



Keeping Children Safe

Hope Church Goldington Safeguarding Policy Documents

Hope Church Goldington Statement on Keeping Children Safe:-

At Hope Church Goldington we are concerned with the wholeness, value and worth of each individual within God's purpose for everyone.

We seek to safeguard all those involved in the activities of the Church, whatever their age. It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children and young people, including neglect.

It is the duty of a person working with children and young people to prevent abuse and report any abuse discovered or suspected to the appropriate elder/ officer of the church.

We shall endeavour to implement all procedures in a consistent and equitable manner and to keep up to date with national developments relating to the care and protection of children and young people.

We shall encourage parents/carers to be involved in the work of the church and to have access to all guidelines and procedures if requested.

The policy and all other documents relating to Safeguarding will be reviewed annually.

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Safeguarding Lead: Thomas Rowell

Elder : James Chewter

Introduction

Keeping Children Safe has been produced by Hope Church Goldington in recognition of the importance of safeguarding the welfare of the children and young people participating in the events and activities organised by the church. Parents trust us to care for their children and it is important that we honour that trust.

It is intended to ensure that everyone involved in the youth or children's work of the church is aware of the issues of child protection. They should also understand the procedures of the church to safeguard all those involved in these activities, including all the volunteers and employees of the church. We shall try to ensure that these policies and procedures are accessible, and easy to understand and implement.

Background

Child Protection is a difficult and emotive area and presents many challenges. Children are easily involved in accidents; this document should help you to be aware whether you should be concerned about the frequency or nature of injuries. Information about the signs of abuse will be given so that an awareness will develop about the areas of possible concern.

Remember: 'It is not your responsibility to decide if abuse is occurring; it is your responsibility to act on any concerns you have and to express them to the appropriate person.' **'Do not be afraid to be wrong.'**

Without seeing issues everywhere, we must guard against the tendency to think: **'It couldn't happen here.'**

What is Child Abuse?

The term 'child abuse' is used to describe ways in which a child (someone under the age of 18) is harmed by someone in a position of power. Abuse can happen anywhere but research shows that children are most commonly hurt by those they know and trust. There are a number of ways in which children can be harmed.

- Physical abuse - including burning, biting, administering poisonous substances, suffocating/drowning, excessive force. Bullying usually falls into this category. If a child cannot give a satisfactory explanation of their injury then you should report your suspicions.
- Neglect - a failure to meet basic essential needs of a child, or if a child is left unsupervised at a young age.
- Emotional abuse - children harmed by **constant** lack of love and affection, or threats, verbal attacks, taunting or shouting. Ridiculing and ignoring are also forms of abuse.
- Sexual abuse - involvement of children or young people in sexual activity that they do not fully comprehend, or to which they cannot give informed consent. This also includes inappropriate physical contact or talk and suggestive comments or innuendo.

How might we recognise this abuse?

- Changes in behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws, becomes clinging, or has sudden outbursts of anger.
- Nervousness/watchfulness.
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration.
- Changed or inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults.
- Difficulties making friends.
- Attention seeking behaviour.
- Persistent tiredness.
- Running away/stealing/lying.

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them, or where differing explanations have been received.
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- Injuries and illnesses which have not received medical attention.
- Instances where children are kept away from the group or school inappropriately.
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming.
- Any signs of neglect, undernourishment or inadequate care.
- Any allegations made, or description given, by a child concerning sexual abuse.
- A 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.
- A 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 connotation.

One or more warning signs may be evident.

Many symptoms of distress in a child can point to abuse, but there are other explanations too. This (together with conflicting medical opinion), has sometimes been the reason for falsely accusing parents of sexual abuse. **It is important that the above signs are not taken as indicating that abuse has taken place, but that possibility should be considered far more than in the past. These signs should make us stop and think, not jump to conclusions inappropriately!**

What to do if you suspect any form of child abuse.

- The first consideration is always the welfare of the child. All children have a right to be protected from any form of harm or abuse.
- It is advisable to mention your concern to the leader of the activity in which you are involved. If it is then felt necessary you should note these concerns using the Logging Form (an example of which is included in this document). Both you (the referrer) and the leader should sign the form.
- This form must then be passed on to the Child Protection Officer.

The CPO alone will hold this information and will consult, as necessary, with the elder who has designated responsibility for Child Protection. It is not Hope Church Goldington's role to investigate concerns/suspicions. It is their duty to report these to the relevant agencies. All information is subject to the Data Protection Policy for Work with Children and Young People (included in this document).

How should you react if a child tells you that he/she has been abused?

- a) accept what the child says
- b) be calm, do not appear shocked
- c) do not promise confidentiality or promise not to tell anyone else
- d) make notes of the conversation as soon as you can and fill in a Logging Form

SAY: (a) thank you for telling me (b) I will try to help (c) I need to talk to someone else about this

AVOID: (a) disbelief (b) questioning the child (c) making promises you can't keep

CONCLUDE: (a) reassure the child that they were right to tell you b) tell the child what you will do next.

The acronym **TED** can be a useful tool: **Tell... Explain...Describe...**

Good Practice in the Care of Children and the Protecting of Leaders

General Guidance

- Parents should be responsible for their children wherever possible.
- Avoid being on your own with any child (always try to have another leader in sight and work with children in 3's or more).
- Wherever possible avoid taking children home on their own.
- Be wise in your physical contact with children.
- Be wise in relationships; do not have favourites.
- Never physically discipline children, except by holding, and only then if there is danger to someone else.
- Think about the safety of children at all times and in all circumstances.
- Never allow allegations of abuse by a child go unrecorded or not acted upon. • Pray.

Boundaries:

- Never rely on good nature to protect you; always be aware that children and young people can fabricate stories. Avoid circumstances which could give this opportunity.
- Personal care (eg toileting) should be appropriate to the age of the child and circumstances (NB some children have special needs).
- Physical contact between adults and children can be quite healthy but should be discouraged in circumstances where an adult and child are on their own.
- Respect children in your attitude and the language you use; conversations should be appropriate to the age of the child/ren. Do not allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- If transporting children it is better to use the back seat, and seat belts must be used.
- If you see another leader putting themselves in a position where they may be in danger of having their actions/behaviour misinterpreted draw their attention to the guidelines, or talk to the leader of the activity.
- If inviting a child to your home ensure another adult is present and the parent knows.

Discipline:

- We need to be insistent, consistent and persistent.
- Never smack, hit, put down a child or use shouting at a child as a means of discipline.
- Keep rules simple.
- Talk about discipline issues with individual children away from the group.
- Be a good role model.
- Each child is unique, special and individual, and needs a different method of being dealt with.
- We therefore need to consider the following:
 - (i) Why is the child behaving like that?
 - (ii) Ask God for wisdom, discernment and understanding.
 - (iii) What are the best methods of disciplining and encouraging that child?
 - (iv) What encourages and builds children up?
 - (v) Work on each individual child's positives, do not compare them to each other.

Some practical ideas for managing activities:

- (a) Don't be afraid of discipline.
- (b) Separate children who have a tendency to be disruptive when together. These children are often friends, don't separate them straight away, give them a chance, perhaps warn them and only separate them if they are disruptive.
- (c) Have a child sit right in front of you.
- (d) Get a helper to sit next to the child.
- (e) Pay no attention to them.

- (f) Be assertive and encourage helpers to be assertive and not to wait to be asked to deal with the situation.
- (g) Take a child aside and talk to them, challenging them to change, whilst encouraging them on their strengths.
- (h) Warn a child that you will speak to their parents and do so if necessary. (With some non-church children we need to be wise in this, as speaking to the parents may incur their wrath on the child and a ban from attending).
- (i) If a child's behaviour is constantly disruptive, seek advice and guidance from the Group leader.
- (j) Change voice tone.
- (k) Warn them, send them outside the room (take care over supervision), back into the activity or ban them for a week. Children may not be banned permanently without reference to the elders. Parents must be advised in the case of any ban.
- (l) Encourage good behaviour.
- (m) Remember each child is individual and unique. We need God's wisdom and love to recognise their needs and to encourage each one to reach their full potential.
- (n) Pray before you meet.

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