



Bessacarr Evangelical Church

Safeguarding children and young people

BEC Good Practice Guidelines

September 2022

Who do I pass information on to?

BEC Safeguarding contacts:

Designated Safeguarding Lead – **Kathryn Mair**

01302 535022 / 07587 184942

Deputy Safeguarding Leads –

Katie McConway (children and youth) 07538 783829

Angela Webster (adults) 07764 616643

BEC Children's and Youth Worker – **Mike Stark**

07712 896236

Bessacarr Evangelical Church

01302 531040 • bessacarrevangelicalchurch@gmail.com

Other useful contacts:

thirtyoneeight (independent safeguarding specialists)

0303 003 1111 • info@thirtyoneeight.org

If no-one is available you should contact an elder on a ***need to know*** basis.

Remember that ***confidentiality is key***, as this could be part of a criminal investigation.

A framework

At BEC we take seriously our responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people. This Guide sets out the way in which everyone at BEC is expected to work. This provides increased safety for children and young people as well as giving additional safeguards for workers and volunteers.

Policies and procedures are there to provide a framework within which to work on most occasions, and it is important we are able to be flexible in order to put the best interests and safety of any child or young person first. If someone becomes aware or sees that a child's safety may be compromised due to suspected abuse or neglect, it is that person's legal and moral responsibility to report the incident in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy. This Guide gives further information on the why, how and when of doing that.

Common sense and Accountability

We should do what is **reasonable** and **sensible** and be prepared to **be accountable** for the decisions and actions we have taken by reporting to the Person in Charge (PIC) of the group or activity or a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as soon as possible.

Legislation and good practice shouldn't conflict with ministry.

Safeguard the person, yourself, the church.., and the gospel.

Recognition and Responsibility

Abuse and neglect may arise from the active infliction of harm to a child, or by a failure to prevent harm or a failure to meet basic needs – all are forms of maltreatment of a child or young person.

A child or young person may be abused by someone known to them, or a stranger, in person or via the internet. The abuser may be an adult or another child or young person. Often the abuser is someone the child knows well and has a trusted relationship with. Abuse can and does occur in Christian settings.

Four main categories of child abuse are recognised, but these are not definitive: physical, emotional, sexual and neglect.

(See **Appendix 1** for further information.)

Terms used:

DSL – Designated or Deputy Safeguarding Lead

PIC – Person in Charge of a group or activity

Responding to allegations or suspicions of abuse

What do I do and what will the process look like?

- Child abuse may be physical, emotional, sexual or present as neglect. Noticeable change may occur in the child/young person's personality; there may be evidence of physical trauma or neglect, use of inappropriate language or other signs.
- If a worker has concerns about a person or situation they should speak to the PIC of the group or activity.
- If a PIC/worker has reasonable grounds to suspect that abuse is taking place they should **immediately** contact a DSL, who will decide what further action is necessary.
- The PIC/worker need take no further action initially, nor speak to anyone else. **Confidentiality is extremely important.**
- Where there is doubt a DSL should seek advice from the Duty Social Worker on 01302 737777.

Code of Practice

To be followed by the DSL when consulted by a PIC or worker regarding the suspicion or allegation of child abuse.

- At the earliest opportunity a DSL will meet with the PIC/worker concerned, who will submit a written, signed, dated and timed statement of the circumstances causing concern. If possible this should not be a telephone conversation.

(See **Appendix 2** for model report form.)

- At the meeting the DSL will obtain and record all possible further information regarding the suspicion or allegation, along with any additional relevant facts. If additional information is added to the PIC/worker's original statement this should be signed by both the PIC/worker and the DSL.
- Should a DSL not be available the PIC/worker should contact the Duty Social Worker/Doncaster Children's Services Trust on 01302 737777 for further guidance.
- The DSL will define the course of action and record the reason for their decision. This will be one of the following:
 - a. No further action is required
 - b. Consultation with or referral to the appropriate statutory body is required: whether that be Social services, NSPCC or the Police in certain circumstances
- Whichever of these decisions is taken the DSL will inform the PIC/worker concerned.

- If consultation with or referral to a statutory body is necessary, the DSL will contact the appropriate statutory body.
- Once a decision has been reached a signed copy of all reports and associated paperwork should be passed to the DSL to be filed.

Strict confidentiality should be maintained throughout.

How do I respond?

How to respond to a child or young person wanting to talk about abuse, or when an allegation is being made:

- **Listen and act promptly**
- Don't ask questions. Never push for information. If a child or young person decides not to tell you, accept that and let them know you are always ready to listen.
- Show acceptance of what is being said. Don't pass judgement.
- Keep calm, and look directly at the child or young person.
- Be honest. Tell the child or young person you will need to let someone know. Don't promise confidentiality.
- Even when a child or young person has broken a rule they are not to blame for the abuse.
- As soon as possible write down what has been shared. *Make careful notes (the circumstances, what was said and by whom etc.) as soon as possible, preferably within an hour. (Include date/time of incident/recording and keep notes securely.)
- Tell the child or young person what you are going to do.
- **Listen and pass on** to the church Safeguarding Lead/Deputy.
- The Safeguarding Lead should contact the appropriate authorities - children's services, the police, *thirtyone:eight*.

See **Appendix 2 for model report form. Spares will be kept in the church office.*

Code of Conduct for child safety

Basis:

When working with children and young people we seek to promote good working practices, in order that workers and volunteers run activities safely, develop good relationships and minimise the risks of abuse or allegation of abuse.

All workers and volunteers will be expected to sign our general Code of Conduct on a regular basis.

Our expectations of good working practice will protect adults from wrongful reports of inappropriate behaviour, and enable interactions with children to be transparent to other people. As adults (over 18), we must accept the responsibility of setting and maintaining clear and appropriate boundaries for all our activities and interactions with children and young people.

At BEC we assume that every adult will use good judgement and be accountable in following and applying these guidelines within each activity setting.

Practicalities:

The next few pages outline some of the practical ways to conduct activities and minimise risk in all our interactions with children and young people.

Remember – the child's or young person's needs must come first and each one should be treated with dignity and respect.

Good working practice includes:

- **Be visible** to other adults as much as possible, in an environment where other adults are present or other activities are taking place. Or keep a door open.
- **Avoid being alone** with a group of children. Ideally there should be at least two unrelated adults present with a group. And when taking children to the toilet, it is preferable to take two or more together.
- **Be accountable** particularly with one-to-one contact whether that is face to face or virtually. Notify parents or other adults beforehand eg. when transporting a child, or video-calling them. In a counselling situation, use an office with windows, or ensure another adult is close by and there for the duration. Mentoring may also take place in public, open spaces, where others are present.
- **Avoid either favouring or excluding** children; and be sensitive to needs, likes and dislikes.
- **Respect personal privacy and use touch appropriately.** Touch should be related to a child or young person's needs, not the worker's. It should be age-appropriate and initiated by the child or young person: except in exceptional circumstances ie. when medical care is needed.
- **Keep everything in public.** A hug in a group context is very different to a hug behind closed doors.

- **Be available** but also ready to refer a situation or problem for someone more experienced to deal with.
- **Avoid much close physical contact**, particularly activities which are, or could be construed as, sexually stimulating to the child or young person.
- **Challenge unacceptable behaviour** (of children and adults).
Team members should take responsibility for monitoring one another and be free to constructively challenge a colleague as necessary.
- **Report all allegations or suspicions of abuse.** Concerns should always be reported to a Safeguarding Lead.

Junior leaders (16-18)

The above code of conduct is equally applicable to junior leaders.

However, be aware that junior leaders (under 18) do not class as adults for safeguarding purposes, and should always be trained and supervised appropriately themselves.

They should be given clear direction when leading or helping with activities, and following clear guidelines regarding toileting, physical contact etc.

Adult to child ratios

Below are suggested ratios of adult to child, recommended for a specific indoor/outdoor activity or event. These are ratios required in regulations governing day care for under 8's.

	Indoor activities			Outdoor activities		
Age	adult	:	children	adult	:	children
0-2 yrs	1	:	3	1	:	3
2-3 yrs	1	:	4	1	:	4
3-8 yrs	1	:	8	1	:	6

For **over 8's** there is no official guidance. A suggested ratio is:

Indoors: 2 adults (one male, one female) for a mixed gender group of up to 20 children/young people, with an additional leader for every extra 10 children/young people or part thereof.

Outdoors: 8-13 yrs, up to 15 young people – 2 adults (preferably one of each gender). 1 leader for every extra 8 children/young people or part thereof.

13 yrs and over, up to 20 young people – 2 adults (preferably one of each gender). 1 leader for every extra 10 children/young people or part thereof.

Record keeping and Registers

Keep a register, either paper (bound book rather than loose-leaf) or digital, at every activity/event. Maintaining a record of children's and youth activities protects both workers and children/young people. Allegations of abuse may be made years later so back copies of registers should be kept securely and indefinitely.

The register should include:

- Children/young people present at each gathering
- All adults (not just workers but others present) including times of arrival and departure.
- Any significant happenings eg. concerns regarding behaviour/ fights/heated arguments; any action taken and by whom.
- A brief note that someone has talked to a worker and that the report is in the (separate) safeguarding book (in cases where there has been an allegation of abuse).
- Keep the register separate to the accident book (which parents and children can sign).
- Contact a Safeguarding Lead where appropriate.

Registers will occasionally be checked by a DSL.

Registers need to be passed to a DSL at the end of each year for safe keeping.

Consent forms

Consent forms, whether paper or digital, are to be updated annually and kept securely, either with the DSL or the PIC, for the 12 month period.

At the end of this period, consent forms should be passed to the DSL to be shredded or disposed of securely.

Risk assessments

Each group should carry out a written **risk assessment** of their regular weekly activity and keep a copy on file. Special activities (including visits or outdoors) would require an additional risk assessment. (*See Adult to Child ratios- p12.*)

Visiting children at home

Children's workers and leaders will need to visit children and their families at home from time to time. The parents/carers may or may not attend church and it is important that they have information about the group including contact numbers.

- Inform a leader or other worker of the proposed visit
- Never go into a child's home if the parent is absent
- Keep a written record of the visit including the following:
Purpose; time of arrival and departure; who was present; what was discussed
- If the parent/carer is absent when the call is made leave some means of identification and explanation for the visit that can be given to them if the child is alone or with other children.

Transporting children

Make arrangements appropriately to avoid being in a vehicle with a child or young person on your own whenever possible.

If it is unavoidable then insist that the child is in a back seat and you are in the front.

(These guidelines apply to all drivers involved in transporting children and young people, organised by or on behalf of the church (NOT private arrangements for transport between parties with parental responsibility).

Online safety – including use of electronic devices and applications for communication

Leaders and workers should understand that contact with children and, young people through phone calls, texting and via social media or other digital platforms can be fraught with danger.

Where possible, activities wishing to engage with young people via social media should do this through a public community account with multiple administrators.

Volunteers should not give out their phone number, email or private social media account as a child/young person may not understand what appropriate use of these should be.

When meeting online, as in person, be accountable and transparent. Ensure parents and/or colleagues are aware of online meetings and conversations, and keep a record for future reference.

Checklist for safe children's and youth work

Have leaders completed applications and been cleared?

Have leaders read the Safeguarding Policy and Good Practice guidelines and signed the Code of Conduct?

Has a risk assessment been carried out, if necessary?

Do we have enough adults (over 18's) to meet the ratios for the age group?

Have parents completed the necessary consent form(s)?

Are we keeping a register of the children/young people and leaders present?

Are we set up to ensure leaders are not isolated with children/young people?

Do leaders know what to do if ever an allegation is made by a child/young person?

Appendix 1 - Categories of abuse and signs of possible abuse

Physical abuse

- Hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, hair-pulling, biting, pushing
- Rough handling
- Scalding and burning
- Physical punishments
- Inappropriate or unlawful use of restraint
- Physical harm caused by a parent or carer fabricating the symptoms of, or inducing, illness

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse may take place either in person or online or offline. It may be perpetrated by family or non-family members, males or females, older adults or by other young people.

- Forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, which may or may not involve violence
- Penetrative acts
- Non-penetrative acts (kissing, masturbation, rubbing or inappropriate touching)
- Sexual photography or forced use of pornography or witnessing of sexual acts
- Non-contact (looking at or producing pornography or sexual images, watching sexual activities, grooming in preparation for abuse)

Possible indicators of sexual abuse

- Bruising, particularly to the thighs, buttocks and upper arms and marks on the neck
- Bleeding, pain or itching in the genital area
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Sudden change in behaviour or school performance
- Displays of affection that are sexual or not age-appropriate
- Use of sexually explicit language that is not age-appropriate
- Alluding to having a secret that cannot be revealed
- Bedwetting or incontinence
- Reluctance to undress around others (e.g. for PE lessons)
- Infections, unexplained genital discharge, or sexually transmitted diseases
- Unexplained gifts or money
- Self-harming
- Poor concentration, withdrawal, sleep disturbance
- Reluctance to be alone with a particular person

Psychological or emotional abuse

Some level of emotional abuse is present in all types of abuse or neglect, though it may also appear alone. It is the persistent mistreatment of a child that has a severe and negative impact on their emotional development.

Emotional abuse may also be perpetrated by other young people through serious bullying and cyber-bullying.

- Overprotection – preventing someone accessing educational and social opportunities and seeing friends
- Intimidation, coercion, harassment, use of threats, humiliation, bullying, swearing or verbal abuse
- Conveying feeling of worthlessness, inadequacy or that a child is unloved
- Threats of harm or abandonment
- Placing inappropriate expectations on children

- Witnessing or hearing the abuse or ill-treatment of others (including domestic violence)

Possible indicators of emotional abuse

- Concerning interactions between parents or carers and the child (e.g. overly critical or lack of affection)
- Lack of self-confidence or self-esteem
- Sudden speech disorders
- Self-harm or eating disorders
- Lack of empathy shown to others (including cruelty to animals)
- Drug, alcohol or other substance misuse
- Change of appetite, weight loss/gain
- Signs of distress: tearfulness, anger

Neglect

Neglect is a persistent failure to meet basic needs (physical or emotional) and it leads to serious harm to the health or development of a child.

- Failing to provide adequate shelter, clothing or food
- Failing to protect a child from harm or danger
- Failing to ensure that a child is supervised appropriately
- Failing to access medical care or treatment for a child when it is needed.

Possible indicators of neglect

- Excessive hunger
- Inadequate or insufficient clothing
- Poor personal or dental hygiene
- Untreated medical issues
- Changes in weight or being excessively under or overweight
- Low self-esteem, attachment issues, depression or self-harm
- Poor relationships with peers
- Self-soothing behaviours that may not be age-appropriate (e.g. rocking, hair-twisting, thumb-sucking)
- Changes to school performance or attendance

Source: <https://www.scie.org.uk/children/>



Model Safeguarding Report Form – Worker, Bessacarr Evangelical Church

To be completed by the worker to whom the disclosure was made.

Workers name:

Day, Date, Time and Place of disclosure:

Context of disclosure:

Content of disclosure (child/young person/adult to worker; worker to child/young person/adult – record as nearly as possible the exact words used in the conversation):

Signed:

Date:
