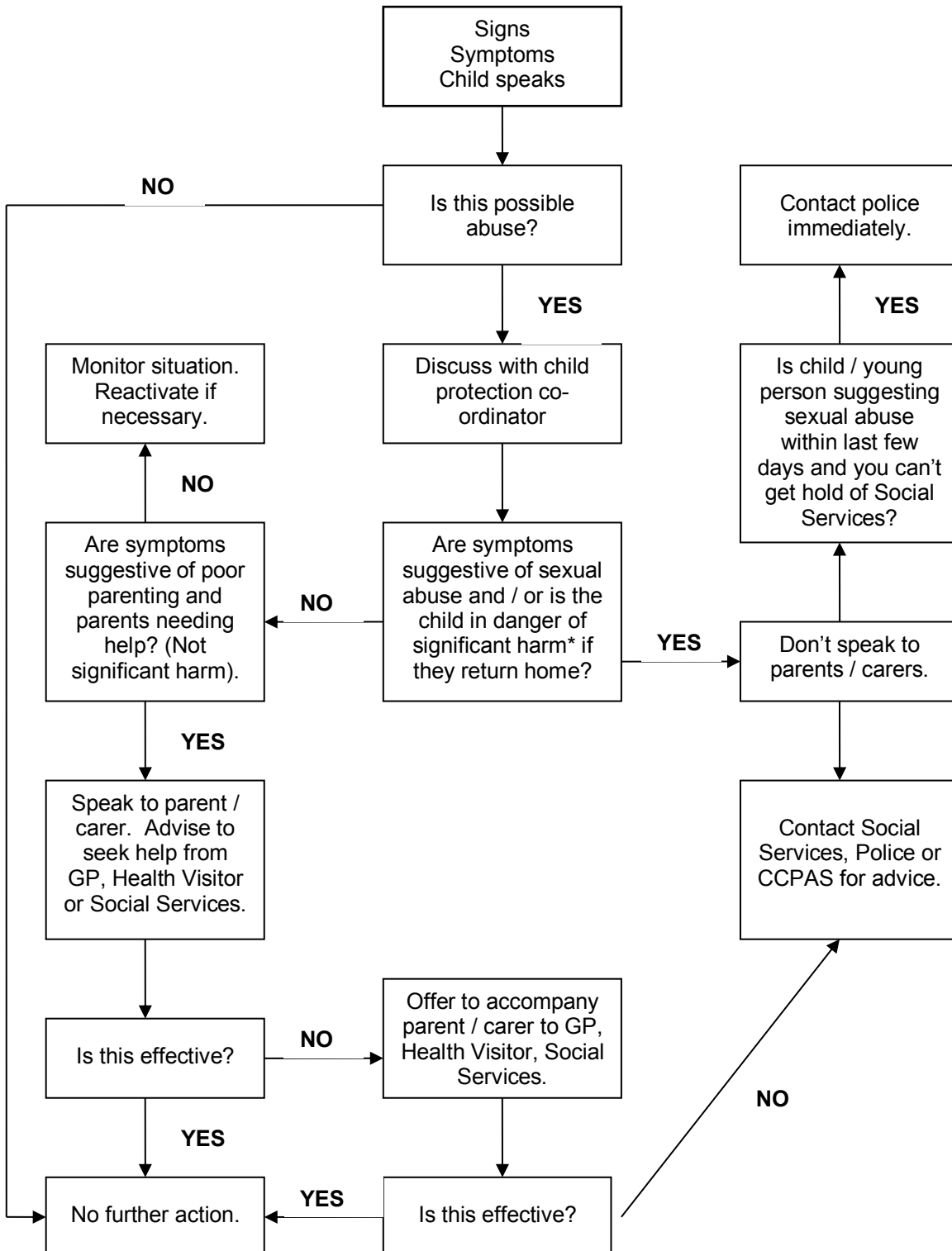
- Make notes as soon as possible (preferably within one hour of the child talking) including a description of any injury, its size, and a drawing of its location and shape on the child's body.
- Write down exactly what the child has said and when s/he said it, what was said in reply and what was happening immediately beforehand (eg a description of the activity).
- Write down dates and times of these events and when the record was made.
- Write down any action taken and keep all hand written notes even if subsequently typed up.
- These notes should be passed on to the Child Protection Co-ordinator to assist him should the matter need to be referred to Social Services. Any referral to Social Services should be confirmed by the referrer in writing within 48 hours (see 'Approaching Social Services' below)
- All documents should be signed, dated and kept for an indefinite period in a secure place – filing cabinet in Church.
- Be aware of Bethany Church's insurance policy and take advice.
- The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service can also offer independent advice that will be followed by written confirmation of the advice given.

See: Section 4.2 CHILD ABUSE RESPONSE FORM & SKIN MAPS

2.5.5 DO'S AND DON'TS

- Take what the child, young person or vulnerable adult says seriously and follow it up as soon as possible.
- Tell your Key Worker – they will contact the Child Protection Co-ordinator
- Stay calm
- Listen and hear
- Give the child, young person or vulnerable adult time to say what they want to
- Reassure them they have done the right thing in telling you
- Write down what was said and transfer onto our Child Abuse Response form
- Keep a note of your report, including date, time, name of individual, who you have told (Key Worker) and then action taken
- Only speak to your Key Worker and/or Child Protection Co-ordinator about the matter
- Don't panic
- Don't make a child, young person or vulnerable adult repeat the story more often than necessary
- Don't promise to keep secrets
- Don't enquire into details of the abuse
- Don't try to deal with the problem alone
- **Don't do nothing!**

2.5.6 FLOW CHART FOR ACTION



2.5.7 RESPONSE OF THE CHILD PROTECTION CO-ORDINATOR:

Where possible, concerns should be passed to the Child Protection Co-ordinator (or deputy) but difficulty in contacting these individual(s) should not delay action being taken.

If there is a concern that a child may have been abused, the Church Child Protection Co-ordinator should take the following action:

Where a Child has a Physical Injury or Symptom of Neglect:

- Contact Social Services directly if there are concerns that a child may have been deliberately hurt, is at risk of 'significant harm' or is afraid to return home. Do not tell the parents in such circumstances. It may also be helpful to have the contact number for the police child protection team.
- If a child needs urgent medical attention an ambulance should be called or they should be taken to hospital, informing the parents/carers afterwards of the action that was taken. The hospital staff should be informed of any child protection concerns. They have a responsibility to pass these concerns on to the statutory authorities.
- If the concerns for the child centre around poor parenting it may be appropriate to speak to the parent/carer, offer practical domestic help and suggest, for example, a chat with the health visitor, doctor or the Social Services Department.
- If a parent/carer is unwilling or frightened to seek help, then offer to accompany them. If they still fail to acknowledge the need for action it is possible to informally discuss the situation with Social Services without divulging their personal details (such as names and addresses) unless, of course, Social Services consider the situation to be serious enough to do so. In these circumstances it is important to realise there may be a bigger picture. Information may have come to light that might be a vital missing piece in the jigsaw. The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service is available to give advice in these situations.
- It is important to take older children's wishes into account when deciding whether to talk to parents/carers unless other children are potentially at risk.

Where There are Allegations or Concerns of Sexual Abuse:

- Contact Social Services. DO NOT try to investigate the matter. The important thing is to relay the information to Social Services and/or the Police so they can carry out any investigation and take appropriate action under Article 66 of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.
- In the case of very severe sexual assault (such as rape), which may have occurred over the last few days, and where it has not been possible to get an immediate response from Social Services, contact the police in order to facilitate a medical examination by a designated police surgeon. This could provide evidence, which may be used in any criminal prosecution. (Older young people are able to decline such an examination if they are considered to be of sufficient age and understanding). Do not touch or tamper with any evidence, such as stained clothing.

- DO NOT tell the parents/ carers, they could be involved. It is also important no one else who might be involved is inadvertently alerted to the situation because this may lead to the child being 'silenced'. Allegations of sexual abuse are usually denied and often difficult to prove. Remember, the child's welfare must be the first consideration at all times.
- Keep information on a "need to know" basis so that any alleged perpetrator is not "tipped off". The child or young person also has a right for their privacy to be respected as much as is possible.

Should the Child Protection Co-ordinator not feel it necessary to refer the matter to Social Services but the Children's Worker (or anyone else) has serious concerns for the child's safety, then the Worker should contact the relevant authorities directly. The safety of the child over-rides all other considerations and it is important to remember that sexual abuse of children is a serious crime. The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service can advise in cases of difficulty.

If the allegation is against the Child Protection Co-ordinator, the referral should be made directly to Social Services or appropriate professional advice sought, e.g. from the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service. The Elders must be informed and the Church's insurance company may need to be contacted.

Allegations Against Workers

If the alleged perpetrator has a role among children in the church, or has any contact with children, seek the advice of Social Services and the police before taking any action such as suspension of employment. During an enquiry, it will be necessary to supervise the Worker as closely as possible without raising suspicion during the period between the matter coming to your attention, the authorities being informed and the appropriate being action taken. The suspension of a Worker following an allegation is by definition a neutral act but may be necessary because the priority is to protect children from possible further abuse or from being influenced in any way by the alleged perpetrator.

2.5.8 CONTACTING SOCIAL SERVICES

If there are concerns about someone being abused or is at risk of significant harm ring:

- **Social Services:**
Monday to Friday Office 9am to 5pm **028 90565555**.
Out of Hours Social Worker **028 90565444**.

Police Child Protection Team: 028 90259856.

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

- Social Services may also be consulted with regarding safeguarding child protection issues within disclosing personal details.

Act in accordance with professional advice – statutory services may already have information and concerns of which you are unaware. Follow up any verbal referral in writing to the Social Services Department within 48 hours.

2.5.9 SHARING INFORMATION

- Explain openly and honestly at the outset what information will or could be shared, and why, and seek agreement – except where doing so puts the child or others at risk of significant harm.
- The child's safety and welfare must be the overriding consideration when making decisions on whether to share information about them.
- Respect the wishes of children or families who do not consent to share confidential information – unless in your judgement there is sufficient need to override that lack of consent.
- Seek advice from CCPAS when in doubt. Ensure information is accurate, up-to-date, necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, shared only with those who need to see it, and shared securely.
- Always record the reasons for your decision – whether it is to share or not..

2.6 PROCEDURE FOR RECRUITING WORKERS

Government Guidance

Government guidance stresses the need to treat all volunteers as job applicants for any position involving contact with children and young people. Great care therefore should be exercised in the selection and appointment process. This will be an outward expression of our Church's commitment to protecting children and young people.

Under current legislation, it is an offence for anyone disqualified from working with children and young people to knowingly apply, accept or offer to work with children. The Act specifically includes trustees of charities working with children. In practice this means that a person banned from working with children should not serve as a trustee of a church. It is also a criminal offence to knowingly offer or continue to allow work with children, to an individual who is disqualified.

A detailed Application Form, Personal References, Information from previous employers (paid or voluntary) and an interview all have a part to play in the assessment of a candidate's suitability for the post, as well as having an individual checked against the POCVA register, through AccessNI, to ensure there are no convictions relating to child abuse.

Church Recruitment Procedure

In Bethany Church Finaghy we will follow this recruitment procedure:

- We will make known the need for new Workers by:
 - Elders making announcement to church members
 - Positions available and details posted on church notice-board

Applicants will be assessed on their suitability in any open, fair, appropriate and legitimate process.

- Successful candidates will complete a **Voluntary Disclosure Form and AccessNI Form**, to be returned to the Child Protection Co-ordinator.

- All such documentation will be held in strictest confidence and only kept for the minimum time necessary.
- Successful candidates will be issued with a Bethany Church Finaghy **Contract for Children's Worker** and commence in their position for a probationary period of 6 months, after which they will be reviewed.
- Our church's policy on safeguarding children's welfare and our expectations in relation to practice will be explained to our new worker. They will receive a copy of Bethany Church's Child Protection Policy, Procedures and Practice.

2.7 HANDLING, STORAGE AND ACCESS OF DISCLOSURE INFORMATION

A record will be kept of all those to whom Disclosure Information has been revealed.

This information will be stored in a secure, lockable, non-portable cabinet separated from other personal information, with access strictly controlled and limited to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties. It is a criminal offence to pass this information to anyone who is not entitled to receive it in accordance with Section 124 of the Police Act 1997.

Disclosure information will only be used for the specific purpose for which it was requested and for which the applicant's full consent has been given.

Once a recruitment (or other relevant) decision has been made, Disclosure Information will not be kept for longer than up to six months, to allow for the consideration and resolution of any disputes or complaints. If, in very exceptional circumstances, it is considered necessary to keep Disclosure information for longer than six months, advice will then be sought from CCPAS as to the Data Protection and Human Rights of the individual. The above conditions regarding safe storage and strictly controlled access would still apply in these circumstances.

Once the retention period has lapsed, Disclosure information will be suitably destroyed by shredding. No copies of the Disclosure information will be kept, in any form. However, a record will be kept of:

- the date of the issue of a disclosure
- the name of the subject
- the type of disclosure requested
- the position for which the disclosure was requested
- the unique reference number of the disclosure the details of the recruitment decision taken.

2.8 PROCEDURE FOR RISK ASSESSMENT OF ACTIVITIES INVOLVING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & VULNERABLE ADULTS

Risk assessments should be suitable and sufficient. In carrying out a risk assessment you need to be able to show that:

- A reasonable and proper check was made.
- You asked who might be affected.
- You dealt with the obvious hazards and took into account the number of people who might be affected.
- The precautions are reasonable and the remaining risk is low.

The chief responsibility for checking out the building rests with the building owner or landlord; however, this doesn't absolve you from all responsibility. For example, if you discover a light fitting hanging from a thread or a broken window or a damaged stair tread then you have a responsibility to report that to the building owner – you may even have to cancel your activity or group until the matter is put right.

Churches and organisations have a responsibility to assess the risk involved in the activities that the young people or children will be involved in. This may be an informal check each evening before the start of an activity that the building is safe and that the planned activities have been assessed, the risks identified and eliminated or control measures introduced.

Guidelines on How to Carry Out a Risk Assessment

The five steps of assessing risk that the Health and Safety Executive suggest are as follows: (These steps can be used for both an informal and formal risk assessment)

Step 1 – Look for the hazards and write them down

Hazard means anything that can cause harm (e.g. cleaning chemicals, working on computers, stairs/ladders). In office and church environments often the hazards are few and simple. Checking them by walking around your building/centre and look for hazards that could cause serious harm or affect a number of people. Some further examples are slipping/tripping hazards, fire, chemicals, moving parts of machinery, working at heights, lifting and carrying, storage, electricity, gas, water pipes, cables, flooring and lighting.

Step 2 – Decide who might be harmed and how and then write this down

It is important to consider if you have people with special needs using the building then attention needs to be paid to their particular requirements, specifically access and emergency evacuation assistance.

Step 3 – Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate. Write this down too.

Risk is the chance, high or low, that someone will be harmed by the hazard. Think about who visits your premises and which groups operate from there e.g. youth club, toddler groups etc. The risks may be different for different groups of people as some may be more vulnerable than others.

How likely is it that each hazard could cause harm? A worn or frayed carpet on a step or on a dark corner, a cable running across a walkway, are higher hazard than say, cleaning materials locked in the cleaner's cupboard, although they are all hazards.

There are some legal requirements which need to be met, like fire exits and extinguishers, check are you complying in these areas? Chemicals such as bleach and other cleaning materials need to be recorded and stored safely.

Risk can be measured by consideration of the likelihood of the incidence/injury.

i.e. 1 = Improbable, 2 = Possible, 3 = Likely, 4 = Very Likely, 5 = Certain

and by consideration of the severity of the consequences

i.e. 1 = Trivial (grazing, soreness), 2 = Minor (small cuts, bruising), 3 = Severe (broken bones), 4 = Major, 5 = Fatal

By multiplying the likelihood by the severity you can quantify risk. This can assist in prioritising the action that needs to be taken. For example, a loose carpet in an open area gives to a very likely hazard or tripping (4) with the likely consequence of soreness or grazing (1)... The risk is therefore 4.

The same loose carpet but this time at the top of the stairs however may still be very likely (4) but the consequences could be severe (3). The risk is therefore 12. This should have greater priority than the previous situation but both need attention to remedy the hazard.

As a result of the risk assessment you should then draw up an action list and prioritise those risks which are high or could affect the most people.

In terms of what action to take, question whether it is possible to remove the hazard altogether? e.g. replacing worn carpet. If it is not possible to remove the hazard then ask how you can control the risk it presents. Preventing access is one way or organising your work in a different way is another. The aim of any risk assessment should be to eliminate the hazard altogether, where reasonably practical. If this is not possible then steps should be taken to reduce the hazard to a low risk.

Step 4 – Record your findings

Legally, if you have fewer than five employees you do not need to write anything down. However having done all work it makes sense to keep a written record of what you have done. If you have more than five employees you must make a written record of your findings and tell employees (and volunteers!) about them.

Risk assessments need to be 'suitable and sufficient'. This means you need to show that a proper check was made, you identified who might be affected, you dealt with the obvious hazards, took reasonable precautions and that the remaining risk is low.

Step 5 – Review your assessment and revise it if necessary.

If you bring in new equipment or change the way you work or the people who use the building then you will need to go through the procedure again, identifying hazards, accessing risk and taking action. Add any of these findings to your original record and it will ensure that it stays up to date.

It is good practice to review your assessment from time to time to ensure that precautions are still working affectively so set a date for review and keep to it!

SECTION 3 – PRACTICE

The Section includes the following topics:

- 3.1 Aim of this Section
- 3.2 General Good Practice
- 3.3 Good Organisation / Team Work
- 3.4 Responsibilities of Key Workers
- 3.5 Talking and listening to young children, young people and vulnerable adults
- 3.6 Visiting children and young people at home
- 3.7 Children and young people from the street
- 3.8 Disciplining children and young people in our care
- 3.9 Working with disruptive children and young people
- 3.10 Tobacco, Alcohol, Solvents and Illegal Substances
- 3.11 Children young people and adults with a disability
- 3.12 Parents /carers staying with their children at a group activity
- 3.13 Transporting children and young people
- 3.14 Health and Safety
- 3.15 Modern Technologies and Safe Communication
- 3.16 Data Protection, Filming and Photos
- 3.17 Images of Children and Young People
- 3.18 Residential Weekends & Rally Camp

3.1 AIM

This section aims to highlight and encourage all Workers involved in youth work and all Church members to demonstrate the best practice possible at all times.

3.2 GENERAL GOOD PRACTICE

In Bethany Church Finaghy, clear guidance of expectations is given to all Workers in order to ensure quality childcare, protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from possible abuse and Workers from false accusation.

- Workers should treat all children, young people and vulnerable adults with dignity and respect in attitude, language and actions.
- Workers should take every opportunity to listen to what children and young may say (verbal and nonverbal), giving praise and encouragement, and always taking what they say seriously.
- Consideration is given to how many Workers should be involved with the group and whether they should be male and/or female Workers or both.
- A clear strategy is in place for summoning additional adult help (if needed) in situations where a worker is alone with a child.
- The level of personal care (e.g. toileting) must be appropriate and related to the age of the child whilst also accepting that some children, young people and vulnerable adults have special needs.
- The privacy of children should be respected, avoiding questionable activity such as rough or sexually provocative games and comments.
- Where confidentiality is important (eg counselling) and a young person is being seen on their own, other Workers must know the interview is taking place and someone else will remain in the building.
- No person under 16 years of age will be left alone with the responsibility of caring for or supervising other children or young people.
- The only people allowed to participate in a children's activity are the Workers assigned to that group. Other adults will not be allowed free access.

3.3 GOOD ORGANISATION / TEAM WORK

Each organisation should have clearly defined aims and objectives and a clearly defined line of accountability so that all Workers report to their Key Worker, who reports to the relevant Elder.

Workers must be aware of the specific programme for each session and be clear about one another's responsibilities. Each Worker must be fully acquainted with the Church's Policy for the Protection of Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults.

Every organisation should have access to a trained First Aider, especially important when high-risk activity is involved.

Key Workers should have up-to-date contact numbers for parents, guardians and carers. Parents should be supplied with the contact name of the Key Worker for that organisation and relevant information.

There should be opportunity for review and appraisal of each youth ministry to address problems and plan for the following year.

3.4 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE KEY WORKER IN AN ORGANISATION

The Key Worker should ensure:

- there is an Accident/ Incident Book / Forms on the premises.
- he/she has access to names, addresses and contact numbers of the children, young people and vulnerable adults attending the organisation.
- be aware of medical condition of children and young people, as identified by the parent/guardian, and act accordingly to the parent's reasonable guidance giving consideration to an agreed action plan (emergency or routine action) as required.
- there is access to a telephone in the event of an emergency.
- all Workers are aware of the appropriate Reporting Procedure/form in the event of an accident.
- all Workers are aware of the appropriate Reporting Procedure/form in the event of an allegation of abuse.
- he/she knows the name and contact number of the Child Protection Co-ordinator and the Deputy.
- he/she seeks to follow Bethany Child Protection Policy, Procedure and Practice in so far as it affects the organisation.
- he/she will keep a register of children or young people attending together with a register of Workers.
- A logbook is used to record unusual events or conversations.

Logbooks may be very helpful, for example, if leaders have to deal with a difficult child who subsequently makes an accusation of assault. A young person who repeatedly makes throwaway sexual comments about Workers may, at a later date, make an allegation of abuse. In this situation, records of previous examples of this behaviour would enable any allegations to be seen in context. Patterns of behaviour or concerns might also emerge from log records that might not otherwise be so obvious. For example, bruising noted on a regular basis or a number of young people making similar comments about one Worker raises concerns. Other information might include records of incidents such as fights and the action taken. Log books can protect both children and Workers.

- A record of all accidents should be completed. See Accident Book or Accident & Incident Form. *In the event of an accident, parents (and older children) should be asked to read and sign the accident book.*
- Parent/carers will be kept informed of activities. A general consent and information form will be sent home for completion and submitted, giving details of parents/carers and emergency contacts.
- *Information of a sensitive nature (child disclosure) will be kept securely and separate from other personal information.*

Adult to Child Ratios

- We endeavour to abide by the suggested ratios of adult to child recommended for under 12yrs old.

	Adult	:	Children
2 yrs & under	1	:	3
3 years	1	:	4
3 to 12 years	1	:	8

- For children over 12, there is no official guidance. A suggested ratio is two adults (preferably one of each gender for a mixed group) for up to 20 children, with an additional leader for every 10 children.
- Following a risk assessment, this ratio would be increased for outdoor activities and more so if that activity is considered high risk or dangerous, or when catering for vulnerable adults or children or young people with disabilities or special needs. In these circumstances it would be preferable if a worker was assigned specifically to that individual, while the ratio of adults to the rest of the group must still be maintained.

3.5 TALKING AND LISTENING TO CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & VULNERABLE ADULTS

Adults should understand the importance of listening to children and responding appropriately.

If a child wants to talk to a worker, the worker should:

- suggest where they might meet
- offer the child or young person privacy but remember the child's and their own safety
- remember not to promise confidentiality
- be aware that the child or young person may not be wanting to talk about abuse
- be aware of how to respond if a child/young person does disclose abuse

3.6 VISITING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT HOME

Workers and leaders may need to visit children or young people and their families at home.

If a visit takes place:

- The worker will inform his or her Key Worker.
- The worker will never go into a child's or young persons home if a parent/carer is absent and may consider leaving a note as to the visit.
- In the event of unusual conversations or events, a written record will be kept detailing the following:
 - Purpose
 - Time the worker arrived and left
 - Who was present
 - What was discussed

3.7 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE STREET

Sometimes children or young people playing outside or wandering the streets with no adult supervision will want to join in with church activities (*e.g. children's club, Sunday school*) without the knowledge of their parents.

- On arrival, the child or young person will be welcomed and their name, age, address and telephone number established. Their visit will be recorded in a register/log book.
- On leaving, the child or young person will be given appropriate information on activity, and consent/personal information form.

3.8 DISCIPLINING CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR CARE

Sometimes a child or young person will behave in a manner which is not acceptable, endangering or hurting other children by their actions or words, sometimes hurting themselves or damaging property.

Workers will:

Never

- use force (smack, hit)
- use a put-down or humiliate
- reject the child or young person, just their behaviour
- allow the behaviour of a child or young person to disrupt the whole activity

Always

- ask God for wisdom, discernment, patience and understanding
- pray for children and young people
- focus on positive characteristics
- be a good role model
- ensure quieter and well-behaved children receive attention
- be consistent and work as a team
- avoid manipulation by good team communication

3.9 WORKING WITH DISRUPTIVE CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE

If a child or young person is being disruptive or dangerous workers will:

- Ask them to stop.
- Speak to the child or young person to establish the cause(s) of upset.
- Inform the child or young person that they may be asked to leave if the behaviour continues.
- Warn the child or young person that if they continue to be disruptive, this might result in exclusion from the group.
- Be mindful to care for other children and young people present
- If in exceptional circumstance where there is significant disruption / danger additional help may be sought e.g. workers, parents, Police, and where there is immediate danger the worker might need to restrain the child or young person to prevent them harming themselves and others.

3.10 TOBACCO, ALCOHOL, SOLVENTS & ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES

Tobacco and Alcohol

It is not illegal for a young person to smoke cigarettes. While workers do not have a right to confiscate cigarettes or tobacco products in the young person's possession, it is important the young person abides by Bethany Church no-smoking policy.

Children aged 5 and over may legally consume alcohol in private but no one under 18yrs can do this in public. Workers do not have the right to confiscate alcohol found in a young person's possession but should be aware of Bethany Church no-alcohol policy.

Workers may have to inform parents that a child or young person has been drinking or smoking. Consideration needs to be given to age of the child / young person, impact of reporting to parents on worker/child/young person relationships, and health and safety issues.

Solvents & Illegal Substances.

It is not illegal for a young person of any age to abuse solvents but if a worker becomes aware there may be a problem, the young person should be encouraged to seek professional help from their GP or a counsellor specialising in this area.

It is a criminal offence however, to allow any young person in the care of a Church group or organisation to produce, possess, use or supply illegal substances. In these circumstances the worker must inform his Key Worker/Elder who must:

- Ask the young person to stop.
- Inform parents if the young person is under 16 years.

- Inform the parents if the young person is over 16 years with their permission.
- Discuss with the young person the proposed course of action, particularly if they re-offend (e.g. informing the police).

The workers will record all such events as above on an Accident & Incident Form

3.11 CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & ADULTS WITH A DISABILITY

Children, young people and adults who have a disability will be encouraged to participate in all activities of Bethany Church.

Leaders and workers should seek to best understand the needs of children, young people and adults who have a disability. Parents and carers should contribute to this.

Leaders and workers should consider training opportunities in understanding the needs of children, young people and adults who have a disability.

3.12 PARENTS / CARERS STAYING WITH THEIR CHILD/REN IN A GROUP ACTIVITY

- There are events which parents are actively encouraged to attend e.g. Sunday School prize-giving, Christmas Sunday School, annual EGR/EBR display, Bethany outing. For very young children, parents / carers are expected to stay with them (e.g. parent and toddler group), unless otherwise planned and agreed (e.g. crèche).
- For children, young people and adults with special needs, it may be appropriate for their parent or carer to stay with them. This will be considered on an individual basis to help the individual become fully integrated into the group or activity.
- There may be occasions when parents request to stay with their children in a group activity. Parents may be facilitated to stay with their children in a group activity but should not take part. Consideration should be given to whether parents / carers staying with their children in a group activity should undergo child protection checks.

3.13 TRANSPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

These guidelines apply to all drivers involved in the transportation of children and young people, organised by or on behalf of Bethany Church Finaghy. They do not apply to private arrangements for transportation made, for example, between parties with parental responsibility.

- Only those who are ACCESSNI cleared will transport children or young people on a regular basis.
- Drivers will be supplied with a copy of the Bethany Child Protection Policy.
- Parental consent will sought for transport
- All transport arrangements will be carried out with the knowledge of the Key Worker.

- Drivers will have a valid and full driving licence that entitles them to drive the agreed vehicle. Drivers must have category D1 on licence for minibuses.
- Drivers will have adequate insurance (those using their personal vehicles for Bethany transport should confirm they have informed and checked this with their insurance company).
- Drivers should ensure their vehicle is road worthy.
- Drivers should not transport a child or a young person by themselves.
- At collection/dropping off points a driver will not leave children on their own but make sure that children are collected by an adult or otherwise as agreed with child's parents.
- It may be unwise for a particular driver to transport a particular child e.g. where there has been a disagreement or where a child / young person has a 'crush' on a driver.
- It is good practice that children and young people are allocated to the same vehicle on the out-going and return journey. This will minimise confusion and the likelihood of a child or young person being left behind.
- If travelling in convoy with cars and minibuses, please note that the maximum speed for a minibus is 50 mph on single carriageway roads, 60 mph on dual carriageways, and 70 mph on motorways.
- Drivers will abide by the Regulations governing the use of child restraints which came into force on 27th February 2007.
- All children transported in cars are subject to the following rules:
 - All children under 135cms and the age of 12yrs must have / use the correct child restraint.
 - All children and young people over 135cms or aged 12 must wear adult seat belts

See: Section 4.14 TRANSPORT PERMISSION FORM

3.14 HEALTH & SAFETY

- Buildings being used should be adequate and safe.
- A suitable 'Risk Assessment' should be carried out for each activity to inform any necessary safety precautions to be taken.
- When food is being prepared, hygiene requirements must be observed.
- Access to an appropriately qualified first-aider is available together with an adequate first aid kit at each activity.
- Fire safety procedures should be followed.

See: Section 4.18 RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

See: Section 4.15 RESIDENTIAL INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORMS (INC. SWIMMING)

3.15 MODERN TECHNOLOGIES AND SAFE COMMUNICATION

This section applies to young people (post primary education), since all communication with children (in primary education) should be made directly with parents / guardians who have parental responsibility of such children. This section also applies to vulnerable adults.

Key Principles

Bethany Church acknowledges that workers communicate with young people and vulnerable adults by modern technologies, and adopts good practices (see key practices below) to ensure that these are used safely and responsibly by all, thereby protecting children, young people, and vulnerable adults, as well as safeguarding the integrity of all workers.

Everyone should consider the safe use of all communication (verbal, written, or electronic) for a number of reasons: its potential to be misinterpreted, its potential ease to be shared with one person or worldwide, and the permanent availability of any communication.

Everyone should be aware and sensitive to the potential risk for misinterpretation of all non face to face communication (whether phone, text, email, messaging, online, etc).

Young people, vulnerable adults and workers should not feel pressured into divulging contact details or into using modern communication technologies should they not wish to, nor should any child or young person be disadvantaged or excluded if they choose not to use electronic communications.

All personal electronic communication with children and young people should only be in relation to Bethany Church activities. An example of such a text message would be, "Please let me know whether you will attend youth group outing?". Where possible all communication should be to the relevant group and/or public, rather than individual and private. There may be exceptions to such communication but these should be exceptional and not the rule. For example a young person who replies to a group text may require a leader to respond on an individual basis, such as, being told that the young person is unable to attend due to a bereavement. In such circumstances an individual response may be more appropriate than a group/public communication. Any other "individual or personal" web communication by a leader to a young person should be within a public domain. An example of an individual or personal communication shared within a public domain is a public Facebook posting, "All the best for exams tomorrow".

When a worker receives a private unsolicited communication from a child, young person or vulnerable adult the worker may respond individually if considered appropriate. Workers should report all significant events to their Key Worker or a Child Protection Team member.

Key Practices

- Key Workers should seek consent from parents/guardians/carers regarding electronic communications by workers with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Workers should always attempt to ensure transparency by copying communications to their Key Worker, other workers in the organisation, or a Child Protection Team member. It is good practice to ensure transparency for workers to allow other workers / key workers, by having access to posts by “being friends” with them on same network.
- Where there is concern regarding any communication, workers should inform their Key Worker or a Child Protection Team member.
- Workers should send group messages rather than messages to individual children young people or vulnerable adults.
- Workers should ensure their personal data is correct and accurate within their profiles. Workers should use their identity in all communications and never anonymise or use a misleading identity. For example including your name at end of texts is good practice rather than assuming a recipient has your number saved.
- Workers should not use any ambiguous, cryptic or questionable references/details. For example current reference of “LOL or XXO” which could be interpreted as meaning something different than possibly intended.
- Workers should consider the duration and frequency of their communication with children young people and vulnerable adults, and ensure it is appropriate, balanced, and equitable to their group. Workers should avoid communications which could be misinterpreted such as late at night, early morning, or prolonged electronic communications.
- Workers must without delay seeking advice and discuss with their Key Worker all issues and concerns regarding any communications with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Workers should follow guidance within this policy when a disclosure occurs. See Section 2.5.3. This may involve logging details of significant communications and/or securing copies of communications such as emails, text, messaging, etc.
- Workers should take all possible steps to protect private information of others, such as using BCC for emails (BCC is a Blind Carbon Copy to send an email without revealing the receivers address, or set up a group in Facebook for your group to stop access by those not connected).

- Workers should NOT post, or tag children, young people or vulnerable adults in photos at any Bethany activity, since they don't know the implications of such action, for the young person, vulnerable adult or even themselves.
- Workers and Key Workers should embrace and use modern technology and communicate to others in a way fitting for a Christian and in accordance with Bethany Church guidelines (See Section 3:2 & Section 3:3.).

3.16 DATA PROTECTION, FILMING AND PHOTOS

The Data Protection Act 1998 is designed to provide privacy protection for individuals about whom personal, identifying data is kept. It lays down 'best practice' principles for those who keep the data and it applies to paper records as well as computerised information. The Act covers the whole of the UK and all organisations including churches, and we must comply with the rules on processing data. "Processing" includes obtaining, recording, holding or storing information and carrying out any action on the data, including adaptation, alteration, use, disclosure, transfer, erasure, and destruction.

Personal data shall be held only for one or more specified purposes and shall not be used for any other purpose. Personal data shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose. Personal data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date. Personal data processed for any purpose shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose. No personal data will be obtained or held unless the individual has given consent. In the case of sensitive data, (defined as race, political opinion, religious belief, trade union membership, physical or mental health, sexuality, criminal offences) specific consent must be obtained i.e. the individual will be informed that this type of data is being held, told the reason for it and give permission for its use. Personal data will be kept in a secure place, e.g. in filing cabinet which can be locked in the Church Office which can be locked when unoccupied. Individuals must seek to prevent unauthorised access to any computers that contain personal data.

NB: photographs count as sensitive data since they may reveal information about the subject's race. Permission should always be obtained to keep a copy or use a photograph of an individual.

3.17 IMAGES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

We must be very careful if we use photographs, videos and web cams of clearly identifiable people.

- Permission must be obtained for children and young people who will appear in a photograph, video, or website before the photograph / footage is taken. It must be made clear why that child or young person's image is being used, what you will be using it for, and who might want to look at the pictures.
(If images are being taken at an event attended by large crowds, such as a sports/display event, this is regarded as a public area and permission from a crowd is not necessary).

- Many uses of photographs are not covered by the Data Protection Act 1998, including all photographs and video recordings for personal use, such as photographs taken at schools' sport's days for the family photo album, or videoing a church nativity play.
- When using photographs of children and young people, it is preferable to use group pictures.
- When a parent takes a photograph of their child and some friends taking part in an event (Rally Display) to be put in the family photo album, these images are for personal use and the Data Protection Act does not apply.

See: Section 4.16 USING IMAGES OF CHILDREN CONSENT FORM

3.18 RESIDENTIAL WEEKENDS AND RALLY CAMP

The following is specific guidance for youth weekend and camp residential

Named Child Protection Personnel

- A Temporary Residential Child Protection Co-ordinator, and Deputy is nominated and have responsibility to deal with all child protection issues.
- All allegations of child abuse will be referred to the Residential Child Protection Co-ordinator, (hereafter the "Co-ordinator") or their Deputy. If the suspicions implicate the Co-ordinator, then the Deputy Co-ordinator should be informed. If both Co-ordinator and Deputy Co-ordinator are implicated, then Social Services or the Church Co-ordinator should be contacted. CCPAS could also be contacted for advice.
- The Co-ordinator may contact Social Services (local to the residential or local to the child's home dependant on concern), the Police, or CCPAS for advice.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse at Residentials

Any allegation against a worker will be reported to the police local to the residential. It is important not to inform the worker of the allegation. The reason for not informing the worker of the allegation is to prevent him/her, if guilty, covering their tracks by silencing the young people before police arrive, or if innocent, false assumptions being made. Either way, this action will help to protect children, young people, vulnerable adults and/or an innocent worker. Until the worker is seen by the police, it is necessary to supervise the worker to prevent any possibility of further abuse or allegation. Once the worker has been interviewed by the police, they may be asked to leave the residential until the matter has been fully investigated. They would only return to the residential, if the police are satisfied that there is no case to answer.

Risk Assessment of Residentials

As per any Bethany activity risk assessment and risk management should be completed, and may include consideration of:

- Location, routes and modes of transport.
- Competence, experience of volunteers or other team members.

- Age, competence, fitness, temperament of those attending in relation to the planned activity.
- Any special educational or medical needs.
- Seasonal conditions, weather or timing.
- Emergency or contingency procedures e.g. if one young person becomes unable to continue.
- A preliminary visit
- Building hazards such as electrical equipment, loose fitting carpets, uneven floors, blocked fire exits, glass doors, splintered floorboards, power points, electrical cables, etc.
- Fire Safety

Safety at Residential

- It is the responsibility of the workers to know the whereabouts of the children/young person they are responsible for at Camp at all times.
- General safety rules will be applied as appropriate.
- A record of camp activities maintained.
- The supervision ratio of workers to children per age range will be maintained.

Fire Safety at Residentials

The Residential Organisers will have a fire safety procedure, which will include the following:

- Everyone at the residential will be warned of the danger of fire.
- Everyone will be made aware of fire exits.
- A fire drill will be practised.
- In the case of an emergency, measures will be in place to alert children and young people with disabilities (e.g. a child who is hard of hearing).

First Aid at Residentials

- There will be at least one named person who holds a recognised and valid First Aid Certificate at the residential. The First Aider should ensure that the residential First Aid boxes are available and their location known and the First Aid boxes contain items recommended by N.I. First Aid Services. The First Aider will have access to medical information and consent forms.
- Leaders are aware of the name and telephone number of the local GP practice and the location and distance of the nearest A&E Department.
- Medication being stored on a child's behalf will be kept securely and will be administered as per agreement with parents.

Health and Hygiene at Residentials

Those with responsibility for food will possess the Basic Food Hygiene Certificate and be aware of food safety (preparation, handling and storage, disposal of waste, etc) and comply with the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) (Amendment) Regulations Northern Ireland 1996 Regulations.

Adventurous Activities

- No child will participate in adventurous activities without the written consent of the parent or carer.
- The Residential Organisers will take reasonable steps to seek assurance that Third Party staff engaged in any activities are appropriately trained and qualified and that the correct ratio of staff to children is met. At an activity centre or for an organisation whose own staff undertake such activities, if the activities come within the scope of the Activity Centre's (Young Persons Safety) (Northern Ireland Order) 1998 or the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996, the Camp Organisers will take reasonable steps to seek assurance that the premises are licensed.

Sleeping Arrangements at Residentials

Arrangements for Residentials should be considered carefully. It is acceptable that adults share sleeping accommodation with a group of children or young people; in practice this should mean that [at least two adults who are vetted and approved by the Elders, may share sleeping accommodation, but this must not be with less than three children](#)

- Arrangements will be secure, age and gender appropriate
- Parents will be informed what the arrangements will be.

Insurance of Residentials

- Residential Organisers will ensure there is adequate liability insurance cover under the Bethany Church's insurance.
- Residential Organisers will ensure there is adequate Public Liability Insurance if it is located at a residential centre.

Swimming Trips at Residentials

- For any child/young person participating in swimming a swimming consent form must be completed.
- Leaders will be aware of each child / young person's swimming ability.
- Swimming in the sea or other natural waters are potentially dangerous activities. This would only be allowed as a supervised activity and following a risk assessment including current safety measures available and weather/sea conditions, etc. [Children should not swim in swimming pools, open sea or natural waterways without the supervision of a trained life guard.](#) Even with lifeguard cover children and young people will always be in the sight of the leaders. One of the team will stay out of the water for better surveillance.

SECTION 4 – EXEMPLAR FORMS

4.1 AIM

This section contains the exemplar forms and documentation which will be used to guide and help implement the Bethany Church Child Policy, Procedures and Practice as detailed throughout the Procedures and Practice sections. Usually only the Elders, Child Protection Team or Key Workers will require these forms, which can be formatted/modified, photocopied and distributed as required.

This Section includes the following:

Procedures

- 4.2 Child Abuse Response Form (inc. Skins Map)
- 4.3 Application Form to Work with Children & Young People
- 4.4 Reference Request Letter
- 4.5 Reference Request Form
- 4.6 Voluntary Disclosure Form
- 4.7 Contract for Worker
- 4.8 Risk Assessment Form

Practice

- 4.9 General Information and Consent Form
- 4.10 Register of Workers
- 4.11 Accident and Incident Form
- 4.12 Outings Consent Form
- 4.13 Swimming Consent Form
- 4.14 Transport Consent Form
- 4.15 Residential Information and Consent Form
- 4.16 Using Images of Children Consent Form
- 4.17 Current Child Protection Appointees

4.2

**BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY
Child Protection
Child Abuse Response Form**

CONFIDENTIAL

Name of Group: _____

Name of Child/Young Person: _____

Address: _____

Date of Birth: ____ / ____ / ____

Name of Person Reporting Incident: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____ Time of Incident: _____

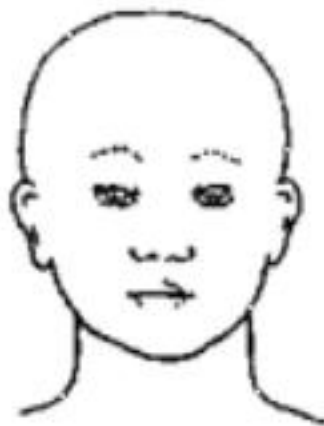
Sequence of Events/Actual Words Used/Observations:
(Use skin map overleaf where appropriate, but do not undress the child!)

Action Taken (including person(s) contacted):

Date: ____ / ____ / ____ Time: _____

1/3

Skin Maps



4.3

BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY
Application Form to Work with Children & Young People

We ask all prospective Workers with children and young people or vulnerable adults to complete this form. If there is insufficient room to fully answer any question, please continue on separate sheet. The information will be kept confidentially by the church office, unless requested by an appropriate authority.

1. Personal Details

Full Name: _____

Maiden / Former Name(s): _____

Date and Place of Birth: ____ / ____ / ____ at: _____

Address: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

Daytime Tel No: _____ Evening Tel No: _____

Mobile Tel No: _____

Email address: _____

How long have you lived at the above address? _____ Years _____ Months

If less than 5 years, please give previous address(es) with dates:

From: ____ / ____ / ____ To: ____ / ____ / ____

Previous Address: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

From: ____ / ____ / ____ To: ____ / ____ / ____

Previous Address: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

Please tell us about your Christian experience including the church(es) you have attended and dates, the name(s) of minister/leader together with any activities undertaken.

Please give details of previous experience of looking after or working with children and/or young people. This should include details of any relevant qualifications or appropriate training either in a paid or voluntary capacity.

Have you ever had an offer to work with children/young people declined?

YES **NO** (Please tick)

If yes, please give details:

Do you suffer, or have you suffered, from any illness which may directly affect your work with children or young people?

YES **NO** (Please tick)

If yes, please give details:

2. Employment History: Please tell us about your past and current employment / voluntary work in the table below.

Employers Name and Address	Employed From (Date)	Employed To (Date)	Job Title & Description	Reason for Leaving

3 Are you currently working in any other child care position in either a voluntary or paid capacity?
If yes please give details:

Name of the Organisation: _____

Address: _____

Contact Person in Organisation: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Post you are employed in (please give details of your duties):

4. References

Please complete the details below of two people who would be willing to provide a personal reference. If you are currently working, one of these should be your present employment (paid or voluntary). You should also provide details of your church minister/leader. We reserve the right to take up character references from any other individuals deemed necessary.

Reference 1	Reference 2
Name: _____	Name: _____
Address _____ _____	Address _____ _____
Town: _____	Town: _____
City/County: _____	City/County: _____
Post Code: _____	Post Code: _____
Telephone No: _____	Telephone No: _____
Relationship: _____	Relationship: _____

Name of Church Minister/Leader: _____

Address: _____

Telephone No: _____

Please would you complete the attached voluntary disclosure form, place it in a sealed envelope and address it to Nominated Child Protection Office with whom you are welcome to discuss any aspects of this procedure.

I confirm that the submitted information is correct and complete, I understand and agree to the conditions involving a Disclosure check and I have sent the voluntary disclosure form to the recruiter in a separate, sealed envelope.

Signed: _____

Please print Name: _____

Date: _____

4.4

**BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY
Request for Reference**

Volunteer Worker with Children and Young People

Name of Worker: _____

Dear

The above named person has applied to be a worker with the children and young people. As I am sure you are aware, before we can accept anyone to work with children and young people, whether on a voluntary or paid basis, we must be sure that they are suitable. This applicant has given your name as a referee.

I would be grateful if you could give your opinion of the person's suitability for the post by completing the enclosed form and return it in the pre-paid envelope as soon as possible.

A copy of the job outline is enclosed.

Please note that this position is exempt from Section 4(2) of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exemptions Order 1975). It is not, therefore, in any way contrary to the Act to reveal any information you may have concerning convictions which would otherwise be considered "spent".

Any information you are able to give will be kept in strictest confidence and used only in consideration of the suitability of the applicant for this position.

Should you require any further information do not hesitate to contact

(Name) _____

Telephone number: _____

May I take this opportunity for thanking you for your help in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Enc:

4.5

**BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY
Reference Form
Workers with Children and Young People**

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

_____ has expressed an interest in becoming a Youth Worker in Bethany Church Finaghy and has given your name as referee. This post will involve access to children and young people.

As a Church, we are committed to welfare and protection of children and young people. All information contained in this reference will remain absolutely confidential and will only be shared with the applicant's Key Worker, Child Protection Co-ordinator and Elders.

1. How long have you known this person?

2. In what capacity?

3. What attributes does this person have that would make them suitable for this role? (See attached Job Description).

4. Please rate the applicant on the following (please tick one column for each):

	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
Being responsible				
Self motivation/enthusiasm				
Ability to work as a team member				
Commitment				
Trustworthiness				
Reliability				
*Ability to plan, lead and provide direction				

*necessary for comment in relation to a Key Worker.

5. The position for which this person is being considered gives substantial access to children and young people. To your knowledge, is there any reason why this person should not be entrusted with care of children and young people? If so, please provide details:

Signed: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

4.6

BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY
Voluntary Disclosure Form for a Position Requiring Disclosure.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

You should be aware that we as a church will be complying with all relevant legislation. All applicants are asked to complete this form and return to us in a separate sealed envelope.

To: Nominated Child Protection Officer

Address: c/o Bethany Church Finaghy

Appointment applied for: _____

Disclosures:

Have you ever been charged with, cautioned or convicted in relation to any criminal offence; or are you at present the subject of a criminal investigation/pending prosecution?

YES **NO** (Please tick)

If yes, please give details including the nature of the offences and the dates. Please give details of the court(s) where your conviction(s) were heard, the type of offence and sentence(s) received. Could you also give details of the reasons and circumstances that led to the offence(s). Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

Police Investigations – this should include relevant police non-conviction information. Please complete this section if the post you are applying for requires an Enhanced Disclosure check.

Have you ever been the subject of a police investigation which didn't lead to a criminal conviction?

YES **NO** (Please tick)

If yes, please give details below, including the date of the investigation, the Police Force involved, details of the investigation and reason for this, and disposal(s) if known.

To your knowledge have you ever had any allegation made against you, which has been reported to, and investigated by Social Services?

YES **NO** (Please tick)

If yes, please give details we will need to discuss this with you.

Have you ever been involved in court proceedings concerning a child for whom you have parental responsibility?

YES **NO** (Please tick)

If yes, please give details and dates:

Has there ever been any cause for concern regarding your conduct with children? Please include any disciplinary action taken by an employer in relation to your behaviour to children.

YES **NO** (Please tick)

If yes, please give details:

DECLARATION

To help us ensure that we are complying with child protection laws, please read the accompanying notes and complete the following declaration.

I (full name): _____

of (address): _____

confirm that the information given above is accurate and correct and I am not subject to any of the disqualifications set out in Protection of Children and Vulnerable adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

I consent to a criminal records check if appointed to the position for which I have applied. I am aware that details of pending prosecutions, previous convictions, cautions, or bind-overs against me will be disclosed along with any other relevant information which may be known to the police, and AccessNI Lists held in accordance with the Protection of Children and Vulnerable adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

I agree to inform the person within the church responsible for processing applications for AccessNI Register checks if I am convicted of an offence after I take up any post within the Church. I understand that failure to do so may lead to the immediate suspension of my work with children.

I agree to inform the person within the church responsible for processing applications for Records Bureau if I become the subject of a police and/or social services/social work department investigation. I understand that failure to do so may lead to the immediate suspension of my work with children.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

ATTACHED NOTES: WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Disclosure of an offence may not prohibit your engagement as a worker.

As this post may involve substantial, unsupervised contact with children, all applicants who are offered an appointment will be asked to submit to a criminal records check before the position can be confirmed.

As the position is exempted under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act this check will reveal any details of cautions, reprimands or final warnings, as well as formal convictions. Because of the nature of the work for which you are applying, this position is exempt from the provision of section 4(ii) of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exemptions Order 1975), and you are not entitled to withhold information about convictions which for other purposes are 'spent' under the provisions of the Act. You must therefore declare all convictions whenever they occurred. In the event of appointment, any failure to disclose such convictions could result in the withdrawal of approval to work with children and/or young people within the church.

This process is subject to a strict code to ensure confidentiality, fair practice and security of any information disclosed. It is stressed that a criminal record will not necessarily be a bar to appointment, only if the nature of any matters revealed could be considered to place children at risk.

As a Church we agree to abide by the Code of Practice on the use of personal data in employee/employer relationships under the Data Protection Act 1998

As a condition of employment we ask that you keep us informed of any other work (either paid or voluntary) which you are undertaking which involved working with children. Should we ever need to refer an individual to the list of people deemed unsuitable for working with children known as the POCVA List held by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (through AccessNI) then we would also inform them of any knowledge we have of that individual working in any other child care position.

Under the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 it is an offence for any organisation to offer employment to anyone who has been convicted of certain specific offences, or included on the List (outlined in Article 3 of the Act) or:

- Individuals transferred from the Pre-Employment Consultancy Service Register
- Individuals prohibited from teaching under Article 70 (2) (e) and Article 88A (2) (b) of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) order 1986 (NI 3)
- Individuals subject to a Disqualification Order within the meaning of Articles 22 - 24 of the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003

Under the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 (Article 30) it is an offence for an individual who is disqualified from working with children (as outlined above) from applying for, offering to do, or accepting any work in a child care position.

Under Article 35 of the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 the DHSSPS will keep a list of individuals who are considered unsuitable for working with vulnerable adults. If you are applying for a position working with vulnerable adults your name will be checked against this list of people deemed unsuitable for working with vulnerable adults.

4.7

**BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY
Contract for Children's Worker**

Name of Worker: _____

Welcome to: _____

Job Title: _____

Job Description: _____

Specific Responsibilities: _____

Person to Whom You Are Responsible (e.g. Key Worker): _____

We are committed to helping you give the best possible service to the children you are working with, so we will endeavour to provide for any training needs. We will also meet with you from time to time to see how things are going.

Signed (Elder): _____ Date: _____

I understand my employment is for a probationary period of _____ months after which there will be a review and by agreement of the Elders my appointment will be confirmed.

I confirm that I have read the church policy on protecting children and young people.

I will endeavour to carry out the policy and if there are things I do not understand or if I have reason to be concerned about a child I will check with the appropriate Key Worker.

I will follow guidelines on safe working practice and the code on discipline.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please Print Name: _____

4.8

**BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY
Risk Assessment Form**

Risk Assessment Form						
Risk assessment for: Bethany Church Finaghy 135 Upper Lisburn Road Belfast BT10 0LN Assessment by (print name) : _____ Assessment date: _____ Signed: _____						
Significant Hazard	Potential injury	People at risk	Existing controls	Action needed	Priority	Review date

4.9

**BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY
General Information and Consent Form**

Please circle the activities attended by your child or young person:

Parents & Toddlers

Sunday School

Bible Class

Ignite

JEBR

JEGR

SEBR

SEGR

Anything written on this form will be held in confidence. The Key Workers need to know these details in order to meet the specific needs of your child or young person.

Full Name of Child/Young Person: _____

Please underline name by which he or she is usually known.

Date of Birth: ____ / ____ / ____

Address: _____

Home Phone Number: _____ Emergency contact number: _____

Name of Parent or Carer: _____

Tel No: Day _____ Eve _____ Mobile _____

If you do not have parental responsibility (e.g. you are a foster carer or grandparent etc) please give details of those with parental responsibility

Name(s): _____ Tel No: _____

Additional Emergency contact: Name _____ Tel No: _____

Name of GP: _____ Tel No: _____

Address: _____

Child or Young Person's NHS No: _____

Date of Last Anti-Tetanus Injection: _____

Details of any known medical problem (e.g. asthma, epilepsy, diabetes, allergies, dietary needs, etc.) or disability which may affect normal activity and any medication being taken:

Please sign the consent form overleaf.

CONSENT

I give permission for _____ to take part in the normal activities of the organisations I have circled. I understand that separate permission will be sought for certain activities, including swimming, and outings lasting longer than the normal meeting times of the group. I understand that while involved he/she will be under the control and care of the group Key Worker and/or other adults approved by the Church Elders and that, while the adults in charge of the group will take all reasonable care of the children, they cannot necessarily be held responsible for any loss, damage or injury suffered by my child or young person during, or as a result of, the activity.

YES **NO** (Please tick)

I will inform the Key Workers of any important changes to my child or young person's health, medication or needs, and also of any changes to our address or phone numbers provided on this sheet.

YES **NO** (Please tick)

In the event of illness or accident, having parental responsibility for the above named child or young person, I give permission for first aid to be administered where considered necessary by a trained first aider, if available, or medical treatment to be administered by a suitably qualified medical practitioner.

YES **NO** (Please tick)

In an emergency and/or if I am not contactable, I am willing for my child to receive doctor/hospital or dental treatment. I authorise an adult Worker to sign on my behalf any written form of consent required by the hospital. However, I understand that every effort will be made to contact me as soon as possible.

YES **NO** (Please tick)

During the time your child or young person will spend with us, photographs may be taken for general church purposes and for this we need your permission.

YES **NO** (Please tick)

During the time your child or young person will spend with us, it may be necessary for information to be communicated as group messages via text messages/social media sites (as described in our Child Protection Policy) and for this we need your permission.

YES **NO** (Please tick)

I confirm that the above details are correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signed (parent/or adult with parental responsibility): _____

Date: _____ Name printed in full: _____

The information requested on this form can be completed by a carer, but only those with parental responsibility can sign the consent. (NB This may not include a foster carer).

4.10

**BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY
Register of Workers**

4.11

**BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY
Accident/Incident Form**

This form should be completed immediately after any accident or significant incident. The worker should discuss with the Elders regarding what follow up action is necessary.

Day, Date and Time of the Incident: _____

Names, Addresses and Ages of Those Involved in the Incident:

Where did this incident take place?

Name of Church: Bethany Church Finaghy

Name of the Group: _____

Who is normally responsible for group? (Name, Address and Contact Number).

Who was responsible for the group at the time of the incident, if different from the above?
(Names, Addresses and Contact Numbers).

Which other workers were supervising the group at the time of the incident? (Names, Addresses and Contact Numbers).

Who witnessed the incident? (Names, Addresses, Contact Numbers and Ages if Under 16)
Normally only two witnesses would be needed.

Describe the accident / incident (include injuries received and any first aid or medical treatment given)

Have you retained any defective equipment?

YES **NO** **NONE INVOLVED** (Please tick)

If so, where is it being kept and by whom?

What action have you taken to prevent a recurrence of the incident?

Is the site or premises still safe for your group to use?

YES **NO**
(Please tick)

Is the equipment still safe for your group to use?

YES **NO**
(Please tick)

Who else do you need to inform? _____

Have they been informed?

YES **NO**
(Please tick)

If so, when and by whom? _____

Signature of person in charge of group at time of accident/incident:

Signed: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Form seen by Elder

Signed: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

4.12

**BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY
Activities and Day Visits**

Proposed Visit or Activity: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Venue/Destination: _____

Leaving From: _____ at: _____

Returning To: _____ at: _____

Cost (inc. cheques payable to): _____

Transport arrangements:

Items to be brought (coat, swimming kit, packed lunch, money etc):

It would be appreciated if you would complete the attached consent form and return to:
_____ by ____ / ____ / ____

BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY
Activities and Day Visits - Reply Slip

ONE FORM PER PERSON

Full Name of Child/Young Person: _____

Address: _____

Please give details of any **medical conditions** (e.g. asthma, epilepsy, diabetes, allergies, dietary needs) or disability that may be affected by this activity):

Telephone No. for Emergencies:

Day: _____ Evening: _____

**I have read the above information and I give permission for _____
to take part in this activity.**

**I give my consent to any medical treatment that may be necessary in event of an
emergency.**

I enclose a cheque or cash to the sum of £____:_____

Signed (parent/or adult with parental responsibility): _____

Please print name: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

The information requested on this form can be completed by a carer, but only those with parental responsibility can sign the consent. **(NB This may not include a foster carer).**

4.13

**BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY
Swimming Consent Form**

Proposed Activity: _____

Full Name of Child/Young Person: _____

Date of Birth: ____ / ____ / ____

Address: _____

Details of any regular medication, medical problem (e.g. asthma, epilepsy, diabetes, allergies, dietary needs, etc.) or disability which may affect the swimming activity and/or activity where being able to swim is essential:

Date of Last Anti-Tetanus Injection: ____ / ____ / ____

Name of Parent/Carer: _____

Telephone No: Day: _____ Eve: _____

Mobile: _____

Additional contact (grandparent etc or other holding parental responsibility):

Name: _____ Tel No: _____

If you do not have parental responsibility (e.g. you are a foster carer/grandparent etc) please give details of those with parental responsibility:

Name(s): _____ Tel No: _____

Address: _____

SWIMMING ABILITY (delete as appropriate):

- | | |
|---|----------|
| Is your child able to swim 50 metres? | YES / NO |
| Is your child water-confident in a pool? | YES / NO |
| Is your child confident in the sea or in open inland water? | YES / NO |
| Is your child safety conscious in water? | YES / NO |

Consent

I give permission for _____ to take part in the specified visit and, having read the information provided, agree to him/her taking part in the activities described. I understand that while involved he/she will be under the control and care of the group leader and/or other adults approved by the church/organisation leadership and that, while the staff in charge of the group will take all reasonable care of the children, they cannot necessarily be held responsible for any loss, damage or injury suffered by my child during, or as a result of, the activity. I confirm that my child is in good health and I consider him/her fit to participate.

In an emergency and/or if I am not contactable, I am willing for my child to receive doctor/hospital or dental treatment including an anaesthetic.

YES NO (Please tick)

Signed (Parent or Adult with Parental Responsibility):

Please Print Name:

The information requested on this form can be completed by a carer, but only those with parental responsibility can sign the consent. **(NB This may not include foster carer)**

4.14

BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY Consent Form for Transporting Children

At times Bethany Church will provide transport for children and young people for specific activities. This transport will be in a minibus, car or private coach.

All drivers will follow Bethany Church policy for transporting Children and Young People. Further information on the specifics of Bethany Church policy for transporting Children and Young People is available on request.

I give permission for my child to be transported to and from a Bethany Church activity. I understand that my child will be transported to and from the address on this form.

Name of Child: _____

Date of Birth: ____/____/____

Address: _____

Signed: _____
(Parent or Adult with Parental Responsibility)

Please Print Name: _____

Contact Number: _____

Date: ____/____/____

The information requested on this form can be completed by a carer, but only those with parental responsibility can sign the consent. **(NB This may not include a foster carer).**

4.15

**BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY
Residential Weekend & Camp Health, Information & Consent Form**

Name of Child: _____

Date of Birth: ____/____/____

Address: _____

Name of Parent/Carer: _____

Telephone No: Day: _____ Eve: _____

Mobile: _____

Contact Address (if different from above):

Name of GP: _____ Tel No: _____

Address: _____

Child or Young Person's NHS No: _____

Date of Last Anti-Tetanus Injection: _____

Details of any illness/disability: _____

Details of any medication required during the camp (all medication to be labelled correctly and clearly with name and dose needed each day):

Details of any allergies or special dietary requirements

CONSENT

In an emergency and/or if I am not contactable, I am willing for my child to receive doctor/hospital or dental treatment including an anaesthetic.

YES NO (Please tick)

Signed (Parent or Adult with Parental Responsibility):

Please Print Name:

The information requested on this form can be completed by a carer, but only those with parental responsibility can sign the consent. **(NB This may not include a foster carer).**

4.16

**BETHANY CHURCH FINAGHY
Using Images of Children - Consent Form**

To: _____

Name of Parent/Carer* _____ (*Person with Parental Responsibility)

Name of Child: _____

Church /Organisation/ Club Child Attends: _____

Bethany Church Finaghy would like to take photograph(s) / make a video / webcam recording of _____ (name of child/ren).

These images may appear in our printed publications, on our website, or both.
(Delete/add as appropriate).

To comply with the Data Protection Act 1998, permission must be granted by the parent/carer before any images of your child/children are taken and used. Please answer questions 1 and 2 below, then sign and date the form where shown. Please return the completed form to:

(the worker commissioning the photography and the return address.)

1. May we use your child's image in our printed promotional publications?

YES / NO (Delete as appropriate)

2. May we use your child's image on our website?

YES/NO (Delete as appropriate)

Signed: (Parent/Adult with Parental Responsibility) _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

SECTION 5 – INFORMATION FOR ELDERS & TRUSTEES

5.1 AIM

The aim of this section is to provide regular, up-to-date information on issues, changing legislation, procedures and practice which have a bearing on how the Elders of Bethany Church Finaghy oversee the implementation of the policy for the Protection of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults. This will enable the Leadership of Bethany Church to be **proactive** in the light of a continually changing situation, **active** in policy implementation and monitoring quality of procedure and practice, and when appropriate, **reactive** to circumstances which affect how we conduct our Youth ministries and maintain our witness in Finaghy.

This Section includes the following:

5.2 Recruiting

- Government Guidance
- Application Forms
- Interviewing
- Sample Interview Questions
- Criminal Record Checks
- Registering with AccessNI
- Retrospective Checks and Re-checks
- Appointment and Supervision
- Training
- If Decided Not to Appoint
- Workers from Abroad
- Working with Vulnerable Adults and Abuse of Trust

5.3 Insurance Issues

- Insurance Issues
- Introduction
- Reasonable Care
- Public Liability Insurance
- Legal Protection Insurance
- What You Must Do If An Allegation Is Made
- Keeping Records
- Summary

5.4 Reference List

5.2 RECRUITING WORKERS

Government Guidance

Government guidance stresses the need to treat all volunteers as job applicants for any position involving contact with children. Great care therefore should be exercised in the selection and appointment process. This will be an outward expression of a church's commitment to protecting children and young people and should be included in its Child Protection Policy.

It will be important to have information about a potential worker's background. Churches can obtain criminal records checks on their workers under the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. The POCVA List may be used by any statutory, voluntary, community or private sector organisation working with children (persons aged under 18) or vulnerable adults where workers have 'unavoidable substantial access' to children or vulnerable adults. This is now done through AccessNI, although in the future may be through the ISA announced to commence in England October 2009. We will have to keep ourselves up-to-date with the continuing changes in registration and checks expected.

Under the 'Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003', it is an offence for anyone disqualified from working with children and young people to knowingly apply, accept or offer to work with children. The Act specifically includes trustees of charities working with children. In practice this means that a person banned from working with children should not serve as a trustee of a church. It is also a criminal offence to knowingly offer or continue to allow work with children, to an individual who is disqualified.

It is important to obtain information about a potential worker's background. A detailed application form, personal references, information from previous employers (paid or voluntary) and an interview all have a part to play in the assessment of a candidate's suitability for the post.

It should be made clear in any job 'advertisement' and explained at interview that as the post will involve regular unsupervised contact with children (or vulnerable adults), the successful applicant will be asked to agree to a criminal records check being carried out before the position is confirmed. This process should be started as soon as the prospective worker has accepted the provisional job offer. It is important that the church also has a policy regarding the employment of those with a criminal record. Identifying those who could be a danger to children is far from easy, so it is important through vigilance and good practice to make it as difficult as possible for such individuals to gain access to children.

Application Forms

All applicants for voluntary positions should complete an **application form**, providing details of referees. It should also be made clear that the church reserves the right to make any character checks it feels are necessary. The application form is a good source of information about previous work experience and a candidate's employment history (e.g. gaps in employment may be significant). It can also be a good place to start from at an interview.

Children's work is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which some spent offences do not have to be declared. Applicants should therefore be asked to declare all convictions, however old, at application stage. They should be asked to complete the **Voluntary Disclosure Form** (making a "nil" return if appropriate), returning it in a separate, sealed envelope to the person in the church responsible for collating and processing criminal records disclosure checks through the AccessNI Register. If the applicant reveals information that suggests they are unsuitable to work with children, the appointment process can be halted, saving the church and the individual considerable time and effort. If the applicant is appointed, the recruiter will find it useful to compare any information revealed by the criminal records checks with that supplied by the applicant. This, and all information received concerning criminal records checks, should be kept securely and destroyed once the recruitment process has been completed.

See the following drafts:

Section 4.3. Job Application Form

Section 4.6 Self Declaration (Voluntary Disclosure) Form

Section 4.4 Request for Reference

Section 4.5 Reference Form

Interviewing

The need for child protection within the context of the 'job' is an essential area to cover at an interview, although it should not dominate the whole selection process. Whilst it would be inappropriate to expect candidates to discuss details of their past, it is relevant for the interviewer(s) to know about any personal issues; such as drug misuse, alcoholism or abuse, and that these have or are being addressed. This might be significant if the successful candidate will be working with young people where abuse is an issue. It is important to remember however, that whilst a small proportion of victims of abuse grow up to be abusers themselves, most do not. Questioning needs to be handled sensitively and it is therefore important the interviewer is competent and confident. Questions of a sensitive nature may best be dealt with on a one to one basis.

Some general principles of good practice are that any questions asked should be:

RELEVANT: related to job description/person specification.

OPEN: attempting to establish how the person thinks and feels about working with children. The interviewer needs to be flexible enough to follow up any responses that need further exploration.

FAIR: any question must be asked of all candidates (e.g. male/female, ethnicity).

APPROPRIATE: questions about values and personal conduct are acceptable as long as they are relevant to the job. This is important within the context of the culture/value system of the church/organisation.

LEGITIMATE: questions about sexual conduct/ morality in relation to the value system of the church/organisation may be asked on the condition they are relevant to the post and as long as this is done sensitively.

It should also be explained to the applicant, the church's policy on safeguarding children's welfare and expectations in relation to practice issues.

Sample Questions for Interviews

NB. This list of questions is not conclusive, but a sample that could be asked depending on the situation and circumstances.

1. How would you handle a child who was being aggressive and challenging towards you personally?
2. Could you tell us about experiences working with children that have been difficult or unpleasant and how did you handle these?
3. What would be your views on a youth worker having a sexual relationship with a girl (over 16) who attends the youth club?
4. What areas would concern you when considering the suitability of a young person to work as a helper in a youth event you were responsible for?
5. How would you respond to a youth asking for advice about embarking on a sexual relationship with a 15 year old girlfriend/boyfriend?
6. Because you are going to be working with children and young people who face problems in the area of drug and alcohol misuse or child abuse, have you any experience which would be relevant in dealing with these issues?
7. Have you ever had any concerns expressed to you about your conduct with children and young people?
8. Have you ever had a position of work with children and young people declined?
9. Have you ever been involved with police or social services in regard to children, either in this country or abroad?
10. Have you ever been involved in court proceedings concerning a child?
11. If you were offered employment, is there anything else we would need to know in terms of your previous work or relationships with children?

Criminal Records Checks Through the DHSSPS POCVA List (through AccessNI)

The Pre-Employment Consultancy Service (PECS) had been in operation since 1982 to assist agencies in screening out unsuitable people when recruiting to positions with substantial access to children and adults with learning disabilities. The Pre-Employment Consultancy Service was run by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

PECS was replaced by two new services, the Protection of Children (NI) Service [POC (NI)] and the Protection of Vulnerable Adults (NI) Service [POVA (NI)]. Both are operated by the POCVA team based in the Child Care Policy Directorate at the DHSSPS. Now this comes under the organisation AccessNI.

Whilst the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 (POCVA) became law in February 2003 it didn't become operational (with the exception of Article 46) until April 2005. This had the effect of placing the DHSSPS PECS register on a statutory basis:-

1. Made it a requirement for child care organisations as defined by the Order to carry out vetting procedures and to report those dismissed for harming children;
2. Introduced Court imposed Disqualification Orders;
3. Created a criminal offence of seeking work or working with children while disqualified.

POCVA aims to improve existing safeguards for children and vulnerable adults by preventing unsuitable people working with them in any capacity whether paid or unpaid.

It provides organisations registered with POC (NI) in Northern Ireland with one means of checking the suitability of an individual seeking work with children. It is designed to be an information service which provides an additional safeguard which complements and strengthens staff recruitment and selection procedures. POC (NI) provides a means for accessing any information, which might have a bearing on an individual's suitability held by the:

- Criminal Records Check – the service will request a criminal records check from the police and this will provide details of all convictions, cautions, bind over orders which occurred within the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man. Where possible criminal records checks will also be obtained from abroad.
- the Disqualification from Working with Children (DWC (NI)) List;
- the Department of Education (List 99); and
- Lists held by government departments in England and Wales (POCA List) and Scotland (Disqualification from Working with Children List) these lists are only checked when an individual gives a previous address in these jurisdictions.

A person can be prohibited or have restricted employment in schools by virtue of being listed under the ***Education and Library (Northern Ireland) Order 1986***. This is under the Articles and Regulations for prohibiting or restricting the employment or further employment of teachers. (This is similar to the DfES List 99 for England and Wales)

- Where somebody is on the POCVA list they will be included on the Education List ;
- Where somebody is prohibited from employment in Education then similarly they will be included on the POCVA List.

A check against one list will result in a person being checked against the other.

The POCVA also creates a list of persons unsuitable to work with vulnerable adults:

- There is a duty on any persons who provide care for vulnerable adults to refer anybody who is considered unsuitable to work with vulnerable adults.
- A person will be guilty of an offence if they knowingly apply for, offer to do, accept or do any work with children or vulnerable adults should their names appear on the respective lists.
- An individual is guilty of an offence if he knowingly offers work in a care position for somebody known to be kept on the list by DHSSPS.

The order, which came into force in February 2003, in broad terms provides an equivalent to the Protection of Children Act 1999, Part VII of the Care Standards Act 2000 and provisions equivalent to some of those in the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 in relation to the protection of children.

The POCVA Register provides a one-stop shop service, enabling organisations to check information held by the Police and, where appropriate, details held by the DHSSPS. Information passed on by the POCVA Register may reveal, for example, that an applicant is unsuitable to work with children.

Organisations using the POCVA Register are required to comply with the DHSSPS Code of Practice. Failure to follow it could result in an individual or organisation not fulfilling their obligations under the Human Rights and Data Protection Acts, and they may even be breaking the law.

The Code of Practice is intended to guarantee that any information released by the POCVA Register is used fairly. The Code also seeks to ensure that sensitive, personal information is handled and stored appropriately, and is kept only for as long as is necessary. In order to comply with POCVA Register conditions, organisations using the register are required to adopt a Rehabilitation of Offenders policy and a policy on the secure storage, handling, use, retention and disposal of disclosure information. The POCVA Register suggests that the Rehabilitation of Offenders policy could be contained within a general Equal Opportunities policy.

Both a policy statement on the recruitment of ex-offenders and the handling of information should be regarded as part of the Church's Policy for the Protection of Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults. Currently as stated within the Policy, completed Disclosure Forms will be sent in sealed envelopes to the Deputy Child Protection Co-ordinator who will then follow through the AccessNI process, sending them, together with fee to CCPAS.

Registering with AccessNI

We are already registered with the Churches' Child Protection Advice Service who has been working with the relevant criminal record checks in England, Scotland and Wales. Now, with the establishment of AccessNI, they have registered with them (therefore we do not need to) and will act on our behalf as an umbrella organisation for the many small churches here in NI who avail of their services. CCPAS will send us details as how to send **Disclosure Check Forms** to them, as soon as AccessNI set up their procedure with them. Again, this is something we need to keep up-to-date with, in an ever-changing situation.

Retrospective Checks and Re-checks

POCVA states that where a child care organisation proposes to offer an individual employment in a child care position, the organisation shall ascertain whether the individual is included in the DHSSPS Disqualification from Working with Children List, or the List held by the Department of Education and if he is included in either of these lists, shall not offer him employment in such a position.

CCPAS have been in contact with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety following conflicting advice from the POC (NI) Team in regards to retrospective checks and received the following information. The letter we received from the HSSPS dated 21 July 2006, states categorically that: *'The Department will not refuse to carry out checks and does not enquire whether the checks are retrospective or not. The onus is on each organisation to determine if a post warrants a check. It has been the practice for some time now that NI Health and Social Services Trusts carry out three yearly renewal checks, but this is not a legislative requirement.'*

'The Department advises organisations at para 5.4 of 'choosing to protect' guidance that retrospective checks may be requested on existing staff where an organisation has concerns about an individual. This concern may arise for a number of reasons, eg information has been received by an organisation from whatever source, and the organisation wishes to check if they have reason to be concerned. As with all checks, organisations who wish to carry out renewal/retrospective checks on individuals need to

*obtain the individual's consent and also need to have procedures in place which comply with any relevant employment legislation to deal with a positive result. **The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill (2007/2008) will introduce a phased programme of retrospective checking for all individuals in regulated activities.***

Given CCPAS experience elsewhere in the UK, the advice for members in Northern Ireland is to consider a programme of retrospective checks, particularly as it is clear from the guidance that the onus is on each organisation to determine whether or not this is necessary. We doubt that any Inquiry would ever ask why a check was carried out, but if it is possible to request retrospective checks one can imagine being asked why one was not done if serious concerns subsequently came to light.

This guidance certainly makes it possible for retrospective checks to be carried out where a church considers it necessary.

Appointment and Supervision

If the disclosure certificate is returned deeming the candidate is suitable to work with children the appointment can go ahead. Any appointee should have a written **contract**, lines of accountability to the church leadership and an assigned supervisor with regular opportunities for planned meetings. It is also advisable to have a probationary period (say 6 months) before the appointment is confirmed.

It is important to arrange regular workers' meetings to review procedures to ensure a common approach, sharing of concerns and identifying other matters which may need clarification and guidance.

No one should be working in isolation but as part of a team showing mutual responsibility for each team member. It should be accepted that anyone seeing another worker acting in a way that could be misinterpreted should be able to speak to the individual or the supervisor about the concern.

Emphasis should be placed on following the group's guidelines and in circumstances where it is necessary to depart from agreed procedures, in an emergency, or to protect a child, permission should either be obtained in advance from a leader or reported immediately afterwards where this is not possible. Also feedback sessions can be organised to report incidents where guidelines have not been adhered to. This provides protection to the individual and draws the leadership's attention to shortcomings and problem areas.

A written record should be kept of issues/decisions discussed at meetings.

See: 4.7 CONTRACT FOR CHILDREN'S WORKER

Training

It is important that all workers understand the agreed procedures for protecting children. Some churches may choose to obtain written acceptance of the church's policy statement as a condition of service. It certainly should be a condition of service that the worker is required to report all allegations or concerns about possible abuse.

Training for workers in relevant areas should be arranged e.g. child protection, first aid, food hygiene.

If You Decide Not to Appoint

All applicants should be notified in writing of a decision not to appoint. If an unsuccessful candidate asks for the reasons why they have not been appointed and/or are seeking honest feedback about their application and interview, it should be given. Obviously this requires sensitivity and tact on the part of the person giving the feedback, particularly if references are discussed. The reasons for non-appointment are particularly important where past offences have come to light, which were not disclosed on their application form. Though it is illegal to reveal information obtained through a criminal records check, an unsuccessful candidate may need advice on directing their abilities into other areas of church life.

Additional Helpers

The 'Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995' defines a child as someone under the age of 18 and the process of appointment should be the same as any other worker.

Drivers appointed by the church should always be regarded as 'Workers' and it follows therefore all the appropriate checks should be carried out. Obviously there are parents who transport children besides their own, but this is essentially an arrangement between those with parental responsibility and not something arranged by the church.

Young people under 16 are frequently used as helpers. It is advisable that such helpers should be responsible to a named worker and never be in a position where they are providing unsupervised care of children. For example they should not be counted as a 'Worker' when considering staff/child ratios. In these circumstances the full recruitment procedure need not be applied, though the church/organisation would be expected to acquire basic information about the individual and take up personal references. Criminal Records Checks would not normally be required. A similar procedure could be used for other occasional helpers.

Care should be taken to ensure that this process is not used to avoid proper checks or as a backdoor recruitment process. These arrangements are essentially about providing work experience for an individual, not as a means for meeting the needs of the organisation.

Workers From Abroad

The same procedure can be applied to other groups where a full vetting process (e.g. POCVA Register check) is not possible or desirable, for example, young people visiting from abroad on "mission", parents or others who are helping on a casual basis, or refugees where full checks are not possible.

When recruiting workers from abroad, certificates of good conduct can sometimes be obtained from the police or church leaders in their home church, however, these need to be treated with caution. As with any other criminal conviction certificate, it can only provide "known" information. Some countries are well behind the UK in recognising abuse/child protection issues. Whilst UK checks will involve intelligence from other agencies, foreign checks are likely to be far more basic and cannot be equated with a check in the U.K.

In this situation it is advisable that these workers do not have unsupervised contact with children but they could work alongside an approved worker.

In England and Wales the Criminal Records Bureau are developing services to assist with checks on workers from overseas. In order to find out what is currently available you can contact the CRB Overseas Information Team on 0870 0 100 450. They will be able to help with general advice about countries providing services and information regarding associated procedures. However, you will need to be aware that the quality of information received will vary and the result of a criminal records check may be returned in a different language and neither childprotectionuk.net nor the CRB provide a translation service.

NB. What constitutes an offence in the UK (and would be seen as child abuse) may not in the country of the home church. References therefore need to be viewed with this in mind.

Working with Vulnerable Adults & Abuse of Trust

For the purpose of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 an organisation either employing or allowing a volunteer to work as someone who regularly cares for, trains, supervises or is in sole charge of vulnerable adults, should apply to the POCVA Register for a check against police records and list of those deemed unsuitable for working with vulnerable adults.. The definition of a vulnerable adult in relation to obtaining a POCVA Register check should be read in conjunction with the definition in 'Caring for Young People and the Vulnerable - Guidance for Preventing Abuse of Trust', issued by the Home Office and Northern Ireland Office and the definition found in the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. Childprotectionuk.net advise that organisations include in their child protection policy, reference to this publication.

5.3 INSURANCE AND CHILD PROTECTION

Introduction

The consequences of failing to implement and maintain effective child protection procedures means that it is easier for a child to become the victim of abuse and/or it may continue undetected. Resultant injury or harm could lead to a civil action on grounds of negligence against those who could have taken steps to prevent it. Lack of effective procedures also increases the difficulty of proving innocence against a false accusation.

In cases of alleged or actual abuse a church or a church worker could incur substantial cost, either as damages awarded to a victim or in legal and other costs arising out of the actual or alleged abuse. Insurance policies issued to churches invariably include Public Liability cover and, more recently but exclusively Legal Protection cover. In many circumstances (but not all) this will protect the church and its officers and workers against the financial costs.

Having said this, some insurance companies now place limitations on public liability insurance to exclude claims involving abuse. The Royal Sun Alliance, for example has stated they have had to pay out more than £30 million in claims against churches. Churches are considered 'high risk' and though they will offer abuse cover, this will only be granted on completion of a questionnaire and risk assessment by the RSA, who will then add an appropriate additional premium to the insurance policy.

ANSVAR (part of the Ecclesiastical family) and Congregational & General both confirm that they do not have such exclusions but have expectations that a church will have a working child protection policy and following safe recruitment practices etc. Churches need to be aware that most policies say that the insured need to take 'reasonable precautions' (hence the need for effective policies, criminal records checks, training etc). It is therefore possible that if an insurance company consider a church has been 'reckless', then even if a payment is made on behalf of the policy holder to a third party, the insurance company could instigate proceedings to recover these monies from the church in question. We would advise all churches to check their cover, and if unsure, to talk to their insurance broker about possible exclusions to public liability. Brokers have a responsibility to point out any major exclusions to a policy.

The following paragraphs are based on the cover provided by Congregational and General Insurance plc in their Church Choice Policy. Other insurance companies' policies may not offer exactly the same cover, or their intentions and interpretation may not be the same. You should consult with your own insurance company if you are at all unclear about the cover it provides. Insurance companies generally support the advice and guidance for the safeguarding of children contained in this booklet.

Reasonable Care

Most insurance policies include a clause requiring policyholders to exercise a duty of "reasonable care" in, amongst other things:

- Preventing injury to other persons
- Complying with laws and regulations imposed by any authority
- Exercising care in the selection of employees

This clause identifies the common law requirement, (and in some areas statutory law), for a variety of different people in all sorts of situations to take reasonable care to prevent injury to others. Where children are involved the law recognises that a higher standard of care exists. It follows that the use of "best practice" in the management of child protection and care is essential. In this context "reasonable care" means that a church should create and maintain a preventative framework which reduces or removes the chance of abuse occurring, both for the protection of a potential victim and of an accused children's worker.

Public Liability (Third Party) Insurance

Typically, the cover provided is as follows:

"we (the insurance company) will indemnify you (the Policyholder) subject to the limit of indemnity against all sums which you become legally liable to pay as damages and all other costs and expenses as a result of accidental bodily injury to persons other than employees, subject to the Policy terms and conditions".

The jargon needs clarifying:

Policyholder - usually the governing body of the church and, on request, employees and voluntary workers while acting on church business

Indemnify - you are responsible to pay but we pay

Limit of indemnity - the most we will pay, usually up to £5m for damages plus legal costs and expenses

In addition there are two other key words which need to be understood:

Legally liable - you have to be responsible in law (common or statute) before we will pay

Accidental - the injury has to be accidental so far as the other person is concerned

Generally speaking, cover is provided to policy holders if, through their negligence, something happens which they are legally liable or that leads to accidental injury or illness as a result of abuse. Establishing negligence is often the key, which is why implementation of "best practice" is so important. It is feasible that abuse actually occurs but you are not held legally liable because you had done everything you reasonably could have done to prevent it. In the absence of legal precedent it is impossible to predict the outcome of any individual circumstance. There are many complex issues arising from allegations of, or actual, abuse and each case needs careful enquiry and consideration. In cases where it transpires that there is no legal liability to pay damages the policy will still provide indemnity for legal costs incurred, with the insurers consent, up to the point of the decision being reached.

The duty of care condition is important for another reason. If you totally or flagrantly failed to implement and maintain proper procedures for the safeguarding of children then you might be deemed to be in breach of the condition and we could refuse to provide indemnity.

Legal Protection Insurance

As described above, Public Liability provides protection for legal liability for accidental injury. However, there are circumstances - notably where a false allegation is made - where there is no actual injury and no legal liability attaching. When this occurs a church, or one of its employees or voluntary workers, can become involved in significant expense incurred in defending, and proving innocence though this can be difficult and may be impossible. Legal Protection Insurance, subject to its terms and conditions, is available to meet these expenses.

Congregational & General include this cover free, up to £100,000 per occurrence. Other insurers may or may not offer similar cover and you should check with your insurance company accordingly.

It is important to understand that Legal Protection cover only provides protection for incidents, or alleged incidents, which themselves occur after the start of the cover. There is no cover for incidents which took place, or incidents alleged to have taken place, prior to the commencement of cover even if the incident comes to light or the allegation is made after the commencement of cover.

Unfortunately, abuse or alleged abuse can go back many years, but Legal Protection cover is new and cannot cover retrospectively. As time goes by the value of Legal Protection insurance for individual churches will increase, the longer it is maintained.

What You Must Do If An Allegation Is Made

If there is a concern or allegation of child abuse involving the church (e.g. relating to church premises or personnel) you must tell your insurance company immediately as well as following the other procedures outlined in CCPAS Guidance to Churches manual. Failure to do so might affect the protection afforded by the policy. It is important also that you do not communicate or correspond on the matter with anyone else, other than to the statutory authorities involved or in relation to seeking appropriate advice and support from an appropriately qualified organisation such as the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service.

Keeping Records

As is well known it can be many years before incidents of abuse come to light.

Retention of all documents relating to those people working in a church, whether paid or unpaid, employees or voluntary workers, whose work involves children is vital. Arrangements must be made for long term secure storage of records on an indefinite basis.

Summary

Implementation of complex procedures designed to safeguard the well-being of children can be difficult and may be costly. However, failure to do so could have grave consequences for victims, the accused and the church itself irrespective of the financial aspects being covered by insurance. The personal cost to individuals simply cannot be measured in terms of money.

These days people are quick to seek "compensation" and to resort to litigation particularly where the injured person perceives a lack of care or failure to implement best practice. In view of the existence of this manual and other publications and of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, failure to implement "best practice" is likely to become a major factor in a Court deciding on legal liability.

Currently, most insurers offer Public Liability and Legal Protection without undue restriction. Inevitably, if insurers are required to pay out under their policies too often, they will begin to select only those churches who do exercise "reasonable care" and implement "best practice" to try to prevent child abuse. Those churches who fail in their duty may find it difficult, or eventually impossible, to obtain insurance to protect their financial obligations arising from incidents, or alleged incidents, of child abuse.

5.4 REFERENCE LIST

Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) www.ccpas.co.uk

Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007

Our Duty to Care (1995) The Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People. Department of Health and Children

Co-operating to Safeguard Children (2003) DHSSPS

POCVA Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Area Child Protection Committee's Regional Child Policy and Procedures April 2005

Sexual Activity in Children/Young People in Northern Ireland - Protocol for Professional Staff. Amendments to Regional Area Child Protection Committees' Policies and Procedures issued 11 November 2008

Intimate Care Policy for Children. Amendments to Regional Area Child Protection Committees' Policies and Procedures issued 11 November 2008

Circular HSS CC 3/96 (Revised) Sharing to Safeguard - Information Sharing About Individuals Who May Pose a Risk to Children

When to Suspect Child Maltreatment Nice Guidelines 2009

Appendix

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