

For everyone involved in working with children at St. Mark's



St Mark's PARISH CHURCH STIRLING



2009

INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been produced as part of our commitment to providing the highest possible standards in our children's work.

This is your resource to help you reflect on your ministry in children's work. It is intended to promote good practice and a loving care for those whom we serve.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Children are an important part of our congregation at St. Mark's. As such, our role in working with them is to present the good news of Jesus Christ in our teaching and in our conduct and to help them to know His love for them.

Every child will be treated with respect as a child of the living God, remembering Christ's words:

"Let the little children come to me, and do not try to stop them: for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these." MARK 10:13

We care for our children best by giving them a safe and supportive setting in which to learn of the love of GOD.

Good relationships are vital to Christian nurture. Children learn about the love of God through the way leaders act and interact with them. As leaders, we are called to become "significant adults" in the lives of our children. It is important, however, to remember that forming a personal friendship with a young person could lead to our ministry and personal life being compromised, and our position impossible. In a society where distorted and damaged relationships exist, it should be the aim of leaders to establish healthy and appropriate relationships with the children in their care.

As leaders, our role is to try to build relationships between the children themselves, between leaders and parents, between the children and the wider church. Children have a deep need to belong. By building relationships, we help them to know they belong within the church community.

INCLUSION

Disabilities and special needs are not always visible or openly discussed. Many children have learning difficulties which make reading or writing problematic for them. Our worship is very much word-based and therefore the Bible, orders of service, worksheets etc. can prove frustrating to such children. Such children can become expert at hiding the situation.

Care must also be taken with children with disabilities to relate to them as individuals first and deal with their disability second.

Please consider the following when dealing with children with disabilities:

- Access , toilet facilities, transport
- Is supervision/help required?
- Ask the child concerned, if you're unsure about their capabilities
- Don't draw attention to a child who is struggling with an activity
- Ensure that you have been understood by the child and that you understand them.
- Treat all children the same
- ALWAYS send written information about activities home and include permission slips if required.
- Be sensitive- Is there a need for 'one-to-one' work?
- Leaders should also be aware that children with special needs may also have related behavioural problems.
- They may have short attention span or lose interest in an activity very quickly and become disruptive.
- They may also have co-ordination problems making craftwork or work with scissors difficult.
- Sequencing problems may lead to confusion where a child cannot remember or execute the steps in an activity in the correct order.

Children with these problems are not necessarily slow or 'thick' , the difficulty often bears no relation to the child's intelligence quotient.

BULLYING

Bullying is not only restricted to the school environment, it can also be found in a church setting.

Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour by a group or individual towards another individual.. either over time or in a one-off situation. It takes three main forms, physical, emotional or abusive. The reasons for bullying are many. The results can be tragic, leading to real or imaginary medical conditions, self-harm or even suicide.

Even after bullying stops, the child may find it difficult to form relationships or to relate to others.

In working to prevent bullying becoming an issue in your work with children, consider the following:

Never dismiss bullying as teasing

Nor dismiss the child's concerns

Don't tell the child to hit back

Thank the child for telling you

DON'T rush in...

Discuss the next step with the child Including who else you tell

Maintain contact with the child and monitor the situation.

Bullying can only be eliminated if children are willing and able to report it.

Children must be reminded that if they are made to feel uncomfortable they should tell an adult.

The reality is that harassment may increase after it is reported and leaders must be aware of this. Our role is to provide the necessary support for the victim which will allow feelings of self-worth & esteem to be regained.

We must also involve the children in any action we take regarding bullying.

GOOD PRACTICE

These Guidelines on Good Practice should be followed at all times to meet our *legal* obligations in respect of *Health & Safety & Child Protection*. They not only protect our children but are also a means of protection for leaders.

REMEMBER, your actions, however well-intentioned, may be misinterpreted by others. This includes caring physical contact with a child. NEVER rely on your reputation or good name or that of the Church of Scotland to protect you.

FIRE DRILL

- Lead children quietly and without panic out of the Fire Exit Door.
- Take Register & First Aid Kit with you.
- One leader/helper must check the toilets are unoccupied.
- Babies must be carried, unless already lying in pram.
- DO NOT stop to put babies in pushchairs.

Assembly Point - Menzies Drive opposite Car Park



Promoting Good Practice

YOU MUST:

- Be aware of the Fire Drill, escape route and assembly point
- Keep a register at the start of the activity of all children attending.
- Keep work areas tidy and free of hazards
- Ensure equipment is stored tidily and safely after use
- Treat all children with respect - avoid labels
- Provide an example of good conduct
- Ensure that there is more than one adult present during your group's activities.
- Respect a child's right to privacy
- Recognise special caution required when discussing sensitive issues
- Encourage children and adults to point out attitudes and behaviour they do not like in leaders and other members of the group as part of promoting a caring environment.

YOU MUST NOT:

- Have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children.
- Arrange to meet group members privately or socially.
- Allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour.
- Make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children.
- Jump to conclusions about others with checking the facts.
- Gossip or discuss other leaders in front of children.
- Exaggerate or trivialise abuse issues.
- Show favouritism to any individual.

**DON'T TAKE A CHANCE WITH COMMON SENSE
AND NEVER THINK "IT COULD NEVER HAPPEN TO ME".**

PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

Children need encouragement and praise, but also need discipline and structure. Disruptive behaviour can be one of the most challenging aspects of children's work. As leaders we have the right to expect a certain standard of behaviour. You may wish to consider working with the children in your group to produce a 'code of conduct', agreeing together on an acceptable level of behaviour.

Ways to promote positive behaviour:

<i>BEHAVIOUR</i>	<i>POSSIBLE ACTION</i>
General	Eye contact, show genuine interest, use praise humour & sincerity
Chatting	Remind of ground rules, use non-verbal signs, use deliberate silence.
Shouting Out	Remind of ground rules, praise those who do not shout out, use targets and rewards for putting hands up.
Inappropriate Language	Don't over-react, look at context, use humour to diffuse, discuss use of such language
Disturbing Others	Establish the rules, change seating arrangements, be prepared and well-organised, use appropriate rewards and sanctions.
Defiance	Reward co-operative behaviour. Don't get into a stand-off, remove child from group.
Disruption	Divert the child from the topic, planned ignoring of behaviour, humour, change of activities, negotiate, use appropriate rewards and sanctions.

PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR (cont)

Sitting to listen or discuss subjects may be difficult for some children. If they become unsettled ask them to do something for you collect/ give out pens, paper etc. Allow the group to stand up / stretch/ move around room before continuing with the activity.

Promoting and maintaining good behaviour is easier if we invest time in getting to know the children in our care. Any uncharacteristic behaviour can then be identified and dealt with appropriately.

The use of '*time-out*' can be helpful where a child's behaviour becomes totally unacceptable. Move the child to another seat, the periphery of the group or beside the leader and make it clear that this is the result of THEIR behaviour.

Once you have settled the group, speak to the child about what has happened. Remember there may be some underlying problem. Afterwards simply ask, " Are you ready to rejoin the group or do you need some more time out."

No child should be removed from the group in such a way that proper supervision cannot be maintained.



NEVER HIT OR SMACK A CHILD - IT'S ASSAULT

PASTORAL CARE

As leaders, we are called to provide pastoral support and care for the children. We are trusted by the children, their parents and society - this trust must NEVER be abused. Pastoral relationships formed between leaders and children are a privilege and need to be worked at, so that children learn that we can be trusted.

In this position of trust, children may confide in us, bringing their worries or fears to us. Our duty is to respect that confidentiality. However, leaders must NEVER promise 'confidentiality' or to 'keep a secret' before hearing the problem.

It may be necessary to inform the other leaders about the problem or situation facing the child. E.g. parents' separation or family illness.

You MUST inform the appropriate person if a child's health or well-being is at risk. If in doubt, speak to the Minister, Deacon or Child Protection Co-ordinator.

MAKE SURE THE CHILD IS AWARE OF THE GROUND RULES BEFORE THEY START TELLING THEIR PROBLEM.

If possible, ask the child's permission before sharing the information. If you must pass on information without permission, help the child to understand why you must do so. In the case of suspected or possible abuse, we have a legal responsibility to pass on such information. Failure to do so may be a criminal offence.

In pastoral situations, here are some guidelines to consider:

- Listening is the most important skill you have to offer
- Let the child speak without interruption - if there is something you don't understand, ask for clarification.
- If you ask questions - keep them open-ended (who, where ,what, how) - not why. The child may assume that we think they ' got it wrong'.
- Make eye contact and think about your body language.
- Stay calm. Don't be afraid of displays of emotion.
- NEVER say, 'I know how you feel' Or 'Everything will be alright'
- When listening to the child, try not to be judgemental, the child may already be judging and condemning themselves.
- DON'T go out of your depths -ALWAYS REFER.

LEGISLATION & CHILD PROTECTION

Children 's Act (1989)

- Provision for regulation and inspection of Child Care by local authorities.

Children (Scotland) Act 1995

- Responsibility of Care towards children and young people and the recognition of the importance of the child or young person's needs in any decision affecting their life.

“Protecting children: A Code of Practice for Voluntary Organisations in Scotland Working with Children and Young People“ Published in 1995 by the Scottish Office.

- Statutory and Voluntary Organisations encouraged to use this as the basis for their own Child protection Policy and Guidelines.

The Church of Scotland produced **A Code of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People in the Church** in 1997.

- Appointment of Child Protection Co-ordinators

This Code **MUST** be followed by everyone who has responsibility for young people within the Church

Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001

replaced the Children's Act (1989)

- Responsibility for registration and inspection of Child Care now with the Care Commission (Scottish Commission for regulation of Care)
- Sets National Care standards for children and young people up to 16 years of age.

The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003

- Scottish Ministers now keep a list called the Disqualified from Working with Children List (DWCL)

- Those on the list (other than provisionally) commit a criminal offence if they apply to work with children.

- Organisations have a duty to refer people to the list when:

They have harmed a child **or** Put a child at risk of harm

And have been dismissed or moved away from contact with children as a result.

- The fact that someone is on the list is part of the Disclosure from Disclosure Scotland.

These Acts of Parliament are **LAW** and as such in place to help ensure the highest standards of care and protection are maintained. It is important that congregations adhere to these policies because, where before we have chosen to operate best practice, we are now required to comply by law.

The Church has introduced a strict selection procedure for all those working with children and young people to ensure that those individuals who might pose a threat to them cannot obtain access.

All leaders must complete an application form, provide references and undertake an Enhanced Disclosure Scotland check.

All leaders must display:

-- A commitment to treating all children and young people as individuals.

-- Concern for their needs

- They must be able to provide warm and consistent care to children in their care.
- They may be asked to produce evidence of any qualifications they may use in their ministry.
- The Church is required to keep a confidential register of all those who work or have worked with children and young people.



ABUSE

Any type of abuse is a betrayal of trust. Abuse is when an adult harms a young person in any way and may be physical, mental or sexual. Abuse is not always easy to identify. There may however be indications. Abuse may be revealed by what children say. There may be physical or medical signs or the children's behaviour may indicate abuse.

Avoid jumping to conclusions and never dismiss information, but **ALWAYS** refer to the Child Protection Co-ordinator.

Children may disclose abuse to a leader they trust and may ask that such information is treated in confidence. The child should be helped to understand that you will support and help them, but that you **MUST** inform the Child Protection Co-ordinator without delay. Legally, we have a duty of care towards our children and young people. To conceal such information may be a criminal offence.

If a child discloses abuse:

- Allow child to speak freely - accept what they say.
- Allow child to tell their story.
- Try to alleviate their feelings of guilt, fear, isolation etc.
- Thank the child for telling you.
- Record what the child has told you as soon as possible
- Under NO circumstances, investigate or ask questions.

- Asking the wrong questions may hinder subsequent investigation by the Police or Social Work Department and may put at risk any legal proceedings against abuse.

Church of Scotland

Code of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People in the Church

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland adopted the following policy statement with regard to the protection of children and young people.

"The Church of Scotland has a deep concern for the wholeness and well being of each individual. It seeks to safeguard the welfare of all people, regardless of age, who come into contact with the Church and its organisations. It is the responsibility of each individual within the fellowship of the Church to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children and young people."

The General Assembly of 1997 also confirmed the need for the Church to develop and implement procedures for ensuring the safety of children, young people and children's workers in the Church. The Assembly introduced the Code of Good Practice, which consists of 13 articles. These are the Code's 13 articles:

1. Adopt the Policy Statement agreed by the General Assembly on safeguarding the welfare of children and young people.
2. Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children and young people may occur.
3. Appoint a suitable person as Co-ordinator for the Safety and Protection of Children and Young People.
4. Apply agreed procedures for protecting children and young people to all paid staff and volunteers.
5. Give all paid staff and volunteers clear roles.
6. Use supervision as a means of protecting children and young people.
7. Treat all applicants for any position involving contact with children and young people in the same way.
8. Gain at least one reference from a person who has experience of the applicant's paid work or volunteering, if any, with children or young people.
9. Explore all applicants' experience of working or contact with children or young people in an interview before appointment.
10. Find out whether an applicant has any conviction for criminal offences against children or young people.
11. Make paid and voluntary appointments conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period.
12. Issue guidelines on how to deal with the disclosure or discovery of abuse, and advise on the risk of false and malicious claims of abuse
13. Train paid staff and volunteers, their co-ordinators or supervisors, and policy makers in the prevention of child abuse.

ST. MARK'S PARISH CHURCH - Child Protection Application Procedure

Minister or Deacon interviews candidate and explains the application procedure and issues job description and application form. Application form to be returned to Child Protection Co-ordinator within 4 weeks.

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Minister or Deacon advises Child Protection Co-ordinator of name and telephone number of candidate.

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Form returned to Child Protection Co-ordinator.
Child Protection Co-ordinator takes up 2 references
(not relatives and one of whom MUST be outwith membership / association with St. Mark's Parish Church)

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**If no form returned within 4 weeks
Child Protection Co-ordinator to
contact candidate to ascertain intentions
and advise Minister / Deacon.**

**If no response within further 4 weeks
candidate advised that application
is deemed to be withdrawn.**

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References returned to Child Protection Co-ordinator and checked.

If satisfactory references received -
Enhanced Disclosure Scotland procedure initiated.

NOTE:

During this period the candidate cannot take any leadership role within the group but training should be scheduled.

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Child Protection Co-ordinator sends candidate Disclosure Scotland form and declaration for completion with a request for a meeting within 4 weeks.

Child Protection Co-ordinator meets applicant and checks ID, completes signatory form and sends Disclosure Form Declaration to Church of Scotland Safeguarding Unit who sends them to Disclosure Scotland.

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If candidate *NOT* approved, Child Protection Co-ordinator advises candidate that because they have not been approved they are unable to take up the post and minutes this action. The Candidate is informed of appeal procedure. Child Protection Co-ordinator may seek guidance / advice from the Safeguarding Office about what further action may be required.

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Within 4-6 weeks the Safeguarding Office sends Child Protection Co-ordinator letter of approval / disapproval. Candidate receives own copy of Disclosure from Disclosure Scotland If Candidate's application approved Child Protection Co-ordinator advises Deacon.

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Deacon presents candidate's name to Kirk Session at earliest meeting for approval. After approval, Minister signs Job Description and sends this to candidate with request to return signed copy within 14 days.

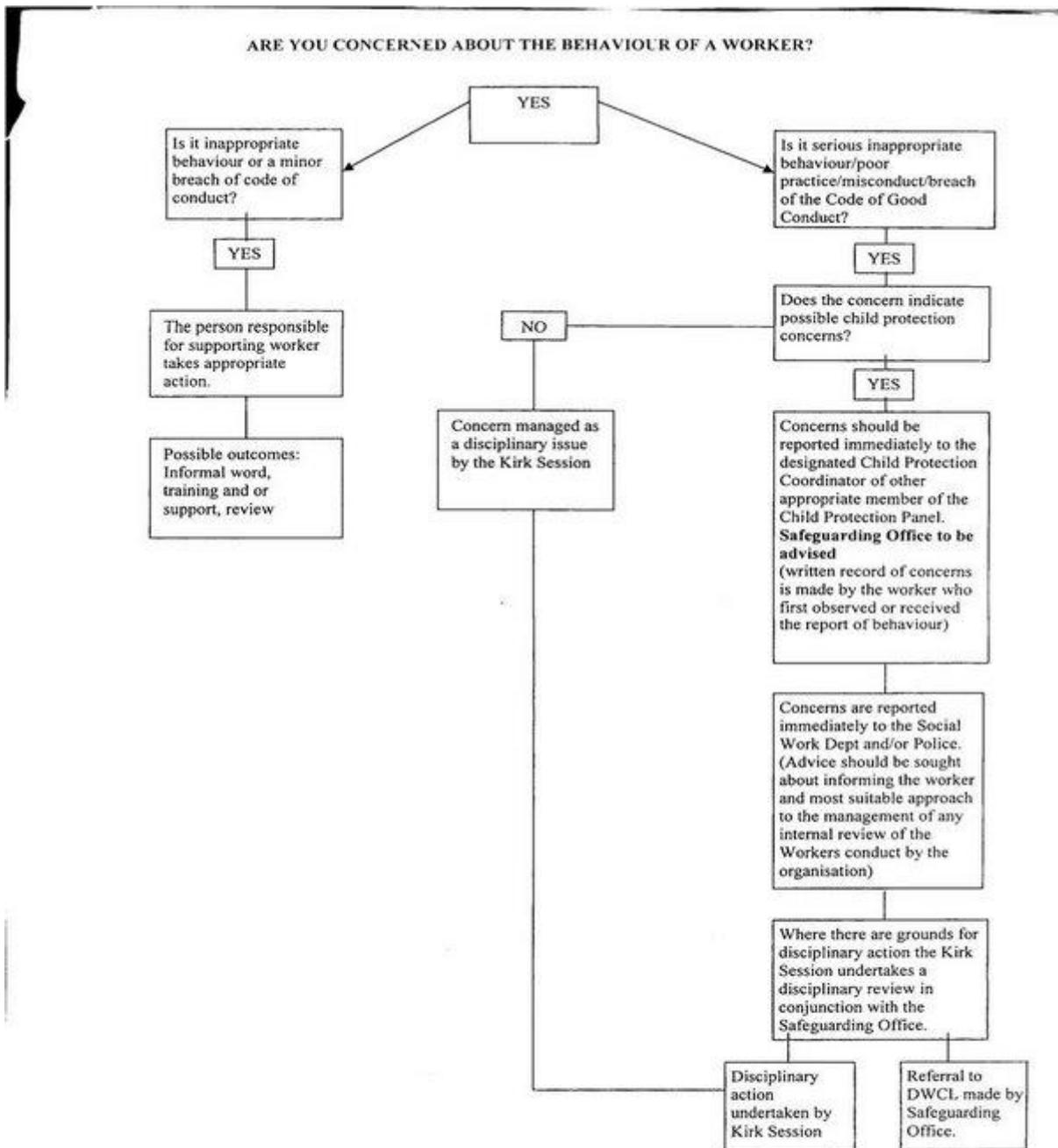
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On receipt of signed Job Description, Minister forwards it to Deacon for his/her records. Child Protection Co-ordinator and group leader advised by Deacon that candidate can take up post. Child Protection Co-ordinator completes Child Protection Register entries for entry on to database. Candidate takes up post.

NOTES:

Group Leaders MUST inform the Deacon regarding all changes in workers personal details (e.g. change of address / name etc) or if worker resigns or leaves the post. On receipt of this information Deacon informs Child Protection Co-ordinator to enable changes to be made to database.

Child Protection Co-ordinator is required to provide the Minister and Deacon each January with an updated copy of the register so that this can be approved by the Kirk Session to enable the Session Clerk to attest it for Presbytery approval.



**From: The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003
A Guide for the Church of Scotland**

The reporting of allegations, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse.

If you suspect a young person is being abused, or you receive an allegation about a leader or yourself :

- Record the facts and ONLY the facts.
- Write them down as soon as possible.
- Report the matter at once to the Child Protection Coordinator.

A young person informs you that they are a victim of abuse:

- Allow the young person to speak without interruption.
- Do not investigate -Listen
- Be non-judgemental
- Let the young person know that you are glad they have shared this information with you.
- Advise them that you must pass this information on to the Child Protection Co-ordinator.

We would like to acknowledge the work of Colinton Parish Church, Edinburgh, whose *Children and Youth Ministry Leaders' Handbook* has proved the inspiration and template for this handbook.