



SAFE TO GROW

POLICY AND PROCEDURES



Roundswell's Vision is

To make committed followers of JESUS who change communities by sharing the LOVE of God in word and deed

An Introduction to Safe to Grow Policy

Good practice is always at the forefront of our policy when working with children and young people. This applies within the church and in wider society, where child protection has become a very major concern in recent years.

As Christians we are charged to love and care for each other. This is particularly true where the most vulnerable members of our community are concerned. Children and young people have specific needs, which can be met by the church if its members respond to the call to be Christ's people, living in His way. This means living in today's world amongst its problems and challenges, recognising that some of these will be challenges for the church itself.

The Christian community is particularly concerned to stand alongside the child as part of the calling of God to be on the side of the powerless, the vulnerable, the voiceless and the marginalised in the world. All children and young people, whatever their age, gender, racial background, culture or disability should have the opportunity to grow up safe from harm. As valued members of the church community they should be treated with respect, listened to and kept safe.

The guidelines contained in our Safe to Grow policy are responsible measures to enable our children to grow and develop in a community where they will not be threatened with harm. These proposals are all about proper and appropriate care of children and young people, allowing them to grow and develop in an environment that engenders trust and security at each stage of their development. Some of the children we welcome may be children who are harmed at home. Some people who are looking for opportunities to harm children will try to establish relationships through the church. Thoughtless and careless attitudes and behaviour on the part of our workers can be harmful for young people. People can sometimes unnecessarily place themselves in situations in which they are open to accusation or suspicion. Survivors of child abuse may be in our congregation and they, in particular, will want to know the church is doing all it can to prevent others going through the same experiences as themselves.

Child abuse is the outcome of a highly complex set of interacting factors, both psychological and social. Child abuse is now understood to embrace social and emotional damage as well as physical, including as it does not only physical injury but also neglect and sexual abuse. 250 children die each year from abuse in the U.K. 20 times as many cases will be notified to Social Services as there were 10 years ago. 40,000 children in England alone are listed on the Child Abuse Register. In recent years people have become more aware of the devastating effect of abuse on those who are abused and on the adult survivors of abuse. There is a greater realisation of the effects of abuse on families and those around them. There is an increased awareness of the implications for those who work with children and young people. In turn, there is also the realisation of the situation in churches.

Many thousands of children and young people come on to church premises every week to take part in worship and other kinds of activities. This happens because many people give their time to work with children and young people and to care for them. For the overwhelming majority of children and young people these are good experiences. But unfortunately, this is not true for all. Although most abuse happens at home, on very rare occasions a child or young person is hurt or abused

by another young person, by a member of the church community, by a stranger or by someone involved in the leadership of a youth group. Churches have a Christian responsibility, therefore, to care in love for all the children and young people with whom they work, and to amend their practice accordingly.

In 1993 the Home Office issued *Safe from Harm, a Code of Practice for Safeguarding the Welfare of Children in Voluntary Organisations*. This development led churches to the realisation that it was a 'whole church' issue needing a 'whole church' response and affecting **every** church.

The policy is also concerned with the appropriate support of those who have abused others, recognising that they, also, are a part of the Christian community and need love and guidance. Christians have sometimes assumed that when God forgives them their sins, the sins are simply cancelled out, as if they had never been. Yet the biblical understanding of forgiveness cannot be reduced simply to 'Forgive and Forget'. It is rather a matter of 'Remember and Forgive'. On this understanding, God constantly bears people in mind, remembering who they are and what they have done, and still reaching out to them in love. The past is not ignored but, reconciled to God, the future has become rich with promise. This love of God that remembers and forgives transforms people for their whole good. In doing so it guides and disciplines them. Unfortunately, the fact that a person feels himself or herself to be forgiven does not guarantee future immunity from perverse action. Christians therefore keep praying 'lead us not into temptation', which is a way of asking God that they may have clear boundaries to their lives, clear patterns and pathways: and that they are not brought to their breaking point. The Christian community has a responsibility to support people in developing their self-discipline not just for the sake of that individual but also for the sake of others. It is a terrible thing to cause any of the 'little ones' to stumble. It is vital to recognise where the burden of relapse is carried. It is not carried by the church which has proclaimed what it terms 'forgiveness' but by the young child who has become the object of abuse in circumstances where the church ought to have been realistic and brave enough to do something about the situation.

Many people say that good practice is just common sense. However, the variation in what is considered to be common sense in childcare terms is enormous. It is because of this that we have to try to define good practice. Sometimes good practice needs to deal with issues that we may take for granted, but because we are dealing with other people's children, we have to be especially careful. Good practice is not a straitjacket, designed to make life difficult and stop you doing things, it is to enable you to do the things children and young people enjoy in a safe environment.

These good practice measures are first and foremost about protecting children and young people. However, they will also help to protect the workers from false accusation or unnecessary and unwanted suspicion and should be a policy that is continued in the home environment as well as on church premises.

SAFE TO GROW

Child Protection Policy Statement

Roundswell Church

Policy statement on children, young people and the church

This statement was agreed at the church meeting held on 1st February 2004.

It will be read annually at the church meeting held in the month of March where progress in carrying it out will be monitored.

- ◆ As members of this church, we commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all, especially children and young people.
- ◆ It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children and young people, and to report any abuse discovered or suspected.
- ◆ We recognise that our work with children and young people is the responsibility of the whole church.
- ◆ We undertake to exercise proper care in the selection and appointment of those working with children and young people, whether paid or volunteer.
- ◆ The church is committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with children and young people, and to providing supervision.
- ◆ The church is committed to following the Home Office Code of Practice, Safe from Harm, and adopts the guidelines and procedures published by the Baptist Union of Great Britain in its publication 'Safe to Grow' [revised edition].
- ◆ Each worker with children and young people must know the recommendations and undertake to observe them. Each shall be given a copy of the church's agreed procedures and Good Practice guidelines.

As part of our commitment to children and young people, the church will appoint a Designated Person for Safeguarding [DPS]. The role will be regularly explained to children, and his/her name, address and phone number will be publicly displayed. He/she will also keep a confidential Incident Book to record any important/relevant event or situation that happens while children or young people are in our care.

Policy Statement on Equal Opportunities

Roundswell Church

This statement was agreed at the Church Meeting held on 1st February 2004.

- ◆ As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service [DBS] to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, this church undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a Disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information received.
- ◆ We welcome people to serve the church on the basis of the right mix of talent, skills, character, potential and call of God, including those with criminal records.
- ◆ A Disclosure is requested only after a thorough risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned.
- ◆ A criminal record will not necessarily be a bar to a person serving with children and young people. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offences.
- ◆ In order to protect the confidentiality of those with criminal records we will access Disclosures through Due Diligence Checking. We invite the Baptist Union's Child Protection Advisory Panel to advise us in the appointment process when necessary, and we agree to act on their advice for the protection of children and young people.

GOOD PRACTICE

Health and Safety

- ◆ Furniture must be in a safe condition, child sized etc.
- ◆ Potentially dangerous items of equipment should be safely locked away.
- ◆ Electrical equipment should be regularly checked, and socket covers should be used where applicable.
- ◆ Location of the first aid box and names of first aiders should be known by all leaders.
- ◆ All buildings used for church activities should be well lit internally and externally, especially around entrance and exit points.
- ◆ The church insurance should be adequate for children and young people both on and off site.
- ◆ Security must be in place to prevent someone leaving during an activity or for a stranger to get in.
- ◆ In case of an accident or emergency a record of the names and addresses of all those on site should be kept together with the consent of the parents to emergency treatment if necessary.

Ratios

- ◆ As far as possible a worker should not be alone with a child or children where their activity cannot be seen. Leave doors wide open or have 2 groups in a room.
- ◆ Do not invite a child or young person to your home alone. It is acceptable to have a group but there must be at least one other adult in the house. Parents must know where their child is.
- ◆ In a counseling situation make sure there is another adult on the premises and that the young person knows where they are. Make sure the interview is time limited.
- ◆ Children and young people should not have access to church premises unless responsible adults are present.
- ◆ At no time should one adult be alone on church premises with a child or group.

- ◆ There should be a suitable ratio of staff to children and young people:

	<u>Indoor Activities</u>	<u>Outdoor Activities</u>
0 – 2 years	1:3 (minimum 2)	1:3 (minimum 2)
3 years	1:4 (minimum 2)	1:4 (minimum 2)
4 – 7 years	1:8 (minimum 2)	1:6 (minimum 2)
8 – 12 years	2:20 (male & female) plus 1 extra for every 10 additional children	2:15 (male & female) plus 1 extra for every 8 additional children
13 years plus	2:20 (male & female) plus 1 extra for every 10 additional children	2:20 (male & female) plus 1 extra for every 10 additional children

NB: The above figures should be increased if children with special needs are taking part in the activities.

The Way We Work

- ◆ Treat all young people with respect and dignity befitting their age; watch language, tone of voice and where you put your body.
- ◆ Listen well. Be careful not to assume you know what a child is thinking or feeling, listen to what is spoken or how it is said. Observe body language at the same time.
- ◆ Do not engage in any of the following:
 - invading the privacy of children when they are showering or toileting,
 - rough, physical or sexually provocative games,
 - making sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person, even in 'fun',
 - inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form,
 - any scapegoating, ridiculing or rejecting a child or young person.
- ◆ Learn to control children without using physical contact. A situation may arise however where a child or young person needs to be restrained in order to protect them from a third party.
- ◆ Make sure another adult is present if for example a young child has soiled their underclothes and needs to be washed.
- ◆ Do not respond to any excessive attention-seeking that is overtly sexual or physical in nature.

Touching

A thoughtful and sensitive approach to the whole question of touch has wider implications in the life of the church. As hugs and kisses have become the norm within church communities, we need to be aware that not everyone welcomes that kind of contact, including some children. An innocent touch may have another more sinister meaning for children who have experienced abuse.

- ◆ Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- ◆ Touch should be related to the needs of the child, not the worker.
- ◆ Touch should be age appropriate and generally initiated by the child and not the worker.
- ◆ Avoid any activity that is, or may be thought to be, sexually stimulating to the adult or the child.
- ◆ Children have a right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except if they need urgent medical attention.
- ◆ Team members should monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They should be free to help each other by pointing out anything that could be misconstrued. Concerns about abuse should always be reported.

Transport

- ◆ Avoid giving lifts to children or young people on their own. If they are alone, ask them to sit in the rear of the car.
- ◆ All private transport must have correct insurance cover for passengers.
- ◆ Always insist that seatbelts be worn when travelling.
- ◆ On every trip, an adult should be allocated a set, with a written list of those for whom they have responsibility, even if the whole group is to remain together.
- ◆ If travelling in several small groups, it is good practice to insist that the same group travel on both the outgoing and return journeys with the same adult/s.
- ◆ If you use a minibus, and people are contributing to its use, you are required to get a section 19 permit from the DETR.
- ◆ When using coaches, ensure that the company has full insurance cover. Check on the limit of passenger numbers and do not exceed this number. Children should remain seated and wear belts provided.

Electronic Communication

Electronic communication has become enormously important and popular over the last 10 years. It is an easy way to communicate with young people in particular. However, there are dangers associated with electronic communication that call for vigilance:

- ◆ It is often an extremely informal mode of communication and creates the potential to be misunderstood or can easily cross appropriate boundaries. 'Text language' can easily be misunderstood.
- ◆ It can be used to meet and 'groom' children and young people.
- ◆ It can easily become a substitute for face-to-face contact with young people.
- ◆ Electronic communication should only be used where appropriate consent has been given.
- ◆ Images of children and young people should not be retained.
- ◆ Youth workers should not use their personal social networking site.

Information for Parents/Carers

- ◆ Parents/carers should be advised of the child protection policy in our church and given the names and telephone numbers of leaders.
- ◆ They should be advised of what action will be taken if a child protection issue arises.
- ◆ All children should be registered and parents/carers asked for details of full name, date of birth, address, contact numbers and details of any medical conditions and medication.
- ◆ Consent forms for emergency medical treatment should be completed if children are being cared for in the absence of their prime carer, whether on or off the church premises. This information should be readily available to workers.
- ◆ Be aware that in some families there are legal constraints on contact with children by absent parents, and where children will be collected from activities nominated persons should be identified by the parent/carer as acceptable to carry out this task.
- ◆ There should be a clear understanding of what sort of activities the child or young person will be doing and the time limits of these.

ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

A child may suffer more than one category of abuse:

Physical Abuse	Emotional Abuse
Sexual Abuse	Neglect
Organised Abuse	

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately, causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as fictitious illness by proxy or Munchausen syndrome by proxy.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent 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 feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative, [e.g. rape or buggery] 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.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. 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 neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Organised Abuse

Organised or multiple abuse may be defined as abuse involving one or more abuser and a number of related or non-related abused children and young people. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation, or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for abuse. Organised and multiple abuse occur both as part of a network of abuse across a family or community, and within institutions such as residential homes or schools.

Abuse may come to the notice of a person in a number of different ways:

- Disclosure by the child or young person
- Information from a 3rd party [e.g. friend, family member, another worker]
- Observation of unexplained injury or changes in behaviour

If abuse is disclosed or suspected:

- ◆ Do not delay
- ◆ Do not act alone
- ◆ Do not promise confidentiality
- ◆ Do not start to investigate – do not ask questions
- ◆ Do consult with the person to whom you are responsible, and the DPS
- ◆ **It is important to remember that the child's welfare is paramount**

What to do if a child tells about abuse:

- ◆ Do not promise to keep secret
- ◆ Look at the child directly
- ◆ Accept what the child says
- ◆ Do not press for information – do not ask questions
- ◆ Be aware the child may have been threatened
- ◆ Tell the child they are not to blame
- ◆ Reassure the child that they are right to tell, and that you believe them
- ◆ Let them know what you are going to do next, who you are going to tell and why
- ◆ Tell them what will happen next
- ◆ Finish on a positive note
- ◆ Immediately afterwards make handwritten notes of exactly what the child said, plus date and time

A confidential Incident Book will be kept by the DPS recording all the facts.

What will happen next?

The DPS will make 3 judgements

- Whether to consult with someone outside the church
 - Whether to inform the parents/carers
 - Whether to refer to Social Services
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- ◆ A strategy discussion involving Social Services, Police Protection team, other significant professionals, and the person suspecting abuse, or to whom the child talked.
 - ◆ A decision will be taken as to whether an investigation is warranted, and if so, it will then be planned.
 - ◆ The investigation may include:
 - An informal talk with the child
 - A formal police video-recorded interview following disclosure
 - Medical examination
 - Preliminary family assessment
 - ◆ If there is sufficient concern a child protection conference will be held to decide the best course of action to protect the child and help the family.
 - ◆ There may be police prosecution of the alleged abuser.

The child protection process is to formally register that a child is likely to suffer significant harm in the future, and that professionals consider that there is need for formal protection beyond the responsibility of the parents to protect. The objective is to ensure the child does not suffer significant harm in the future.

ALLEGATIONS

Why a child might make a false allegation:

A child might misinterpret an innocent action

- As a way of drawing attention to previous abuse for the first time
- As a way a young person can be 'in control' over their life
- For revenge – a way of 'getting back' or of leaving with 'style'.

An allegation against you!!

- How would you feel?
- What would you do?
- Who would you talk to/who is in charge?
- Have you any notes – diary, day book etc?
- What would happen first?
- How would it impact on your life – family, friends, job etc?

MYTHS

"It couldn't happen here"

"We don't have those sort of problems"

"We don't have enough children to worry"

"We are so desperate for helpers – anyone who offers is warmly received"

OUR DEFENCE MECHANISMS

We are often reluctant to admit abuse is taking place, especially to children whose families we know, or by people we trust.

We have an unconscious mechanism which refuses to see abuse.

All this is natural – **but** it must never prevent us from keeping alert to the possibility.

This is not the same as treating everyone with suspicion.

DISCLOSURES

It is considered best practice to make use of all available means to check a person's background when appointing them to a trusted position with potentially vulnerable members of our communities.

People who have regular contact with children and young people need to apply to a government agency, known as the **Disclosure and Barring Service** [DBS], for an **Enhanced Disclosure** that will provide information regarding any criminal convictions or relevant information about the applicant.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain uses the umbrella agency known as **Due Diligence Checking Ltd** [DDC] to process DBS checks on our behalf. We use the online application process wherever possible as it is much quicker and easier than submitting a paper application. There is plenty of guidance on the screen to support applicants at each stage of the process. The DPS will be able to provide help and advice if needed.

Step 1: The DPS will set up the online application with the applicant's basic information.

Step 2: The applicant will then be notified via email from DDC that they can complete further details and nominate the documents they wish to use to prove their identity.

Step 3: The applicant will need to show the DPS the original **[NO photocopies]** identity documents used for verification.

Step 4: The DPS will check that the documents submitted match the online record, then will submit the application. DDC then send it to the DBS.

Step 5: DDC will send an email when the certificate has been issued.

Step 6: When the disclosure arrives, the applicant should advise the DPS who will note the date and number.

The applicant must keep the disclosure in a safe place – no photocopies will be kept by the DPS due to data protection.

Technically, the disclosure is only valid on the date of issue therefore continued safe practice is essential, so applicants will be asked to renew the disclosure every 3 years.

CONTACTS

Minister & Safeguarding Trustee:

Rev Dave Eadie
15 Easter Court
Roundswell
BARNSTAPLE
Devon, EX31 3SJ
Tel: 07931 731413

Designated Person for Safeguarding:

Val Main: 07888 661142

Police:

Tel: 999 [Urgent]
101 [Non-emergency]

Children's Social Services:

Tel: 03451551071 [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)]
03456000388 [outside office hours]

Adult Social Services:

Tel: 03451551007
03456000388 [outside office hours]

South West Baptist Association Safeguarding Contact:

Chris Fry
S.W.B.A
36 – 38 Wonford Street
Exeter, EX2 5DL
Tel: 01392 433533

He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

[Mark 9 v 36 & 37]