

## WRBC Procedure for Responding to Concerns

If any concerns arise regarding the safeguarding of children or young people:

- Do not dismiss your concerns – in particular, do not ignore or dismiss concerns about a colleague or professional
- Do not confront the adult about whose behaviour you have concerns
- Do not take responsibility for deciding whether or not child abuse is actually taking place
- Do not investigate allegations
- Do not act alone
- Do not take sole responsibility for what has been shared or any concerns you may have (always work through the church's procedures)
- Do follow the church's procedures for responding to concerns

3 stage process for responding to concerns:

STAGE 1 – Record and Report

STAGE 2 – Review and Refer

STAGE 3 – Report and Support

### STAGE 1 – RECORD AND REPORT

The duty of the person who receives information or who has a concern about the welfare of a child or young person is to RECORD their concerns in writing (using the Incident Report Form) and to REPORT their concerns to the Designated Person. The report to the Designated Person should be made within 24 hours of the concern being raised.

#### THE DUTY TO RECORD

As soon as possible after a child or young person tells you about harmful behaviour, or an incident takes place that gives cause for concern, a written record should be made. The record should:

- be made as soon as possible after the event
- be legible and state the facts accurately (if hand written notes are typed up later, the original hand-written notes should be retained)
- include the child's full name, address, date of birth (or age if not known)
- include the nature of the concerns/allegation/disclosure
- include a description of any bruising or other injuries that you may have noticed and the demeanour of the child

- include an exact record of what the child said using the child's words
- include what was said by the person to whom the concerns were reported, including any questions asked
- include any action taken as a result of the concerns
- be signed and dated
- be kept secure and confidential and made available only to:
  1. The Designated Person
  2. The church minister as far as this is consistent with the welfare of the child/young person concerned and possible pastoral responsibilities to any others involved
  3. Representatives of the professional agencies

## THE DUTY TO REPORT

If anyone has a concern about the welfare of a child, that concern should be reported to the Designated Person without delay (within 24 hours). The report can be made in the first instance either in a face-to-face conversation or by telephone, but should always be followed up by submitting a written incident report.

If a child or young person is considered to be in imminent danger of harm a report should be made immediately to the police or Social Services. If such a report is made without reference to the Designated Person (because it was not possible to contact the Designated Person immediately), the Designated Person should be informed as soon as possible after the report has been made.

It should be clear that the duty remains with the worker to record and report their concerns to the Designated Person. If a concern is brought to the attention of a group leader by one of the workers, the leader should remind the worker of their duty to record and report, and will also themselves have a duty to report the concern to the Designated Person

## STAGE 2 – REVIEW AND REFER

The duty of the Designated Person on receiving a report is to REVIEW the concern that has been reported and to REFER the concern on to the appropriate people. If a child or young person is considered to be in imminent danger of harm a report should be made immediately to the police or Social Services.

## THE DUTY TO REVIEW

In reviewing the report that is received the Designated Person:

- should take account of his/her own experience and expertise in assessing risk to children and young people
- must take account of other reports that may have been received concerning the same child, family or adult
- may speak with others in the church (including the Minister) who may have relevant information and knowledge that would impact on any decision that will be made
- such conversations should not lead to undue delay in taking any necessary action and should be fully recorded
- may consult with their Regional Minister in order to seek guidance from their Association
- may seek advice from the local Social Services department or police in knowing how to respond appropriately to the concerns that have been raised
- Social Services will be willing to discuss a case with the Designated Person without the need to divulge names or identities in order to offer guidance to the local church, however without sharing names or identities, information about that child or family vital to the decision making process may not be considered. If the advice of Social Services or the police is to make a formal referral, this advice should be followed.

## THE DUTY TO REFER

In reviewing the reported concern the Designated Person must decide to whom the report should be referred. The Designated Person may:

- refer back to the worker who made the initial report if there is little evidence that a child or young person is being harmed, asking for appropriate continued observation
- refer the concern to others who work with the child/children in question asking for continued observation
- speak directly to the adult about whom the concern has been raised.

This may be the parent/carer of the child or it may be one of the children or young people's workers. If there is any question at all of possible sexual abuse or serious physical abuse the Designated Person should never address the adult directly but should refer their concerns to the police or Social Services.

- Make a formal referral to the local Social Services Department

The Designated Person should keep a written record of all actions taken in reviewing and referring a concern.

All original reports should be retained safely and securely by the Designated Person.

## STAGE 3 – REPORT AND SUPPORT

Responsibilities in Stage 3 are shared by the Designated Person, the Safeguarding Trustee and the Minister.

### THE DUTY TO REPORT

Whenever a formal referral is made to Social Services or the police the Designated Person should:

- report the referral to the Safeguarding Trustee
- report the referral to the Minister
- report the referral to the Regional Minister of the local Association

In certain circumstances the Safeguarding Trustee acting on behalf of the trustees may also need to make further reports.

If an allegation is made against someone who works with children or young people the allegation should be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The LADO is located within Social Services and should be alerted to all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children or young people has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child or young person
- possibly committed a criminal offence against a child or young person
- behaved towards a child or young person in a way that indicates that they are unsuitable to work with children or young people

If a worker has been removed from their post or would have been removed from their post ( had they not resigned or left the church) because of the risk of harm that they pose to children and young people there is a statutory duty to report the incident to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

If a worker in the church has been accused of causing harm to children and young people this would be classed as a serious incident that should be reported to the Charity Commission in the annual return.

A record should be kept of all safeguarding incidents and should be considered in the annual review of the church's safeguarding policy.

### THE DUTY TO SUPPORT

Once concerns, suspicions and disclosures of abuse have been addressed, the church continues to have a responsibility to offer support to all those who have been affected. Even when formal referrals to the statutory authorities have not been made, those who make reports will feel uncertain and vulnerable and support will need to be

offered to them.

### Child/Young Person

For the child/young person concerned, Social Services and other agencies may provide support and services. However, the church will have a role to play in complementing this support. The Designated Person should seek to work in partnership with other agencies, clarifying with them how best the churchman be able to support the child/young person and to ensure that consistent help and support is being offered.

### Other Family Members

The church may similarly be in a position to offer pastoral and practical support to family members who may find they are trying to cope with a variety of feelings.

### Church worker/Volunteer

Support and counselling should also be offered to those within the church who are involved in the incident. This could be the person who the child/young person shared their concerns with and the Designated Person. Consideration should be given within churches to ensure that no one person is responsible for dealing with safeguarding issues without the support of others.

### Ministers/Deacons

Ministers and deans should know to whom they would turn for support, advice and help when facing the pastoral demands of addressing a safe guarding issue. The local Baptist association may be particularly helpful in this regard, which is why it is recommended that whenever a referral is made to the police or Social Services that a Regional Minister is informed.

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