

# **DIOCESE IN EUROPE CHILD PROTECTION GUIDANCE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Every day, throughout our churches much valued work with children and young persons is carried out by people, often on a voluntary basis. The contribution they make in nurturing and guiding our children in the Christian way of life can never be over estimated.

Sadly it is a fact that some adults will attempt to infiltrate any organisation to abuse children or young people. The church is probably no more vulnerable than other organisations, but is unique in its ministry to both those who have been abused and those who have abused. We therefore need to create and maintain a culture of informed vigilance to safeguard and promote the welfare of our children. This can be achieved by a number of means, the most relevant to this document being;

## **SAFE RECRUITMENT**

### **AND**

**RESPONDING** appropriately and proportionately to concerns about a child or young person, or concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a child, or children or young person

The following is intended to provide ease of reference for designated child protection representatives within churches, and those with a responsibility to select both volunteers and employed people who will have regular contact with, and a duty of care for children within the church community. The document can be supplemented to meet local requirements.

Further advice or guidance will always be available from the Bishop's Adviser for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

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## **THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

The Church of England, in all aspects of its life, is committed and will champion the protection of children and young people both in society as a whole and in its own community. It fully accepts, endorses and will implement the principles enshrined in The Children Act 1989 (UK) that the welfare of the child is paramount. The Church of England will foster and encourage best practice within its community by setting standards for working with children and young people and by supporting parents in the care of their children. It will work with statutory bodies, voluntary agencies and other faith communities to promote the safety and well being of children and young people. It is committed to acting promptly whenever a concern is raised about a child or young person or about the behaviour of an adult, and will work with the appropriate statutory body when an investigation into child abuse is necessary.

The Diocese in Europe has adopted and fully supports this policy statement. This guidance reflects these principles.

## **DEFINITION**

The Children Act 1989 (UK) defines a child, as someone who has not yet attained their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The term 'child' therefore includes young person throughout.

**THE ROLE OF CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION REPRESENTATIVE** is to take responsibility to ensure The Church Council complies with the safe recruitment process as outlined below.

Collate and clarify the precise details of any allegation or suspicion, and pass this information to the Bishop's Adviser for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults. On rare occasions it may be necessary to inform the local Children School and Families Department, Social Services (or the equivalent body) or the police immediately. It is recommended that the Child Protection Representative compiles a list of contact numbers for easy reference. In this event the Bishop's Adviser for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults must be informed as soon as is practicable. Under such circumstances, due consideration should be given to seeking medical attention as a priority.

It is important to remember that no one within the church should become involved in investigating that which is a clearly defined legal obligation placed on the local statutory authority, and police. Any concerns about a child or the conduct of an adult towards a child, or children should be referred to the Church Child Protection Representative, who should then consult with the Bishop's Adviser for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

## **SAFE RECRUITMENT**

As described above one of the ways that children and young persons are protected from harm is to take care over the way adults are appointed when they are likely to have contact with children. It would be good practice that all such people, whether voluntary, or paid, be subject to the following:

Be regarded as job applicants (prospective employees) and have a defined role.

Complete an application form.

Have an interview.

Name two referees, one of which should be from current employer, or previous church (references must be taken up). It is important that in certain circumstances the authenticity of the person purporting to be a referee is checked. This need not be a lengthy process, often a single telephone call will suffice.

Be given appropriate training guidance, and supervision.

## **CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU (CRB) CLEARANCE**

If the decision is made to appoint, the appointee should apply for a \*CRB Enhanced Disclosure certificate and / or obtain the equivalent from the current country of residence.

- \*Only required if the appointee has been at some time in the past resident in the UK.
- \*The Diocese in Europe is unable to process applications from volunteers for a CRB Enhanced Disclosure certificate. It may be possible for the church to use the services of another agency for this purpose.

Note: where an appointee has recently only recently moved into the current country of residence a certificate confirming 'no criminal record' from the previous country should be required. However, although it is accepted that this may not always be possible efforts should be made in this respect

especially if the appointee cannot obtain a certificate from the current country of residence because he / she has not lived there for a sufficient period of time.

## **WHO SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO CRB CHECK AND / OR ITS EQUIVALENT**

All people employed or working as a volunteers, or in paid employment, who may come into regular and direct contact with children during their work or activities, or have a duty of care or responsibility for children. Examples of this will include, activities in which both children and adults participate. There are some exceptions to this. In the case of choirs with children, it is not necessary for all members to be CRB cleared (and / or its equivalent) but the Director of Music who has a duty of care, should be subject to this procedure.

Good practice, for everyone's benefit, dictates that there should be a reasonable ratio of the number of adults, in proportion to the number of children. In any case there should be least two adults present supervising children. These adults should be CRB cleared at enhanced level (and / or its equivalent). "Activities" also includes residential activities.

There will be instances where parents remain present throughout the activity and in these circumstances the supervisors should be CRB cleared (and / or its equivalent).

## **COMPLETE A CONFIDENTIAL DECLARATION FORM**

The first step in the CRB clearance process is to complete a Confidential Declaration form.

The purpose of this is to give the applicant an early opportunity to disclose, any convictions or cautions, and to discuss, in confidence anything that may cause embarrassment. It also encourages honesty, and integrity from the outset. Copies of this form can be obtained from the diocesan web site (under Administration).

A caution or conviction does not necessarily bar a person from working with children; this will depend on all of the circumstances. Contact must be made with the Bishop's Adviser for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults who will advise on individual cases.

The applicant should produce the appropriate supporting documentation as detailed on page 3 / 4 of the Confidential Declaration.

If the church is using an agency for applications for an Enhanced Disclosure certificate then the agency's instructions need to be followed.

No person should take up the post until suitable references and the appropriate supporting documents ie a CRB Enhanced Disclosure certificate and / or its equivalent for the current country of residence and, in some case, the previous country of residence have been received.

Any enquiries concerning CRB issues should be forwarded to the Bishop's Adviser for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

## **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS**

### **PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE**

There are four categories of abuse.

#### **PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Can range from excessive smacking, to inflicting injuries so serious that the result can be permanent disability or death.

Physical abuse involves hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, punching, kicking, or otherwise causing physical injury to a child.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child also includes fabricating, or deliberately inducing illness in a child. This was formerly referred to as Munchausen's syndrome.

The symptoms manifest themselves as bruising on areas of the body, where it would be difficult to have occurred accidentally, fractured limbs etc. Children can also be withdrawn, fearful, and aggressive.

It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive or definitive list, neither should one single symptom be seen as indicative of abuse, all known facts need to be considered.

#### **SEXUAL ABUSE**

This category involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery, or oral sex) 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.

It is almost impossible to recognise symptoms of sexual abuse which will result in abnormal medical conditions. It requires highly experienced medical professionals to diagnose abuse, and recent controversy within the medical profession simply emphasises the difficulties in this highly sensitive area.

Notwithstanding medical symptoms, the child may present as being withdrawn, fearful of adults, show inappropriate sexual knowledge for their age, extreme exposure or preoccupation with genitalia, unexplained sums of money, or gifts.

#### **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment 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 need of another person.

It may involve serious bullying 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 maltreatment, though it may occur alone.

It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.

These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another.

It is worthy of note that the issue of domestic abuse, and the negative effects for children living in an abusive household, is now recognised.

It is very difficult to recognise physical signs of emotional abuse but it may manifest itself by the child lacking in self confidence, as a result of constant criticism, poor interaction between parent and child, developmental delay, communication difficulties, self harming etc.

## **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.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home, or abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate caretakers, 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.

Neglect is usually obvious. The child will be inappropriately dressed for the weather conditions, dirty, unkempt, poor personal hygiene, low weight and height for age, poor skin, and hair condition, constant hunger, voracious appetite, hiding food etc.

To emphasise again that what has been previously stated, the indicators of abuse outlined above must not be taken in isolation. The list is not definitive, neither is it exhaustive.

Any concerns around a child or the conduct of an adult towards a child should be reported, as described above to either the designated Child Protection Representative, the Chaplain / Priest-in-Charge, or the Bishop's Adviser for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults..

Please do not allow this reporting procedure to be delayed. On very exceptional and rare occasions, the need for medical attention or immediate police attendance may be needed

## **INHIBITORS TO REPORTING ABUSE**

It is appreciated that for a lay person to report what they suspect to be abuse of a child or concern around an adults conduct towards a child, or children can be a daunting experience.

Concerns such as, "What if I am wrong," the social standing of the person concerned within the community, the impact on the family concerned, the impact on the church community, are questions raised by those considering referring abuse.

To balance some of these concerns it should be remembered that children very rarely lie about abuse.

Professionals from all agencies involved in safeguarding children will have undergone specialist training. They will be well experienced and will act with sensitivity and discretion.

The aim of professionals is not to remove children from the family unit but to work with the family. Removal of a child happens in rare and exceptional circumstances.

If reporting suspicions of abuse is difficult for an adult, then please consider the trauma a child faces in such circumstances.

An abuser will have conditioned and groomed the child, using threats and fear to prevent disclosure.

The child will have had to overcome all of these inhibitors, and built up sufficient trust and faith in an adult to disclose to them.

## **HANDLING A DISCLOSURE**

The reality is that incidents of abuse of a child by an adult within a church setting are, thankfully rare, but you may have concerns for a child or family, within the wider community. The following guidance applies to equally to both.

## **INVESTIGATION OF SUSPECTED ABUSE**

It is essential to remember that it is not the responsibility of anyone within the Church to investigate. Child protection investigations can be sensitive complex, and require a great deal of expertise and experience.

Normally the requirement from the church community is that any concerns are reported to the church designated Child Protection Representative, and to the Bishop's Adviser for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

Certain circumstances may dictate that the local authority social care or the police should be contacted first. In this instance the Bishop's Adviser for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults should be informed at the first opportunity

## **QUESTIONING**

Some questioning may be necessary to establish basic facts. Use only open questions. It is important to emphasise that any questioning must be kept to an absolute minimum.

## **SOME DO'S AND DON'TS**

DO listen without interruption to what the child is saying.

DO reassure the child that they are not to blame and they are doing the right thing by telling.

DO stay calm.

DO be honest and tell the child what will happen next.

DON'T make promises to the child. As an example do not tell them that you will keep what has been said, secret.

DON'T interrogate the child, as stated above it is for others to investigate.

DON'T criticise the alleged perpetrator

DON'T ask leading questions, for example, "Was it your dad that caused that bruise?"

## **WRITTEN RECORDS**

A written record of disclosure or concerns you may have relating to a child, or adult should be made, based on what you have seen or heard. Use the exact words or term used by the child or adult. In the event of a disclosure from a child, a record of the conversation should be made as soon as is practicable. These should be kept safe. It may be that the police will need to have these.

May 2009