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## **CHURCH OF ENGLAND, PARISH OF DUNSTABLE** **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

**Adopted by the PCC on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

### **Introduction**

It is the responsibility of every church member to safeguard our children and young people, promote their welfare and protect them from accidental injury or deliberate abuse. This policy document has been written in response to the requirements of the law. Its application will ensure that the Parish is in conformity with the House of Bishops' Child Protection Policy adopted by the Diocese and this Parish. It applies to all those who are involved in leading church groups or activities which include children and/or young people within the Parish. The staff team, churchwardens, group leaders, and the members of the PCC and DCCs should all possess a copy of this document and other volunteer helpers working with children and/or young people should be given a summary of the sections, which are relevant to their involvement.

The PCC is the body responsible for all activities undertaken by the church involving children and/or young people, i.e. those under eighteen years of age, however it delegates some working out of this responsibility to the DCCs and, in the case of St. Katherine's, the Ecumenical Council.

The Parish has many activities for its young church members including crèches, toddler-groups, Sunday schools, workshops, Bible-study classes, Adventurers, youth groups, choirs, bell-ringers, and altar-servers as well as the associated uniformed organisations. There are also many skilled and dedicated adults who lead them. In a society where the media misses no opportunity to spotlight any hint or rumour of malpractice and where some individuals readily resort to litigation to exploit any grievance, it is important that, in the Parish, a correct code of practice is maintained. The aim of this policy is not to undermine or criticise any activity or group, which has been functioning successfully over many years but rather to draw the attention of leaders to present-day requirements. As a condition of its Public Liability Insurance the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group (EIG) requires that all reasonable steps be taken to ensure that the children and young people in our care are protected and safe from harm.

This Parish seeks to safeguard children, young people and leaders by developing its recruitment procedure, by the provision and encouragement of training for its youth leaders and by providing procedures for ready response whenever possible abuse is suspected. The PCC encourages all involved with children and/or young people to pay particular attention to children and/or young people with special needs and those from ethnic minorities to ensure their full integration and protection within the church community.

It is agreed that, for the purposes of this policy, the Local Ecumenical Partnership at St Katherine's shall follow the Child Protection Policy of the Church of England as interpreted by the Parochial Church Council of the Parish of Dunstable.

The following policies and procedures are based on current good practice and need to be closely observed in all instances.

(The Scouts, Guides and other uniformed associations have separate policies and procedures and so are not the responsibility of the PCC.)

### **A Recruiting Adults to work with Children and/or Young People**

- 1 Anyone aged sixteen years or above applying to work with children and/or young people, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, should be asked to complete a declaration form.
- 2 Any applicant aged 16 years or above will be given a copy of Dunstable Parish's Child Protection Policy, Equal opportunities Statement and Safe Storage Policy.
- 3 Any applicant aged sixteen years or above will be asked to complete a Self Declaration and a Job Application Form, supplying the names of two referees. The Child Protection Officer will seek references.

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- 4 Any applicant aged sixteen years or above will be asked to complete the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure process before commencement of position applied for.
- 5 All employees voluntary or paid will receive a 'Job Description' a written outline of their duties and responsibilities to be signed by the applicant and ratified by the PCC, Parochial Church Council for Dunstable – the Employer. Job descriptions will be kept by the Parish Child Protection Officer and reviewed yearly. This review will comprise of a meeting between the post holder and the person to whom they are responsible, for the purpose of pastoral care, identifying training requirements and updating the job description.
- 6 Everyone working with children and/or young people should have access to a copy of this Parish policy document and be bound by its procedures.

## **B The Training and Supervision of Leaders**

- 1 The PCC will encourage all adults working with children and/or young people to undertake suitable training, which should include an element of first aid, e.g. the First Response Course currently used by the Scout and Guide Associations.
- 2 Leaders and their helpers should know to whom they are responsible and also the procedures to be followed in reporting accidents and allegations, or actual instances, of abuse.

## **C The Required Ratio of Adults to Children**

At all meetings and activities the current minimum requirement is as follows.

- 1 For children of pre-school age: Two adults for up to four children plus one extra adult for every additional four children.
- 2 For children of 5-8 years old: Two adults for up to eight children plus one extra adult for every additional eight children.
- 3 For children over 8 years old: Two adults for up to twelve children plus one extra adult for every additional twelve children.

Wherever practicable a parent participating in an outing accompanying his/her own small child/children should not be counted as one of the supervising adults.

Any activity, whether indoors or outdoors, which involves children under eight years of age and which is likely to be of more than two hours duration must be reported to the local authority (Central Bedfordshire Council). If the activity is held on a frequent and regular basis it may need to be officially registered with the authority.

## **D Safety - General**

- 1 In any group meeting or activity there should be at least two adults present with more adults if the activity requires a stricter level of supervision (Refer to Section C).
- 2 Only suitably qualified and trained instructors should lead groups in those activities/sports, which are potentially hazardous. All equipment used in such pursuits must be regularly inspected and properly maintained.
- 3 No adult leaders or helpers may administer medication to children or young people unless this has been previously authorised in writing by a parent/guardian.
- 4 In the event of an accident to a child or young person, a written report must be made and retained in the group's own record book and in the Accident Book of the relevant building which is kept in an accessible place stated on the public notice-board. Written in the book by the leader concerned must be an explanation of the circumstances and details of any first aid rendered. The child or young person's parents/guardians must also be fully informed.
- 5 Parents should be asked to provide any relevant medical information concerning their child/children.
- 6 Letting agreements with non-church organisations for the use of church premises shall require a signed undertaking that the user will make arrangements for children and/or young people that comply with current legislation and best practice.

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**E**      **Safety – Outings**

- 1      Children and/or young people and the adult helpers must be fully insured for the specific visit and activity. This is achieved for Church groups by written application to the relevant DCC for permission for the activity to take place and approval being given by the DCC.
- 2      Parents/guardians must be given full details, in writing, well in advance.
- 3      Written permission must be obtained from parents/guardians before children and/or young people may participate in any outing. A tear-off reply-slip for this may easily be included beneath the letter giving information about the visit.
- 4      Proper and appropriate supervision of children and young people should be exercised. Parents should be aware of what the arrangements are.

**F**      **Minimising the Opportunities for Abuse or Allegations of Abuse**

It is important that during any organised activities involving children and/or young people the following rules should be adhered to.

- 1      The PCC will ensure all adults working with children and or young people undertake suitable training. CCPAS recommend 'Facing the Unthinkable' programme.
- 2      There should always be two adults in a car when lifts are given to children and/or young people except in exceptional circumstances where this is unavoidable. The child or young person must sit in the back of the car. If a child or young person does travel alone this should be noted in the group's attendance register.
- 3      After a group activity no child or young person under sixteen years of age should be allowed to leave church premises unaccompanied or be left unaccompanied unless this has been previously authorised by the parents/guardians in writing to the group leader.
- 4      A minimum of two adults should be present at all activities including one of each sex where mixed groups of older children are involved. At least one of the leaders in a single sex group shall be of the same sex as the group members.
- 5      A good system of record keeping should be maintained. This needs to include the date of the meeting, a register of the children and/or young people present, together with the adult leaders and helpers. The home addresses of the children and/or young people together with a contact telephone number should also be included along with any relevant medical information, e.g. where a child or young person has impaired-hearing or diabetes.

**G**      **Dealing with Complaints or Allegations of Abuse**

- 1      Any adult, whether leader or helper, must listen to and take seriously any child or young person wishing to share an anxiety. The child or young person must be clearly told that any information given may be passed to the appropriate body (Police or Social Services) and that it cannot be kept secret. Those listening to a child or young person sharing an anxiety must only listen and must not ask questions. They should stay calm and should not show that they are shocked. They should make a written record of the conversation as soon as is practicable after talking to the child or young person. Such written notes are subject to Paragraphs G5 and H6.
- 2      An adult wishing to complain should be seen by the designated leader of the group or one of the clergy team. If the complaint or disclosure concerns abuse (not necessarily in the context of the church-linked activity), detailed notes of the conversation should be made immediately afterwards (preferably recording the exact words which were spoken) and the relevant leader/clergy member informed as soon as possible. These then have a duty to inform the Bishop's Representative (see Notes at end). If reporting to the group- leader or clergy seems inappropriate or embarrassing, the person with concerns should contact the Parish's designated "Independent Person" (see Notes at end).

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- 3 Any allegation of abuse is also the concern of the Police and the Social Services. The Parish's Independent Person or the Bishop's Representative will advise about this according to the circumstances. If a child seems under threat or in danger, the Police/Social Services must be alerted.
- 4 If an adult feels uneasy about a child or young person in his/her care then the procedure outlined in the previous paragraph should also be followed. It is most important that investigations concerning abuse must be carried out by the Social Services/Police, not the church.
- 5 In such sensitive areas involving allegations or suspicions of misconduct or abuse it is important that only those people specified above are told. Rumours must not be allowed to circulate. All notes of complaint or allegation must remain confidential and be retained indefinitely (see Paragraph H6).
- 6 It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make a direct referral to the safeguarding agencies or seek advice from CCPAS, although the Leadership hopes that members of the Parish of Dunstable will use this procedure. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Safeguarding coordinator/Deputy has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Safeguarding coordinator(s) as to the appropriateness of a referral they are free to contact an outside agency direct. We hope by making this statement that the Leadership demonstrate its commitment to effective safeguarding and the protection of all those who are vulnerable
- 7 When any concerns about a child or young person or the behaviour of an adult are noted they shall be reported to the Parish Child Protection Officer who shall ensure that all necessary steps are taken in respect of this policy and in reporting to both the statutory agencies and to the Diocesan Child Protection Adviser.
- 8 When anyone known to be a possible threat to children and/or young people becomes attached to a congregation, it shall be reported to the Parish Child Protection Officer who shall, in consultation with the Rector, the Team Vicar of the relevant District and the Parish Wardens establish plans for the effective management and monitoring of that individual. This will involve consultation with the Bishop's Representative.
- 9 Any person against whom an allegation is made must be immediately suspended until investigation is complete.

## **H Control and Review of Parish Policy**

- 1 The PCC and in the case of St. Katherine's, the Ecumenical Council, shall have the prime duty of ensuring the well-being of children and young people in the church community and shall have a constant concern to create a culture of informed vigilance which takes children seriously.
- 2 The PCC shall appoint a Parish Child Protection Officer who shall ensure that this policy is fully implemented and that all necessary steps are taken in the event of concerns about a child or young person or the behaviour of an adult relating to this policy and in reporting to both the statutory agencies and to the Diocesan Child Protection Adviser. This person may also be the Parish Administrator.
- 3 Each DCC and the Ecumenical Council at St Katherine's shall appoint a District Child Protection Officer who shall be responsible for seeing that a copy of this Parish policy document is available to everyone concerned. He/she shall ensure its implementation by group leaders and check that its procedures are being followed. He/she shall ensure that the Childline telephone number and the name and contact number of the Children's Advocate are displayed in each building.
- 4 Each DCC and the Ecumenical Council at St. Katherine's shall appoint a District Children's Advocate whose name shall be publicised in each building used by children and/or young people. This person must have CRB clearance. He/she may be the person appointed as District Child Protection Officer. He/she is the suggested first point of contact.
- 5 There shall be an annual review of the policy by the PCC to ensure effective implementation and that the policy continues to conform to any changes to legislation or Diocesan instruction/advice and to include any new and appropriate suggestions of best practice.

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- 6 The Parish Child Protection Officer shall maintain a register of all who have received or are seeking CRB clearance. He/she will initiate an annual check, using the District Child Protection Officers, that all persons working with children and/or young people across the Parish have received CRB clearance. He/she shall ensure confidential and secure storage of documentation produced according to 'Handling, Use, Secure Storage, Retention & Disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure information Policy'

**Notes**

1. The Bishop's Representative for Child Protection is:  
Mr Chris Lees  
The Diocesan Lodge  
41 Holywell Hill  
St. Albans  
Herts.  
AL1 1HE  
Telephone: 01299 841269  
E-mail: [childprotection@stalbans.anglican.org](mailto:childprotection@stalbans.anglican.org)
2. The Parish's designated Independent Person is:  
Miss Jan Bailey  
4 Downs Road  
Dunstable  
LU5 4DD  
Telephone: 01582 521898