



Pantygwydr Baptist Church
Safeguarding Procedures –
Children and Young People
November 2018

Part 3: Respecting children and young
people

Pantygwydr Baptist Church, Ernald Place, Swansea, SA2 0HN

Charity Number: 1126593

3. Respecting children and young people

The church will adopt a code of behaviour for all who are appointed to work with children and young people so that all children and young people are shown the respect that is due to them.

A code of behaviour for the local church

One would hope that within the Christian community among people who profess to be followers of Jesus, it would go without saying that all children and young people, whatever their age, gender, racial background, culture, belief or disability, should always be treated with respect and dignity and that their safety and welfare should be a priority.

Experience tells us that what this means in terms of the behaviour, attitude and actions of those who work with children and young people needs to be carefully thought through and clearly defined.

- What one person sees as a 'harmless joke', another person understands as a form of ridicule that belittles and demeans.
- What one person offers as a gesture of affection and friendship can be experienced by another as intrusive and threatening.

Behaviour that is perfectly innocent for most people may to others be part of a progressive pattern of behaviour that is about developing an abusive relationship with a child (what is often termed 'grooming').

While the code of behaviour is first and foremost about protecting children and young people it will also help to protect workers from false accusation or unnecessary and unwarranted suspicion.

Respecting children and young people

The following **code of behaviour is expected from all volunteers and/or paid staff** within the Church:

- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity;
- Use age appropriate language and tone of voice. Be aware of your own body language and the effect you are having on the individual child or young person;
- Listen well to children and young people. Be careful not to assume you know what a child or young person is thinking or feeling. Listen to what is spoken and how it is said. At the same time, observe the body language to better understand what is being said;
- Do not engage in any of the following:
 - invading the privacy of children or young people when they are using the toilet or showering;
 - rough games involving physical contact between a leader and a child or young person;
 - sexually provocative games;
 - making sexually suggestive comments about or to a child or young person, even in 'fun';
 - Scapegoating, belittling, ridiculing, or rejecting a child or young person;
- When it is necessary to control and discipline children and young people, this should be done without using physical punishment. (A situation may, however, arise where a child or young

person needs to be restrained in order to protect them or a third person. This should be done with minimum force so as not to hurt the child);

- Make sure another adult is present if, for example, a young child has soiled their underclothes and needs to be thoroughly washed. If possible, the child's own parent or carer should be called in to carry out such a task;
- Do not respond to or encourage excessive attention-seeking that is overtly sexual or physical in nature;
- Must comply with the boundaries and behaviour recommendations around Electronic communication (later in these procedures).

Workers should normally not plan to be alone with children and young people

All workers should plan their work with children and young people in such a way that they will not normally be alone with children or young people where their activity cannot be seen by others.

This will mean:

- A worker should never plan to be alone on church premises with children or young people;
- Doors should have glass panels, be left open, or two groups should work in the same room when there are not sufficient leaders to have two for each group;
- At least two people should be present before the doors are open as children arrive for a group and at least two people should remain present together before the last child has left the building or room at the end of a meeting;
- A worker should never invite a child or young person to their home alone. It is acceptable to invite a group if another adult is in the house. Establish that each parent/carer knows where their child is and at what time they will finish.

Unplanned occasions when a worker is alone with children or young people

There may be occasions when, despite careful planning, a worker finds themselves in a situation when they are in sole charge of children or a child in the context of a church activity. In these situations the worker should:

- Assess the risks involved in sending the child or children home against the risks and vulnerability of being alone with children;
- Wherever possible immediately phone the Safeguarding Trustee or the Designated Person for Safeguarding, or a Staff Member to report the situation;
- Make a written report of the situation immediately afterwards and give a copy to the Designated Person for Safeguarding and the Safeguarding Trustee/Deacon. (The report serves two functions. It helps to ensure appropriate accountability for situations where there is increased vulnerability and risk. It also allows for the monitoring of situations where workers are on their own with children and young people.).

If the same situation keeps recurring, working practices must be reviewed.

Working One to One

Most church children's/youth work takes place within a group setting (youth club, small groups etc), however there are times when one to one work with a young person is a necessary part of a good work programme.

Working one to one with a young person can come out of a number of different situations e.g:

- Taking time to listen as a young person shares an issue they are facing;
- Offering ongoing support and advice;
- A formal agreement involving a mentoring relationship between an adult and young person;
- The need to meet a young person who is facing a crisis in their life;

- Discipleship of a young person, including accountability, prayer, Bible study.

Venue

Any contact with young people should be in a public place, at an appropriate time and in view of another adult (i.e. early morning, late night or whilst they should be at school is not appropriate).

For example you could meet with a young person in a one to one situation:

- At the end of a youth group event whilst others are clearing up;
- During a youth group session, in a side room;
- At a coffee shop after school;

One to one work can be an essential part of youth work, but there are risks involved with this type of working for both the young person and the youth worker. One to one work must be practised safely, appropriately and within agreed guidelines by the church.

Accountability

A simple log sheet should be kept regarding who, where and when workers and young people have met. This gives opportunities for other workers to raise a concern about a particular workers' allegiance to a young person

Written notes should be made following the meeting, recording the essence of the conversation, advice given or recommendations made and what was agreed.

Notes should be securely stored and young people should be aware that they have a right to see any records kept about them.

Supervision

Supervision of workers should be used to monitor the frequency of appointments as well as the content of meetings, ensuring a worker isn't getting in over their head, and a young person is not becoming too dependent.

Phrases such as 'you're the only one who understands me' may be flattering but should ring alarm bells. Is there a possibility of drawing someone else in to work alongside you or having a cooling off period of a few weeks whilst they reflect upon advice given to them?

Workers need to maintain a professional distance, and not be at the beck and call of the individual young person. Workers need to have adequate knowledge of where to refer a young person to, if necessary. It is the worker's responsibility to know what to do with the information given to them and when to involve other agencies.

Confidentiality

Appropriate confidentiality is necessary. However workers must understand that if they believe the young person they are talking to, or other young people are at risk then they have a duty to pass that information on. Often, in church situations workers meet with sons and daughters of their friends. Clarity regarding confidentiality is paramount in these situations and needs to be clearly communicated.

Transporting children and young people

Vulnerable situations can be created when workers offer lifts to children and young people, either to take them to and from church activities or to take them on planned outings.

These practices are adopted to mitigate the risks involved:

- Although it is often impractical, wherever it is possible two adults should be present in a car with children and young people;

- Parents should give permission for children to be given transport and should be informed at what time to expect their children home;
- Where possible workers should avoid giving regular lifts to children or young people on their own to and from church activities;
- If the same group of children are regularly given lifts, consideration should be given to picking them up in a different order each week so that the same child is not always the first or the last to be picked up or dropped off;
- If a child is travelling alone in the car with a worker, the child or young person should be asked to sit in the back seat of the car;
- Workers should not spend unnecessary time alone in a vehicle with a child. Long conversations in the car outside of church premises or home, or unnecessary diversions should be avoided;
- Workers should avoid being alone in a car with a child or young person who is particularly vulnerable; for example, a child with a crush on a leader, or a child whose behaviour is difficult to manage.

Guidelines for physical contact with children

It is hard to conceive how you can be a nurturing, caring worker with children and young people without some physical contact happening at least occasionally! For example, if a child is distressed it is natural to want to put an arm round their shoulder. It could even be thought of as abusive not to respond by touching a child in such circumstances. However, we must be conscious that what to most is an innocent touch may have another, more sinister meaning for children who have experienced abuse.

The following guidelines are helpful when considering whether or not touch is appropriate in any given situation:

- Physical contact should always be for the sake of the child or young person, not the workers benefit;
- If no-one else is present it is always advisable to avoid physical contact;
- If you find that the child or young person is cringing or responding in a negative way to being touched, then stop immediately and find an alternative, non-tactile way to convey your concern;
- Use physical contact in a way that conveys appropriate concern but in a way that is least likely to be misconstrued. For example, an arm around the shoulder standing by the side of a young person may be more appropriate than a full 'hug';
- Remember that not all express friendship or affection in the same way and some people (children included) find excessive touching an infringement of their personal space;
- Workers should be prepared to be accountable to fellow workers for their use of touch and physical contact and should listen to the concerns of others if it is felt that boundaries are being crossed;
- It is never appropriate for staff to touch a young person's intimate body areas except as part of intimate care, and then only as a last resort if the child's parents cannot be located;
- It is not appropriate to kiss children or young people.

Abuse of trust

Relationships between children or young people and their leaders take many different forms, but all of them can be described as 'relationships of trust'. The leader is someone in whom the child or young person has placed a degree of trust. The trust may be because the leader has an educational role, is a provider of leisure activities, or even is a significant adult friend. In every case, however, that relationship is not one of equal partners and there is the potential for the trust to be abused by the leader, who is in a position of power over the child or young person. It is important for all those in positions of trust to understand the power this can give them over those they care for and thus the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence of this relationship.

It is always wrong for a leader to enter into a romantic or sexual relationship with a young person. Whilst young people aged 16 or 17 can legally consent to some types of sexual activity, they may still be emotionally immature. Their vulnerability could be exploited either deliberately or unwittingly. In these circumstances it does not make any difference whether or not the sexual relationship is consensual. The imbalance of power makes it an abuse of trust. It is not acceptable for a leader to form a romantic relationship with a child or young person with whom they have a relationship of trust. Such a romantic relationship (even if consensual) would not be a relationship of equal partners - the leader is always in a position of power over the young person and exploitation is almost inevitable, even if unintentional.

These principles apply irrespective of sexual orientation. In addition, it is important to recognise that women as well as men may abuse a position of trust.

Electronic communication

Electronic communication has become enormously important and popular over the past ten years. It is an easy way to communicate with young people in particular but must never become a substitute for face to face contact with young people.

It is important for Workers to adhere to the following guidelines regarding the safe use of electronic communication to maintain healthy and safe relationships between adults and children.

The following guidelines will ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny. Copies of communications should be retained and where possible other workers should be copied in on communication. Workers should be aware that, if there is an allegation of inappropriate behaviour they may be asked by authorities to provide access to their social media accounts or electronic devices.

With the world of electronic communication changing so rapidly, it is not possible to issue guidance that covers all eventualities. However, there are general principles that the church is adopting for the well-being of the children and young people:

- Parents or carers and children and young people themselves have the right to decide if a worker is to have the children's or young person's email addresses or mobile phone numbers etc;
- Workers should only use electronic means of communication with those children and young people from whom appropriate consent has been given;
- Workers should not put any pressure on children or young people to reveal their email address, mobile phone number etc;
- Direct electronic communication with children of primary school age is inappropriate and should be avoided;
- Only workers who have been appointed under the church's agreed procedures should use any electronic means of communication to contact children or young people on behalf of the church or one of the church's organisations;
- Contact with children and young people by electronic communication should generally be for information-giving purposes only and not for general chatter;
- Workers should not share any personal information with children and young people, and should not request or respond to any personal information from the child or young person other than that which is necessary and appropriate as part of their role;
- Workers should be careful in their communications with children and young people so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives. To reduce the risk of misinterpretation, clear, unambiguous language should be used and the use of unnecessary abbreviations should be avoided;
- Electronic communication should only be used between the hours of 8.00 am and 9.00 pm, apart from in exceptional circumstances, for example if a young person is in crisis;

- Emails to young people should always be copied to safeguarding@pantygwydr.org. The DPS and Safeguarding Trustee are able to access this email account to review communications with young people. This will also show that email is an official communication.

Mobile phones

- Mobile phone usage should be primarily about information giving;
- 'Text language' should be avoided so that there is no misunderstanding of what is being communicated;
- 'Text conversations' should usually be avoided; (that is a series of text messages/emails being sent to and from between mobile phones);
- Where possible messages should be retained on the phone;
- The use of the camera should comply with consent to photograph / video children contained on each child or young persons consent form, and the Photography Section in Part Four of the Safeguarding Procedures – Safe Working Practices. Workers should not retain images of children and young people on their mobile devices.

Social Networking sites

- If youth leaders are going to communicate via social networking sites they should ensure that all of the content on their own profile page is appropriate for young people to see;
- Consideration should be given to creating a separate profile to use for the church group;
- Alternatively youth leaders should consider having a site that is used solely for youth work communications and that is totally separate from their own personal site;
- Lower age limits of social networking sites should be adhered to (this varies for each site);
- As far as possible communication with young people should be kept within public domains, e.g. within the Pantygwydr Baptist Church group pages;
- If private message services within social media sites are used, the guidelines for Instant messenger services should be followed.

Instant Messaging Services

- The use of instant messenger services should be kept to a minimum;
- Where possible, instant messages should be stored;
- Apps such as Snapchat, in which messages are automatically deleted after a short period of time, should never be used to communicate with young people.

Crisis

Where a young person in need or at a point of crisis uses electronic communication of any kind to communicate with a worker, the worker should attempt to meet with the young person or speak to them on the phone instead of by electronic means. However, if the young person will only communicate electronically:

- Significant conversations should be saved as a screen shot, text file, or email if possible;
- A log should be kept of who and when they communicated;
- Depending on the content of the conversation, the worker may need to contact the Designated Person for Safeguarding.