



EVANGELICAL CHURCH

PEC Child Protection Policy

Our Commitment

We are committed to equipping volunteers with the information and skills necessary to ensure the safety and well being of children, young people and workers in Plains Evangelical Church.

The aim of the Youth and Children's Ministry of Plains Evangelical Church is:

"Reaching children and young people for Jesus and together becoming disciples"

As we do this we want to communicate the love of the Lord Jesus Christ to these children and young people. We recognise that they are extremely valuable to our Lord and God and because of that they are valuable to us. As we minister to them we want to show them just how valuable they are to God and just how much he loves them.

As we do this we will do our utmost to ensure that their experience of Plains Evangelical is a happy, fulfilling, safe and secure one.

We will try to do this by:

- Regularly reviewing the background to, and purpose of this policy and its associated guidelines.
- Outlining the nature of child abuse and the churches role and responsibility within the wider child protection network.
- Clarifying the roles of the Child Protection Co-ordinator and the procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse.
- Exploring how to support a child who discloses abuse.
- Clarifying the Churches guidance on how to ensure a safe and loving environment for all people.

Recognising Abuse

How are children harmed?

- Physically
 - Violence
 - Bruises
 - Burns
 - unusual fear
 - violent themselves
- Emotional
 - Put down
 - not loved
 - called names
- Sexual
 - Used for adult's sexual gratification

When Children come to our Church they must not be harmed in any of the following ways:

Physical-You must NOT hit a child, however badly behaved. Work out systems of discipline, remove the child if necessary, but do not use any form of physical violence.

Emotional -This is perhaps the most difficult area. Often things said in fun (teasing and slugging) can be very hurtful. (particularly relevant to teenagers). Try and remember some hurtful things that were said to you in fun. Remember every child (no matter how unattractive, annoying or badly behaved) is a child made in the image of God and a person for whom Christ died. We have to show them this as well as tell them it. Value each one and ask God to help you with those you find difficult to love.

Sexual -We all have to be careful with our behaviour to ensure that we do not leave room for misunderstandings or false allegations.

Be careful with physical contact e.g. men hugging young boys or girls. This may be totally innocent and showing care and concern, however, in order to avoid misunderstanding such contact should not take place.

Do not put yourself in situations where you are alone with a child. If a child needs to talk alone, then do so in the corner of a room with other people in it, with the child's back to the other people. Alternatively invite another adult to join you. If you are male, the other adult should be female.

In cars, try to arrange it so that you are not in a car with one boy or girl to drop off.

Think about the situations you are in and always err on the side of being extra careful. Protection of children is essential if we are trying to tell them of God's love.

Dealing With Abuse

What To Do Once A Child Has Talked To You About Abuse:

1. Make notes as soon as possible (preferably within one hour of the discussion) Write down exactly what the child said and when he/she said it and what was happening immediately beforehand (activity etc). Do not add your own interpretation of what the child has said. Also, record anything you said to the child and how they responded to it. Record dates and times of the events and when you made your notes. Keep all handwritten notes, even if they are typed up later.
2. Report your discussion as soon as possible to the Child Protection Co-ordinator. If the Co-ordinator is implicated then report to the Pastor. If both are implicated, report to one of the other Elders.
3. You should not discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone other than those nominated in the above positions.
4. Do not tell anyone else, remember allegations can be false as well as true.
5. Do not investigate further yourself.
6. Talk about and pray through your own feelings with the Child Protection Co-ordinator.

What To Do If You Suspect That Abuse May Have Occurred

1. You must report concerns as soon as possible to the ***Co-ordinator***, who is nominated by the church to act on their behalf in referring all allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities. In the absence of the ***Co-ordinator*** the matter should be brought to the attention of the ***Pastor***.
2. If the suspicions in any way involve the ***Co-ordinator*** then the report should be made to the ***Pastor***. If both may be implicated the matter should be taken in the first instance to **PCCAS Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service, PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ. Telephone 01322 660011 / 667207 www.ccpas.co.uk** Should any person be unhappy with the handling of such a case they are at liberty to contact the above agency direct.

The **Co-ordinator** for Plains Evangelical Church is Mrs Allison McCracken. All Leaders working with young people will be kept informed of the current designated Co-ordinator and any future changes.

Key Word: 'Refer', Do Not Investigate.

How To React When A Child Wants To Talk About Abuse

1. Accept what the child/young person says (however unlikely the story)
2. Keep calm, and don't panic. Try not to look shocked or disgusted. Let the child know that they are cared for and valued no matter what they have told you.
3. Look at the child/young person directly. Your main concern is the child, **not you**. Think about how the child is feeling. You may be the first person he/she has trusted to tell – so it is important how you react
4. Be Honest. Let them know that you will need to tell someone - don't promise confidentiality. Tell them you will have to tell, but you can assure them that you won't be telling all their friends or all of the other leaders. If they choose not to tell you at this point, do not pressure them for information. Keep building the relationship, they may decide to tell you later.
5. Don't rush to report to the Police, remember any allegations should be investigated through the laid out procedures first.

6. Do not put words in their mouth. The child may not be saying what you think they are saying! Also, if allegations are investigated by police and taken to court, the case could collapse if there is any possibility that you, 'suggested' things to the child.
7. Re-assure the child, but don't make promises you can't keep.
8. Even when a child has broken a rule, they are not to blame for the abuse.
9. Be aware that the child may have been threatened.
10. Never push for information
11. Sin – If a child says he has done something bad, then remember that in abusive situations it is the adult who has sinned and needs to repent. The child is the victim of sin.

Positive things to say

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

Avoid saying

- "Why didn't you tell anyone before?"
- "I can't believe it",
- "Are you sure this is true?".
- Avoid questioning the child. Do not begin with Why? When? Who? Where? Just listen and do not push the child to tell more than they want to.
- Never make false promises

NEVER SAY

- "I'm shocked"
- "don't tell anyone else"

Concluding

Reassure the child/young person that they were right to tell you
Let the child know what you are going to do next

Allegations of Physical Injury or Neglect

If a child has a physical injury or symptom of neglect the Co-ordinator will:

- Contact Social Services (or PCCAS) for advice if concerned about the child's safety
- Where emergency medical attention is necessary it will be sought immediately. The Co-ordinator will inform the doctor of any suspicions of abuse
- In other circumstances speak with the parent / guardian and suggest that medical help / attention is sought for the child.
- The doctor will then initiate further action, if necessary. If appropriate the parent / guardian will be encouraged to seek help from the Social Work Department
- Where the parent / guardian is unwilling to seek help, if appropriate, a Church Leader will offer to go with them. If they fail to act, the Co-ordinator should, in cases of real concern, contact the Social Work department for advice
- Where the Co-ordinator is unsure whether or not to refer a case to Social Work, then advice from PCCAS will be sought and followed. PCCAS will confirm its advice in writing in case this is needed for reference purposes in the future

Allegations of Sexual Abuse

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Co-ordinator will:

- Contact PCCAS for advice, or the Social Work Child Protection officer directly. The Coordinator will not speak to the parent (or anyone else).
- If the Co-ordinator is unsure whether or not to follow the above, then advice from PCCAS will be sought and followed. PCCAS will confirm its advice in writing in case this is needed for reference purposes in the future
- Under no circumstances will the Co-ordinator attempt to investigate allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse. It is the task of the Social Work Department to carry out this investigation under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989
- Absence of the Co-ordinator or Pastor should not delay referral to the Social Work Dept
- Exceptionally, should a disagreement arise as to the appropriateness of a referral to the Social Work Dept. that person who disagrees has a responsibility as a member of the public to report serious matters of abuse to the Social Work Dept. and should do so without hesitation
- The Elders of PEC will support the Co-ordinator and Pastor in their role, and accept that any information they have will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis

RESOURCES

PEC does not assume the position of a "professional" in the arena of Child Protection. Although these guidelines are not exhaustive in any *way*, *we* feel they provide a good foundation on which to build. Close relations with local authorities and other qualified agencies will be developed to assist us in this work.

The following materials and addresses are recommended for any wishing to better equip themselves in this vital area of **CHILD PROTECTION**.

GUIDANCE TO CHURCHES

PCCA Christian Child Care

SAFE TO GROW

Baptist Union of Great Britain

WORKING TOGETHER Care & Protection

Baptist Union of Scotland

THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Church of Scotland

SCRIPTURE UNION

9, Canal Street, Glasgow G4