



NEXT GENERATION BIBLE CHURCH

Under-18s and vulnerable adults protection policy

Introduction

As people of Re:Hope Next Generation Bible Church we are concerned with the wholeness and safety of every individual within God's purposes. We therefore seek to safeguard all who are part of our community, especially under-18s and those legally considered vulnerable.

It is the duty of all persons working with children, young people or vulnerable adults to prevent abuse and report any suspected abuse to their supervisor, ensuring that it is in turn reported to the police or other relevant authority.

Our church is committed to valuing, listening to and respecting vulnerable people, including children, young people and adults at risk, as well as promoting their welfare and protection. This involves safe recruitment, supervision and training where necessary of all servers and staff workers in contact with vulnerable people within the church; the use of and adherence to correct procedure for dealing with suspected and confirmed abuse; supporting those affected by abuse in the church; following correct procedures to ensure information privacy for everyone in the church.

This policy is in accordance with the following legislation:

- Children (Scotland) Act 1995

- Child Protection (Scotland) Act 2003

- Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007

- Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) (Scotland) Act 2007

- Data Protection Act 1998

Appointment of leaders

It is important to us that we know and trust those who we allow to work with our under-18s or vulnerable adults. Our application process for those wishing to work with these groups is as follows:

1. Applicant fills out our application form, and are directed to our child protection policy.
2. Applicant's references are applied for.
3. Informal interview to establish previous history of working with children or vulnerable adults, motivation, suitability for the role, and to explain what the role involves.
4. Applicant applies for PVG membership (if not scheme member) or a PVG record update (if already a scheme member). This includes verifying the identity of the applicant.
5. Applicant's references, form and disclosure are checked - if satisfactory, the applicant is appointed to the role.

In some cases when an applicant is well known to us, we may allow them to start working under direct supervision after stage 5. At no time will a worker still going through the background checking process be unsupervised.

Training and supervision

Workers will be provided with appropriate levels of training and supervision for the tasks they need to undertake. This includes ensuring they are aware of child or vulnerable adult safety issues. All workers are to follow the practical guidelines for appropriate conduct. It is best practice to always work alongside another leader, and for no leader to be left unsupervised. All volunteers will undergo annual child protection training.

Practical guidelines for appropriate conduct

1. Be mindful of the safety of the children and vulnerable adults at all times, and in all circumstances.
2. Treat all children and vulnerable adults with dignity and respect in attitude, listening, language used and actions.
3. Respect the boundaries, privacy and confidentiality of children and vulnerable adults.
4. Avoid being on your own with any child or vulnerable adult. This may mean groups working in one large room, or adjoining rooms.
5. Have two or more leaders present with a group whenever possible, particularly when it is the only activity taking place on the premises.
6. If a parent who is not a leader wishes to accompany their child, they may only help their own child or act as a supervised observer.
7. Never take a child or vulnerable adult home on your own - preferably have another helper with you, or else ensure that the last two people are dropped off together. It is better to seat the child or vulnerable adult in the back.
8. Encourage children to enforce their own personal boundaries, for example by saying 'no'.
9. Children and vulnerable adults should not be taken on trips or away from the premises without prior written permission of parents/guardians and the authorisation of church leadership.
10. Where confidentiality is important (eg: counselling a young person) ensure that others know when and where the interview is taking place, and that someone else is around in the building.
11. Be wise in your physical contact with children and vulnerable adults. Physical contact can be natural and healthy, but must be kept appropriate at all times. It should also be initiated by the child or vulnerable adult. Avoid physical contact in private.

12. Do not be over friendly with some children or vulnerable adults at the expense of others.
13. Be wise with your words and actions around children and vulnerable adults, especially those of the opposite gender.
14. Never smack, hit or physically discipline a child or vulnerable adult. However, If there is immediate physical danger to them or another person, it may be appropriate to temporarily hold them still.
15. If you feel that a child or vulnerable adult may have a "crush" on you, inform your team leader and seek advice and guidance.
16. Maintain a level of personal care (eg: toileting) appropriate for the age and ability of the child or vulnerable adult. If this is unclear, check with their parent or guardian.
17. Obtain parent/guardian consent in written form before taking photographs or videos of children or vulnerable adults.
18. Taking photographs or videos of children or vulnerable adults should only be done in group settings.
19. Monitor and restrict computer and internet access for children in your care as appropriate by age.
20. **If you see or discover an issue of concern, including suspected abuse, inform your team leader immediately.**
21. **If you see another worker acting in a way which could be seen as inappropriate, inform your team leader immediately.**

Feedback

We regularly ask for feedback in U18s ministries, including identifying areas which need change or improvement. However, a worker is welcome at any time to feed back concerns, suggestions or other matters to their team leader or a member of staff. We expect workers to do this in a loving and encouraging manner even when dealing with difficult situations.

If a concerning or confusing situation arises, workers are to inform their team leader as soon as possible. Workers should feel able to raise any problems with their team leader in an appropriate way as they occur. In some cases a record of concerns is kept, which your team leader will have access to. It is better to record something which turns out to be insignificant than to not record something which turns out to be significant.

Confidentiality

No children's worker is permitted to divulge any information concerning a child, vulnerable adult, their family or anything a child or vulnerable adult may tell them to anyone other than the team leader or the church leadership. This confidentiality is a continuing requirement at all times and is required when workers are "off duty" or no longer involved in the work. However, workers cannot promise to keep secrets or conceal disclosed information, and are expected to report any concerns to their team leader immediately.

It is expected that if a concerning situation arises, the worker will report it to their team leader as soon as possible. This is in order to protect the interests of the child or vulnerable adult.

A worker must not promise to keep information pertaining to child or vulnerable adult protection issues secret. Workers may have to be wise in what they say. An example would be a child asking a worker if they can keep a secret. Promising to do so would be in breach of this policy - the worker would have to respond carefully, explaining that it depends on what the secret is, or clarifying that certain issues must be reported.

If someone informs a worker of a concerning situation, they must immediately and as accurately as possible note down the conversation and any concerns you have along with the date. Inform the team leader concerned who can pass it on to church leadership. The church leadership along with the team leadership can then plan action steps to ensure that people can remain safe and that the situation is monitored. Further investigation or intervention is not a servers responsibility.

It may be appropriate to seek counsel from a member of staff about a situation. Concerns may therefore be shared with the leadership without breaching this duty of confidentiality.

Talking with an independent person

Occasionally a child or vulnerable adult may seek independent counsel from a server or member of staff. It is important that people can talk about their concerns in a safe place and the church is often an appropriate community for providing that.

It is best practice to pass all such meetings on to the team leader or an appropriate member of staff.

If speaking privately with someone under 18 or a vulnerable adult, the following guidelines are to be followed for your and their protection:

1. If at all possible, have another leader with you.
2. Ensure other people know you are speaking - preferably their parent/guardian. They do not need to know the topic.
3. It is best practice to speak at the church where other people are present nearby. With young or vulnerable adults it may also be appropriate to meet in a public place such as a coffee shop.
4. Do not meet alone with a person of the opposite gender.
5. Respect the boundaries, privacy and confidentiality of the person you are speaking with - bearing in mind that some difficult situations will require discussion with someone else on the team, such as your team leader.
6. Avoid physical contact with the child or vulnerable adult.

Removal of workers

If it emerges at any point that a worker or member of staff is inappropriate for the role they occupy, for whatever reason, they will be immediately removed from their position as part of the standard disciplinary procedure. If necessary, boundaries will be set in church attendance and contact with attendees to maintain safety and well-being and fulfil our duty to protect children and adults at risk of harm.

What to do in cases of suspected or disclosed abuse

If a worker suspects abuse or have abuse disclosed to them, they are to report all concerns immediately to their team leader or a member of staff, as per the concern and incident procedure. For a brief overview of abuse see **appendix A**. Under no circumstances should a server carry out their own investigation into the allegation or suspicion of abuse. Further action is the responsibility of the church leadership. Any concerns raised should be recorded, dated, signed, passed on to the team leader concerned. These will be kept in a secure place for future reference. It is better to record something which turns out to be insignificant than to not record something which turns out to be significant.

Seek medical help if required, informing the medical professional of any suspicions.

Our concern for the wholeness and safety of each person at Re:Hope may lead us to reporting suspected abuse to outside organisations such as medical professionals, social services or the police. A list of relevant local contacts is available on the Glasgow City Council website.

If we suspect or are informed that someone at church is involved in abuse we will immediately end their contact with children and vulnerable adults until the situation is clarified. This may invoke church discipline and the imposing of long-term boundaries on contact with children or vulnerable adults if the person concerned wishes to continue attending.

Suspicious or allegations fall under the duty of confidentiality and should not be discussed with those outside the leadership. If overriding the duty of confidentiality, the situation should only be discussed with relevant professional; however this is the responsibility of the team leader or a member of staff, not that of a server.

There are some situations which allow overriding the duty of confidentiality:

1. The protection of the confider from harm, whether emotional, physical or spiritual.
2. The protection of an identified second party from harm, whether emotional, physical or spiritual.
3. The protection of non-identified individuals or society at large from harm, whether emotional, physical or spiritual.
4. The protection of the church community from harm, whether emotional, physical or spiritual.

The confidant should believe that there are reasonable grounds to override the duty of confidentiality but he or she is not required to be certain, or provide proof or evidence that the belief is justified. It is expected that a worker will discuss the matter with their team leader or a member of staff before taking any action out with this policy. It is the right of any individual citizen to make a direct referral to the child or adult protection agencies or seek advice from thirtyone:eight in addition to this procedure.

Concern and Incident procedure

When a concern arises or an incident takes place, follow the following steps:

1. If needed, seek medical attention.
2. Note down the concern or incident.
3. Report the incident to your team leader.
4. Write the incident formally in the concern and incident record. Attach any notes you made at the time.

It is not the duty of a server to carry out any investigation or follow up regarding concerns or incidents. The team leader and Church leadership will carry out any steps needed to investigate, report or follow up.

Support for those affected by abuse

The pastoral care team is committed to offering support to any person attending the church who is affected by abuse, working with outside agencies as appropriate. Practically, this involves encouragement and praying with a victim of abuse, but may also mean advising them to seek support out with the church, such as from a relevant professional.

Our commitment to care also means being prepared to offer support to those who have carried out abuse; helping them maintain appropriate behaviour and seek professional support. This includes ensuring appropriate boundaries are set in contact with other church attendees. This does not constitute endorsement or encouragement of abuse. In some cases, we may have to follow the church disciplinary procedure. We expect that boundaries will be respected if someone who has carried out abuse wishes to continue attending.

Social Media and communication

1. Do not follow or befriend children on Facebook or Instagram.
2. Do not communicate privately with children via any social media or communication channel.
3. If you have public social media accounts (e.g. Instagram), keep your online presence consistent with Christian standards for behaviour and living.
4. Do not take or store still or moving images of children on your personal device.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually.

If inadequacies in the policy emerge, these may be adjusted as they are found.

Appendix A: Types of abuse

(Adapted from thirtyone:eight notes)

The government defines abuse within four separate but interrelated categories - physical, sexual, emotional and neglect. This document also mentions spiritual abuse and bullying, which are included within these four categories. Abuse often overlaps multiple categories, and all forms of abuse inevitably include emotional abuse.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse involves actual or attempted physical injury to a person. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, deliberately inducing illness or fabricating illness, not seeking needed medical attention or any other physical harm.

It is normal for people to sustain injuries, especially young children in the course of play - pay attention to the area,, frequency, reason given and reactions in judging whether an injury has occurred normally or through abuse.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing someone to take part in sexual activities, both physical activities and non-contact (such as making a child look at sexual images). This may involve assault, unwanted physical attention, viewing sexual content, encouraging sexual inappropriateness, grooming a child or any other sexual activity which is inappropriate for the persons age or mental competency, or carried out against their will.

It is worth noting that sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult men - women and other children can also carry out sexual abuse.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional mistreatment of a person which causes persistent adverse effects on their emotional development and wellbeing. It can involve conveying worthlessness, lack of love, conveying inadequacy, conveying that value depends on meeting the needs of another person, not allowing expression of views, invalidating emotions or thoughts, silencing, mocking, overprotection, controlling, excessive limitation, inappropriate expectations or roles, bullying, cyberbullying, exposure to danger or violence, inciting fear, exploitation or corruption.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of abuse, although it can occur on its own. Due to the nature of emotional abuse, it is usually emergent over multiple interactions as opposed to confined to a specific event, and therefore may be more difficult to identify than other forms.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a person's basic physical and/or psychological needs. This is likely to cause serious impairment of physical or mental health and development. It may involve failing to provide food, shelter, clothing, supervision, medical care/treatment, failing to respond to emotional needs or failing to protect a child from physical or emotional harm/danger.

Spiritual abuse

Bullying

Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually carried out repetitively over a period of time, from which the target is unable to defend themselves successfully. It is broadly split into physical, verbal and emotional, encompassing those types of abuse, but these may well overlap.

Appendix B - Signs of abuse

This is only a guide to common signs of abuse and should not be considered an exhaustive list. The presence of multiple signs is only an indicator of abuse and does not necessarily mean a child or vulnerable adult is experiencing abuse - there may be another explanation. Nevertheless, multiple signs of abuse occurring together should be reported to your team leader. Everyone is unique and so the reactions to abuse may be very different - do not take a lack of outward signs of abuse as meaning no abuse has occurred if abuse is disclosed to you.

Physical signs

- Unexplained bruising/marks/injuries
- Multiple bruises, especially if in clusters
- Bruises occurring in areas unlikely to have been the result of an accident
- Injuries not consistent with the given explanation
- Untreated injuries
- Cigarette burns or multiple burns with a clear edge
- Human bite marks
- Broken bones
- Scalds with upward splash marks
- Inappropriate or poor clothing
- Being underweight or losing a lot of weight
- Discomfort when walking or sitting
- Repeated urinary infections
- Pregnancy
- Developmental delay
- Constantly dirty or smelly

Behavioural signs

- Nervousness, flinching or frozen behaviour
- Allegations of abuse
- Sexual activity through words/play/drawing
- Acting in a sexually provocative or seductive way towards adults
- Eating disorders
- Self harm
- Suicide attempts
- Depression, low self-esteem
- Neurotic behaviour eg: sulking, hair twisting, rocking
- Unusual reluctance to play
- Speech disorders
- Fear of making mistakes
- Fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour
- Developmental delay in emotional progress
- Persistent tiredness
- Under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Isolation
- Obsessions or phobias
- Excessive desire to please adults
- Fear of certain persons or occasions
- Running away from home
- Sudden or unexplained behavioural changes
- Sexual knowledge beyond their age or developmental level
- Saying they have secrets they can't tell anyone about
- Not being allowed friends

Appendix C - Guidelines for how to react if a child or vulnerable adult discloses abuse

General

- Remain calm
- Accept what they say
- Look at them directly
- Listen carefully
- Take notes as soon as possible, writing down exactly what they said and any other relevant details.
- Be honest
- Do not promise confidentiality
- Do not blame them for abuse they have experienced, even if they have broken some rule
- Be aware that they may have been threatened
- Be aware that they may be especially sensitive to physical contact
- Do not push for information
- Reassure them that they were right to tell you
- Let them know what you are going to do with the information
- Let them know anything that happens as a result
- Immediately tell your team leader
- It is important to report this even if abuse has stopped, as other children or vulnerable adults may be affected.

Helpful things to say

- "I believe you"
- "I'm glad you told me this"
- "It's not your fault"
- "I will try to help you"

Things to avoid saying

- "Why didn't you tell anybody before?"
- "I can't believe it"
- "Are you sure this is true?"
- "Why? How? When? Who? Where?"
- "I'm shocked!"
- "Don't tell anyone else"
- Making false promises

Appendix D - Incident and concerns report

Child's name	Date	Reported by	Concern	Action