

Crawley Baptist Church

Child Protection Procedures

Procedure if abuse if disclosed or discovered

1. What do abuse and neglect mean?

There are four main categories of abuse as officially defined in government guidance: Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

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.

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.

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, through it may occur alone.

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.

2. What might lead us to think that a child is being harmed?

Knowing whether a child is being abused or neglected may be difficult to judge. However, all those who have contact with children and young people should be alert to the potential indicators of abuse and neglect and know how to respond to any concerns they may have.

On occasions an incident or an injury will give cause for concern but often it is a series of incidents or an accumulation of concerns which indicate that a child may be suffering or at a risk of suffering harm.

Whilst it is not possible to be prescriptive about the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect, the following list sets out some of the indicators which might be suggestive of abuse:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts, or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries;
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent;
- Injuries which have not received appropriate medical attention;
- A child or young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/herself;
- A disclosure or allegation made by a child or young person;
- Someone else (a child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another child or young person;
- Unexplained changes in behaviour or mood (e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper);
- Inappropriate sexual awareness;
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour or play;
- Nervousness / watchfulness;
- Inappropriate relationships with other children and / or adults;
- Signs of neglect, such as under-nourishment, untreated illnesses, inadequate care.

It should be recognised that this list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more indicators is not in itself proof that abuse is actually taking place. It is also important to remember that there might be other reasons why most of the above are occurring.

3. How can children express their concerns?

All children and young people should be valued and listened to and their views and wishes taken into account.

Children and young people sometimes share views, worries, anxieties and concerns with adults with whom they have contact. Whenever they express concerns about their safety and protection in relation to physical, sexual and emotional harm, we help to protect them by listening to them and taking seriously what they say. Their views and wishes should be respected and taken into account, in so far as this is consistent with their safety and protection.

Children who are being abused will often only talk about what has happened to them to people they trust and with whom they feel safe. All who work with children and young people should know how to respond if a child or young person talks to them about an abusive or harmful relationship.

When a child or young person talks about abuse it is important:

- To create a safe environment in which the child or young person can share their concerns;
- To react calmly so as not to further distress the child or young person;
- To listen carefully to what the child or young person has to say;
- To allow them time to say what they want;
- To not rush or interrupt them or ask more questions than you need to in order to establish whether there is cause for concern or to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said;
- To not ask closed questions (ones which are answered by a single 'yes' or 'no') or leading questions which suggest what may have happened and who was involved such as. *'Did he say/do something to you?'*
Instead use open questions such as, *'Is there anything else you want to say?'* *'Can you tell me more about that?'* All of which help to encourage the child to tell you in their own words what may be troubling them.
- To accept what the child or young person says and take seriously what you are hearing;
- To reassure the child or young person, and confirm that you know how difficult it must have been to confide in you;

- To tell the child or young person s/he is not to blame and that it is right to tell;
- To help the child or young person understand what is going to happen next. They need to be made aware that other people will need to be told about the concerns which have been shared and who those people may be. **Do not promise that any child protection concern which affects them or other children or young people will be kept confidential.**
- To be aware that a child or young person may be frightened and that he/she may have been threatened if they tell of what has been happening to them.
- To remember that most children feel loyalty to their parents and other significant people in their lives and often find it difficult to say things to their detriment.

Children and young people within a church should also be aware of those people within the church who have been given special responsibility to act on their behalf in relation to child protection concerns.

4. What should you do if abuse is suspected or disclosed?

Individuals should not

- Take responsibility for deciding whether or not child abuse is actually taking place;
- act alone;
- take sole responsibility for what has been shared or any concerns they may have

But must

- discuss concerns without delay (through the Team leader as appropriate) with the Minister for Children's and Youth work so as to protect the child or young person and gain some support for all those involved in what could be a difficult situation.

If the concerns in any way involve the Minister for Children's and youth work these must be taken to the Senior Minister.

- Ensure that a written record is made.

The record should be made as soon as possible after the disclosure / incident be legible and state the facts accurately. They should include: -

- the child's name, address and date of birth;
- the nature of the concerns/allegation/disclosure;
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries;
- An exact record of what the child has said using the child's words. A child's behaviour and demeanour might also give some indication of what a child means to say and these should also be noted;
- What was said by the person to whom the concerns were reported;
- Any action taken as a result of the concerns e.g. who was spoken to and the resulting action, including any contact with parents, or the responsible person within the church.

Records should be signed and dated, kept secure and confidential and made available only to the responsible person, the senior minister of the church as far as it is consistent with the welfare of the child or young person concerned and other children in the church and representatives of the professional agencies as required by them.

