

CHILD CARE GUIDELINES

Grosvenor Road Baptist Church, Dublin – As amended in 2011

Introduction:

General Policy Statement on Children,

Young People and the Church

- As a church body we commit ourselves first to praying to our Heavenly Father for the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all children (meaning all those under 18 years)
- As a church body we also commit ourselves to do all we are able to ensure the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all children and young people among us.
- We acknowledge the rights of children to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their views taken into consideration.
- We recognise that the welfare of the child is of paramount importance.
- We recognise that the main responsibility for children and young people lies with their parents/guardians and so we wish to support and strengthen family life and parental responsibility.
- We also recognise that our work with children and young people is the responsibility of the whole church.
- It is the responsibility of each one of us to do what we are able to prevent the neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children and young people, and to handle appropriately any abuse discovered or suspected.
- The church is committed to carefully selecting, supporting, resourcing and training those who work with children and young people, and to providing supervision.
- Each member of staff and all volunteers working with children and young people must read these Child Care Guidelines and agree to follow the guidelines contained in them.
- In all situations confidentiality is respected but not guaranteed. Information is only shared on a “need to know basis” in the best interests of the child.

Guideline 1 - Good practice with children

Children have a right to be treated with respect and dignity since they are all created in the image of God.

1. Code of behaviour for all staff and volunteers:

1. Treat all children and young people (meaning those under 18 years) with respect and dignity befitting their age, taking care to control language, tone of voice, and body language.
2. Do not engage in or tolerate 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 or intrusive touching;
 - any scapegoating, ridiculing, or rejecting any child or young person.
3. Learn to control and discipline children without using physical punishment (see Guideline 2 on discipline).
4. Do not let children involve themselves in excessive attention-seeking behaviour that is physical or overtly sexual.
5. Do not invite a child or young person to your home alone; but invite a group and make sure the parents know where the child is.
6. Do not invite children or young people to events outside the church building without the consent of a parent or guardian.
7. Always seek prior written permission from parent or guardian to contact a child (see parental consent form)

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8. Ensure that you are not alone with a child where you cannot be seen. On church premises, this may mean leaving doors open, or two groups working in the same room.
9. Never give lifts to children or young people on their own without parental permission, and then only in exceptional circumstances.
10. Never overload vehicles with passengers and ensure all seat belts are worn, and have adequate booster seats/car seats for younger children.
11. Do not share sleeping accommodation with children or young people if you take a group away. If this is unavoidable, make sure there are at least two leaders in any room/tent.
12. Never tolerate abusive youth activities (e.g. initiation ceremonies, bullying etc.)
13. Avoid showing favouritism to any individual.

2. Recruitment procedures:

1. New volunteers are interviewed and details of two referees are obtained for those who have been with us for less than two years, or who have been away for the last two years. Referees will be contacted and at least one followed up by telephone call.
2. All must read and sign these Child Care Guidelines.
3. There is a probationary period of at least 6 months for all youth leaders/helpers appointed.
4. Garda Vetting procedures are in place.
5. Annual reviews are held for all leaders/helpers with the person responsible for them.

3. Management Procedures:

1. A register of children (that is all under 18 year olds) is kept based on information from forms given to all parents/guardians to fill in, including names, address (as), contact numbers, notes of medical or other problems, together with the granting of consent by the parents/guardians to involvement by their children in the normal activities of the group, e.g. Ice-skating, bowling.
2. All forms and information is kept confidentially in a secure place in the church office.
3. The names of all the leaders/helpers in their child (ren)'s group is sent to parents/guardians as often as appropriate with the contact details of the leader responsible for the group.
4. A policy of openness with parents is developed as much as possible.
5. Where young persons are of secondary school age, a code of conduct shall be signed by each of the young persons and their parent or guardian.
6. An Accident Book is kept in the Church Office in which to enter details of all accidents involving young people, e.g. date, accident, action taken, how and when parents/guardians informed, names and addresses of witnesses.
7. One Designated Person is appointed and one Deputy to whom allegations or suspicions of child abuse are referred.
8. These guidelines are publicly displayed on a church notice board.

Guideline 2 – Discipline

1. *What is discipline?*
Discipline is the education of a person's character. It includes nurturing, training, instruction, chastisement, verbal rebuke, teaching and encouragement.
2. *Why discipline?*
It brings security, produces character, prepares for life, is evidence of love and is God's heart. See Hebrews 12:5-12 and Proverbs 22:6.

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3. *Do's and don'ts of discipline in children's work:*

1. We need to be insistent, consistent and persistent.
2. NEVER smack or hit a child
3. Discipline out of love NEVER anger. (*Call on support from other leaders if you feel you may deal with the situation unwisely in your anger.*)
4. Do not shout in anger or put down a child.
5. Lay down ground rules (e.g. no swearing, racism or calling each other names; a respect for property), consulting the children where appropriate.
6. Keep the ground rules simple and clear, and make sure the children understand what procedures will be taken if they are not kept.
7. Talk to a child away from the 'group', not publicly, but not in isolation. (*Explain what they have done wrong, encourage remorse - leave them on a positive note*)
8. Never reject a child, just the behaviour. (*Encourage the child that you want them, but you are not willing to accept the behaviour.*)
9. Each child is unique, special and individual, and each child needs a different method of being dealt with. We, therefore, need to ask ourselves "Why is the child behaving like that?"

Then: - • *Ask God for wisdom, discernment and understanding and pray for and with the children.*
• *Decide what is the best method for discipline and encouraging that child.*
• *Work on each individual child's positives, do not compare them to each other, but encourage and build them up.*

Guideline 3 - Good practice with colleagues

- It is important to be clear about individual responsibilities in a team.
- If you see another leader or worker acting in ways which might be misconstrued, be prepared to speak to them or to your supervisor about your concerns. Leaders should encourage an atmosphere of mutual support and care which allows all workers to be comfortable enough to discuss inappropriate attitudes or behaviour.
- Where another leader is a young person under the age of eighteen, then leaders who are eighteen or over should be careful to treat such younger leaders with the same care with which they would treat young persons under these guidelines.

These measures will also protect leaders and workers from false accusations

Guideline 4 - Definition of abuse

There are FOUR broad types of abuse:

- (1) **Physical** - where children's bodies are hurt by ill treatment, failure to protect them, inadequate care or neglect of their basic needs;
- (2) **Sexual** - where an older child or adult uses a child for their own sexual gratification or where children are encouraged or forced to observe or participate in any form of sexual activity;

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- (3) **Emotional** - where children are persistently or severely emotionally neglected or rejected, for example by not being given enough love or attention, by not being taken seriously or by being intimidated by threats or taunts.
- (4) **Neglect** – where a child’s needs for food, warmth, shelter, nurturance and safety are not provided to the extent that the child suffers significant harm.

Guideline 5 – Reporting Procedure

1. *If physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect is suspected:*

- Do not delay
- Do not act alone
- Do not start to investigate
- Consult with the leader of your group who will contact the Designated Person as soon as possible or contact the Designated Person directly.
- Do not mention the matter to anyone else

2. *If a child discloses abuse:*

- Do listen carefully
- Don't panic
- Do ask open-ended, non-leading questions
- Don't enquire into details of the abuse - trained professionals will do this properly
- Do reassure the child that you believe him or her - the vast majority of children who disclose are telling the truth
- Don't imply blame to the abuser/parents
- Do tell the child that it was not his or her fault
- Don't promise confidentiality or to keep the disclosure secret
- Do tell your Designated Person Heather Edge or if not available Deputy Lisa Boyd as soon as possible but do not tell anyone else unless they need to know.(details below)
- Do not try and deal with the matter on your own
- Do make a written summary of what was said, noting the date of the conversation and the date of telling the Designated Person
- Do not tell the child that everything will be fine now
- Do praise the child for telling you and reassure them that they did the right thing
- Do keep your own emotions under control when talking to the child but do express them afterwards to the Designated Person or Deputy.

Role and Reporting duties of the Designated Person or Deputy

- All concerns should be discussed with the Designated Person or Deputy.
- A standard reporting form is used for written reports to HSE
- Out of hours or an emergency situation should be referred to the Gardaí.
- Verbal and written reports will be made to the HSE without delay.
- It is recognised good practice that parents be informed if a report is being made to the HSE unless doing so would put the child at further risk.

Designated Person: Heather Edge, Tel. 01 4931553 or 0868057885

Deputy: Lisa Boyd, Tel. 01 2857138 or 0872351122

These Guidelines will be reviewed every three years in February.

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Volunteer Agreement

[SPECIMEN OF FORM TO BE COMPLETED BY GROUP LEADERS AND VOLUNTEERS]

Name Contact number.....

Name of Group

Age range(s)

Person to whom you will be responsible (Group Leader).....

Elder responsible for the Group

Role and range of work/tasks to be undertaken:

We want to help you give the best possible service to your group, so we will meet with you from time to time to see how things are going. We would also like to make sure that you receive any training needed.

Signed..... (Group Leader)

Date.....

I confirm that I have read the church Child Care Guidelines on protecting children and young people. I understand that it is my duty to protect the children and young people with whom I come into contact. I will endeavour to follow the guidelines 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 Designated Person Heather Edge or Deputy Lisa Boyd.

I hereby and sincerely declare that:

- a. I have never been involved with or convicted, nor am I currently being investigated for violence, sexual assault, or any crime against a minor.
 - b. I understand that checks may be made to verify the above and I hereby give permission for any police checks which may be necessary.
 - c. I understand that should I fail to meet my commitments as set out above I could be asked to withdraw from the ministry of Children's/Youth work at this church and will do so upon such request.
- And I make this declaration believing it to be true

Signed..... (Volunteer)

Date.....