

Child Protection Policy Statement and Procedures

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TRINITY
Church Lancaster

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Definitions

Child Protection Officer

The Child Protection Officer is the person (or people) specifically set apart by Trinity Church Lancaster to be responsible for the development, implementation and compliance of our Child Protection Policy Statement and Procedures.

Children's Work Leader (or Leader)

A Children's Work Leader (or Leader) is any adult who has been given responsibility by the church to lead, or help lead, any group or activity put on by the church for children.

Church Elder (or Elder)

A Church Elder (or Leader) is any of the people who have been appointed by Trinity Church Lancaster to be the leaders of the church.

The Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (or CCPAS)

The Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (or CCPAS) is an independent Christian organisation providing training and advice on all aspects of child protection to both religious and secular organisations across the UK. (See **Appendix A** for contact details).

Child Protection Policy Statement

Our responsibility

Trinity Church Lancaster is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people. We believe all children have the right to protection from abuse. We recognise our responsibility to take all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and to protect children from harm, abuse and exploitation.

We will:

- Ensure good practice in relation to the recruitment of all children's work leaders.
- Ensure that all procedures relating to the conduct of voluntary workers are implemented consistently and equitably.
- Ensure that parents/carers are encouraged to be involved in our work and make all guidelines and procedures easily accessible.
- Endeavour to keep up-to-date with national developments relating to the care and protection of children and young people.

Children's Work Leaders

The church is committed to ensuring that everyone working with children or young people:

- Holds a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check from within the past 3 years and is found to have no relevant convictions.
- Is adequately trained and supervised.
- Understands and follows our child protection procedures and systems.

Our Groups

Trinity Church Babies & Tots

Trinity Church Babies & Tots is for 0 – 4 year olds and operates at a minimum ratio of 1 leader per 3 children.

Trinity Church Kids

Trinity Church Kids is for 4 – 7 year olds and operates at a minimum ratio of 1 leader per 5 children.

Child Protection Policy Procedures

Section 1: Introduction

The purpose of this section is to inform all those working with children or young people in the care of the church during the activities of the church about child protection, and to advise them of the right procedures if abuse is disclosed to them, or suspected by them. This will assist us in providing a secure environment for children.

Trinity Church Lancaster is committed to the right of children to be protected from harm, abuse and exploitation.

Trinity Church Lancaster has appointed Child Protection Officer(s) to be responsible for implementing this Child Protection Policy Statement and Procedures across the church, to review compliance with the Policy and suggest changes and improvements to our working practices and to further develop our Child Protection Policy Statement and Procedures to ensure that they remain up to date with current best practice. Please see Appendix A for the details of the current Child Protection Officers.

Points to note

- Trinity Church Lancaster meets at the Cornerstone, Sulyard Street, Lancaster, LA1 on Sundays.
- During the morning church meeting children will normally be invited to attend an age related groups for children in Key stage 1 and 2
- Children between 12 and 18 years will remain in the main meeting.
- Trinity Church kids groups meet in the rooms adjoining the main meeting room.
- Trinity Church Babies is for 0 – 2 year olds and operates at a minimum ratio of 1 leader per 3 children.
- Trinity Church Tots is for 2-4 year olds and operates at a minimum ratio of 1 leader per 3 children.
- Trinity Church Mini-Kids is for 4 – 11 year olds and operates at a minimum ratio of 1 leader per 5 children.
- From time to time older children (12 – 17 years) may be invited to do a 1 to 1 or small group Bible Study with a member of the church. These are only to take place with the knowledge and permission of both the Elders of the church and the child's parent or guardian.

- These 1 to 1's and Bible studies will only take place in public locations such as a coffee shop or the child's home while a parent or guardian is around.
- Other occasional activities for children organised by Trinity Church Lancaster shall also fall within the boundaries of this Policy.
- Outside of these organised activities children attending the meetings and functions of the church remain in the sole care of their parents or guardians and Trinity Church does not take responsibility of care for them.
- However under the terms of this policy the Elders and Children's Work Leaders undertake to be vigilant with regard to the behaviour of members of the congregation at all times and to take seriously and respond appropriately to any concerns raised.

Section 2: The recruitment of Children's Group Leaders

The church is committed to ensuring that everyone working with children:

- Holds a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check from within the past 3 years and is found to have no relevant convictions.
- Is adequately trained and supervised.
- Understands and follows our child protection procedures.

Anybody whose DBS form discloses cautions or convictions will be interviewed by the church's Child Protection Officers who will make a recommendation to the Elders concerning their involvement in youth and children's work.

Section 3: Types of abuse and a summary of signs and indicators

What is a child?

Any person under the age of 18 years.

What is abuse?

- *Physical abuse* - includes hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning, biting, administering poisonous substances, suffocating/drowning, excessive force.
- *Neglect* - a failure to meet the basic essential needs of a child, or if a child is left unsupervised at a young age.
- *Emotional abuse* - children harmed by constant lack of love and affection, or threats, verbal attacks, taunting or shouting.
- *Sexual abuse* - involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children or adolescents, in sexual activity that they do not fully comprehend, or to which they are unable to give informed consent, or which violate the social taboos of family roles.
- A child may suffer more than one category of abuse.

Who abuses children?

- Very rarely a stranger.
- Often someone close to a child e.g. parent, carer, babysitter, sibling, relative or friend of the family.
- Sometimes paedophiles and others who set out to join organisations (including churches) to obtain access to children.

How might we recognise abuse?

Warning signs - These are only a guide. They may be an indication of abuse but are not necessarily proof:

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy.
- Nervousness/watchfulness.

- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration.
- Changed or inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults.
- Attention seeking behaviour.
- Persistent tiredness.
- Running away/stealing/lying.
- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them or where differing explanations have been received.
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- Injuries and illnesses which have not received medical attention.
- Any signs of neglect, under nourishment or inadequate care.
- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse.
- A child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters, and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age inappropriate sexual play.
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing.
- A child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults.
- Inappropriate bed sharing arrangements at home.
- Severe sleep disturbance with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotation.

One or more warning signs may be evident.

Many symptoms of distress in a child can point to abuse, but there are other explanationstoo. This (together with conflicting medical opinion) has sometimes been the reason for falsely accusing parents of sexual abuse. It is important that the above signs are not taken as indicating that abuse has taken place, but that the possibility should be considered. They should make us stop and think - not jump to conclusions.

Section 4: What to do if abuse is suspected

General Guidance

All Leaders should be aware that any allegations or suspicions are covered by pastoral confidentiality, and that therefore church members have no right to this information. The sharing of information is therefore limited to those who need to know. This will protect the interests of all concerned. Should you be unsure of how best to proceed with any concerns we advise you to speak with another Children's Work Leader, a church elder or a Child Protection Officer.

Whilst the Leader will normally consult with an Elder or Child Protection Officer before reporting incidents/suspicions of child abuse to Social Services, the absence of an Elder or Child Protection Officer should not delay referral. Should there be any disagreement between the Leader and Elder or Child Protection Officer as to the appropriateness of such a referral; the Leader retains the right as a member of the public to report serious matters to Social Services.

If you have a concern of possible abuse:

- Do not speak to anyone else who might be involved.
- Feel free to speak to another Children's Work Leader, a church Elder or a Child Protection Officer for help and advice.
- If definitely serious contact the Police and Social Services directly with your concerns (Contact details can be found in Appendix A).
- Speak with the parent (if appropriate) and suggest medical help/attention is sought for the child from a doctor or Social Services
- If a parent is unwilling to seek help, offer to arrange it with them.
- If they still fail to act you may need to seek help from Social Services yourself.
- Where emergency medical attention is necessary this should be sought immediately, informing the doctor of any suspicions you may have.

If a child brings an allegation to you:

- Do not speak to the parent or anyone else who might be involved.
- Feel free to speak to another Children's Work Leader, a church Elder or a Child Protection Officer for help and advice.
- The fact that you may feel the child's story is unlikely must not prevent appropriate action being taken. For example, a child may say that they have been abused by an older young person. In reality the perpetrator could be a parent or close relative, but naming another person may be the only way in which this child can seek help.
- It is the responsibility of the Leader to pass on the possibility of abuse to Social Services. The role of the Leader is to accurately pass on details of the allegation to Social Services, whose task it is to investigate.

If another person brings an allegation to you about a child:

- Do not speak to the parent or anyone else who might be involved.
- Feel free to speak to another Children's Work Leader, a church Elder or a Child Protection Officer for help and advice.
- If definitely serious contact the Police and Social Services directly with your concerns (Contact details can be found in Appendix A).
- If appropriate advise the other person to contact Social Services, whose task it is to investigate.
- If the person is unwilling to seek help, offer to arrange it with them.
- If they still fail to act you may need to seek help from Social Services yourself.

Section 5: Procedures for responding to concerns about abuse/neglect

How should we react if a child tells us they have been abused?

Children's Leaders are in a unique position and your relationship with the children in your group cannot be underestimated. Your group may provide a safe haven, and perhaps be the only place where a child feels comfortable and able to talk to adults. It is therefore possible that a child may approach you to talk about abuse.

The following guidance may be of help:

- Accept what the child says.
- Keep calm; do not appear to be shocked.
- Look at the child directly.
- Be honest.
- Let them know that you will need to tell someone else - don't promise confidentiality.
- Even when a child has broken a rule they are not to blame for the abuse.
- Be aware the child may have been threatened.
- Make notes as soon as possible. Write down exactly what the child said, including the child's name, age, address, relevant family information, and details of the situation and the activity that preceded disclosure.
- Never push for information or question the child.

Helpful things to say:

- I believe you.
- I am glad you have 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?
- Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- Never make false promises.
- Never make statements such as "I'm shocked, don't tell anyone else"

Concluding:

- Again reassure the child they were right to tell you and that you believe them.
- Let the child know what you are going to do next, and that you will let them know what happens.
- Immediately refer to the Child Protection Officer.

Even if abuse is no longer happening it is still important to report the matter as the adult may be abusing other children. It may be that the child will need guidance and help in overcoming past abuse, or the police may wish to prosecute the abuser.

Section 6: Practicalities and guidance for mutual protection of leaders and children involved in children's work

- Avoid being on your own with any child. This may mean groups working in one large room, or adjoining rooms.
- Never take a child home on your own – transportation is the parent or guardian’s responsibility. In emergency or unforeseen circumstances preferably have another helper with you, or else ensure that the last two children are dropped off together.
- Be wise in your physical contact with children.
- Be wise with your relationship with the children - do not have favourites or be over friendly with some at the expense of others.
- Male helpers need to be particularly careful in their speech and behaviour around young females. Female helpers similarly need to be careful with forward young male children.
- Reasonable force may be used on a child only when essential to prevent the child from causing personal injury, or damage to the property of themselves or another person. This force should only be used to restrain a child, and should not cause any harm to the child.
- In order to help children we need to develop healthy relationships by listening to them and respecting them.
- We must think of the safety of the children at all times and in all circumstances.
- Whenever possible have two or more Leaders present with a group, particularly when it is the only activity taking place on the church premises. A parent may want to accompany their child; however, because of our policy, they should either act as observers or only help their own child.
- Children should not be taken on trips or away from the premises without written permission from parents and at least one of the Elder’s being aware.

Boundaries:

- Toileting and personal care is the responsibility of the parent or guardian. If a child needs help or assistance the parent/guardian should be notified. Nappies will not be changed by volunteers.

- Parents/carers can give written permission to leaders which allows them, only when necessary, to enter the toilet if the child requests help.
- Workers should treat all children with dignity and respect in attitude, language used and actions.
- Respect the privacy of children; avoid questionable activity (e.g. rough/sexually provocative games or comments).

Communication between Leaders

- Anyone who sees another leader act in a way which could be misinterpreted should speak to the individual or a Child Protection Officer about the concern.
- If departure from guidelines becomes necessary, inform another leader before if at all possible. Also write down a clear record of the situation and the reasons for departing from the guidelines. Speak to a Child Protection Officer as soon as possible after the event. This provides protection to the individual and draws attention to any shortcomings or problem areas that should be addressed.
- At planned Leaders meetings records should be kept of all items relating to Child Protection and distributed to Leaders, bearing in mind confidentiality.

Helping children to protect themselves by:

- Teaching safety generally.
- Help children develop common sense rules.
- Examine the way in which we present Christian truths, e.g. children obeying parents. This can be a real problem for a child who is being abused - are we telling the child to accept the abuse? Tell children that if they feel uncomfortable or that something may be wrong, they can always check things out with another adult.

Confidentiality

No children's Leader is permitted to divulge any information concerning a child, or their family, or anything a child may tell them to anyone other than the designated people previously mentioned. This is in order to protect the interests of the child. This confidentiality is a continuing requirement at all times and is required when workers are "off duty" or no longer involved in the work.

Appendix A - Contact Details

Trinity Church Lancaster

Telephone: 01524 383 640

E-Mail: office@trinitychurchlancaster.org.uk

Website: www.trinitychurchlancaster.org.uk

Rosie Werner

Telephone: 01524 32842

Email: rosiewerner@me.com

Child Protection Officer. Person responsible for the development, implementation and compliance of our Child Protection Policy Statement and Procedures.

Lancaster County Council Council:

Call Care Connect on 0300 123 6720 (8am - 8pm)

Lancaster Police 01524 596649 / Lancaster.NPT@lancashire.pnn.police.uk

Web: www.merseyside.police.uk

Churches Child Protection Advisory Service

Telephone: 0845 120 4550

Web: www.ccpas.co.uk

24 hour helpline to offer guidance and advice when dealing with Child Protection issues.
