

# Widcombe Baptist Church

## Child Protection Policy Document

### Introduction

#### Church Details

<b>Name of the church</b>	Widcombe Baptist Church (hereafter, “The Church”) Charitable Company No 5958521
<b>Location</b>	Widcombe, Bath
<b>Denominational details</b>	Independent, member of FIEC

### 1. Background

The Church has a substantial ministry with children and young people. The Church takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people entrusted to the church’s care. The activities that the Church organises do not currently require registration with the local authority. However, the Government document ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ contains the following statement:

**“Experience has shown that children can be subjected to abuse by those who work with them in any and every setting. All allegations of abuse of children by a professional, staff member, foster carer or volunteer (from ACPC member agencies) should therefore be taken seriously and treated in accordance with local child protection procedures. Other organisations which provide services for children (including day care, leisure, churches, other places of worship and voluntary services) should have a procedure for handling such allegations which is consistent with this guidance and with ACPC procedures.**

**There should be clear written procedures in place which are available for scrutiny by service users, and which are supported by the training and supervision of staff. It is essential that all allegations are examined objectively by staff who are independent of the service, organisation or institution concerned. (Para 6.13)”**

The Charity Commission also require churches to have a written child protection policy in place before they will register as a new charity.

It is appropriate for the Church to have a written child protection policy, and this (“The Policy”) is set out in this document.

### 2. Church Mission

The Church seeks to make the gospel clearly known amongst children whether from church families, their friends or from the local community. The Church through its youth work also seeks to disciple Christian children.

In carrying out this mission, the Church is committed to:

- Listening to and nurturing children and young people with whom we have contact
- Ensuring their protection within Church activities
- Encouraging and supporting parents and families
- Supporting and training those who work with children and young people in the Church
- Maintaining a system for dealing with concerns about possible child abuse

The Church members' meeting will confirm its acceptance of the Policy.

### 3. Policy

The Church recognises that children and young people are vulnerable to neglect, and physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Accordingly, the Church has adopted the Policy contained in this document. The Policy addresses the following areas:

- Recognising and helping victims of abuse
- Responding to allegations of abuse, including those made against leaders or members of the church
- Working with offenders
- Appointing youth workers
- Supervision of youth activities

Guidelines are also provided dealing with practical aspects of the Policy.

The activities of the Church, and particularly the Church's work with children and young people, shall be carried out in conformity with the Policy. The Church shall designate a person responsible for the implementation of the Policy - "the Co-ordinator", whose name and contact details are displayed prominently in the Church and notified to all youth workers. All those working with children will be trained in the Policy and its application to their area of involvement with children and young people.

The Church recognises the need to build constructive links with the child care agencies. Accordingly, these guidelines have been prepared in consultation with the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service, (CCPAS) who hold a copy of this policy. A copy has been provided to the B.& N.E.S. Social Services.

The local Social Services office telephone number between 9.00am and 5.00pm is **01225 477000** (phone number), the out of hours number known as the Emergency Duty Team is **01225 477990** (phone number).

All records and documents relating to the Policy and its implementation will be retained by the Church for term required by the church's insurers – currently 50 years.

### 4. Recognising And Responding To Abuse

The Policy recognises the definitions of child abuse recommended as criteria throughout England and Wales by the Department of Health, Department for Education and Employment and the Home Office in their joint document, Working Together to Safeguard Children (1999). These are set out in Appendix 1.

#### 4.1 Instructions to anyone who has reason to believe that abuse may have occurred

- 1 Concerns must be reported as soon as possible to the Co-ordinator who is the person nominated by the Church to act on its behalf in referring allegations or concerns of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities. If the Co-ordinator should be unavailable the matter should be brought to the attention of the Deputy Co-ordinator - whose name and contact details are displayed prominently in the Church and notified to all youth workers.
- 2 Make notes as soon as possible (preferably within an hour of being told), writing down exactly what the child said, what you said in reply to the child, when he/she said it and what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. description of activity). Record dates and times of these events and when you made the record. Keep all hand written notes securely, even if these have been typed subsequently. Complete Form 1.

- 3 If the allegations or concerns in any way involve the Co-ordinator then the report should be made to the Deputy Co-ordinator. If the allegations or concerns in any way implicate both the Co-ordinator and the Deputy Co-ordinator, then the report should be made in the first instance either to the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (hereafter "CCPAS"), PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ. Telephone 0845 120 4551 or 0845 120 4550 or to Social Services on (Phone No. 01225 477000 or out of hours 01225 477990).
- 4 The allegations or concerns of abuse should not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make direct referrals to the child protection agencies or seek advice directly from CCPAS, although we hope that members of the Church will use this procedure. If it is felt that the Co-ordinator or Deputy Co-ordinator has not responded appropriately, then the relevant organisation can be contacted directly. We hope by making this statement that we demonstrate the commitment of the Church to effective child protection.

Guidelines on how to respond to a child wanting to talk about abuse are set out in Appendix 2.

#### **4.2 Action by the Co-ordinator**

When the Co-ordinator or Deputy Co-ordinator is notified of allegations or concerns of abuse, the following procedure is to be followed. All references in the procedure to the Co-ordinator apply to the Deputy Co-ordinator, if it is the Deputy Co-ordinator that has been notified.

Where required by the terms of the Church's insurance policy, the Co-ordinator shall notify the insurers of the notified allegations or concerns of abuse but only to the extent that that is required under the terms of the policy.

Provided that the Church Minister(s) are not implicated in any way by the allegations or concerns, the Co-ordinator shall inform the Church Minister(s) of the allegations or concerns of abuse that has been notified, and report to them how the matter has been handled. The Co-ordinator shall only disclose the allegations or concerns to other people where there is a clear need to know, and in cases of doubt should first seek the advice of CCPAS before making any additional disclosure to that set out in the procedure.

#### **4.3 Action by the Co-ordinator in case of physical abuse or neglect**

If a child has a symptom of physical abuse or neglect, the Co-ordinator will take the following action:

- 1 Once a child has talked about abuse the notifying worker and Co-ordinator should consider whether or not it is safe for a child to return home to a potentially abusive situation. On rare occasions it might be necessary to take immediate action to contact Social Services and/or police to discuss putting into effect safety measures for the child so that they do not return home.
- 2 Contact Social Services (or CCPAS) for advice in cases of deliberate injury or where concerned about the child's safety. The parents should not be informed by the Church in these circumstances.
- 3 Where emergency medical attention is necessary it will be sought immediately. The Co-ordinator will inform the doctor of any suspicions of abuse.
- 4 In other circumstances, speak with the parent/carer and suggest that medical help/attention is sought for the child. If the Co-ordinator visits the parent/carer a further worker should be taken to witness the visit. The doctor, (or health visitor) will then initiate further action, if necessary
- 5 If appropriate the parent/carer will be encouraged to seek help from the Social Services Department.

- 6 Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, if appropriate, the Co-ordinator may offer to go with them. If they still fail to act, the Co-ordinator should, in cases of real concern, contact Social Services for advice.
- 7 Where the Co-ordinator is unsure whether or not to refer a case to the Social Services, then advice from CCPAS will be sought and followed. CCPAS will confirm its advice in writing in case this is needed for reference purposes in the future.

#### **4.4 Action by the Co-ordinator in case of an allegation of sexual abuse**

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

- 1 Contact the Social Services duty social worker for children and families or Police Child Protection Team directly. The Co-ordinator will NOT speak to the parent.
- 2 If, for any reason, the Co-ordinator is unsure whether or not this section 4.4 applies to a situation, then advice from CCPAS will be sought and followed. CCPAS will confirm its advice in writing in case this is needed for reference purposes in the future.
- 3 Under no circumstances will the Co-ordinator attempt to carry out any investigation into the allegations or concerns of sexual abuse. The role of the Co-ordinator is to collect and clarify the precise details of the allegations or concerns and to provide this information to the Social Services Department, whose task it is to investigate the matter under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.
- 4 Whilst allegations or concerns of sexual abuse will normally be reported to the Co-ordinator, the absence of the Co-ordinator or Deputy should not delay referral to the Social Services Department.
- 5 Exceptionally, should there be any disagreement between the person in receipt of the allegation or concern and the Co-ordinator or Deputy as to the appropriateness of a referral to the Social Services Department, that person retains a responsibility as a member of the public to report serious matters to the Social Services Department, and should do so without hesitation.
- 6 The Church will support the Co-ordinator and Deputy in their role, and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.

The action to be taken by the Co-ordinator is summarised in the flow chart in Appendix 3 which should be read in the light of the above instructions.

#### **4.5 Helping victims of Abuse**

The Church is committed to supporting victims of abuse, and encouraging them in their faith.

### **5. Working with Offenders**

Where someone attending the Church is known to have abused children, the Church Elders must be immediately notified. Whilst extending friendship to the individual, the Church is first of all committed to the protection of all children in its care. The Church Elders will meet with the individual and define boundaries that the person will be expected to keep, as a condition of their continuing attendance at any activities of the Church, with the object that any contact that could put children at risk is avoided.

### **6. Appointment to work with children**

#### **6.1 Definitions**

Those people involved in running a youth activity, typically having responsibility for planning and executing the programme of activities, will be known as youth workers. This includes those who work with children unsupervised, or who are responsible for the supervision of others. It also includes those who have any responsibility for care or supervision of children overnight - for example in church camps - and all those who provide help (even if only occasionally) in toileting, washing or dressing. These youth workers will be adults, normally in church membership, and on first being appointed will be subject to a probationary period before being confirmed in the post as described below. The youth worker(s) (usually no more than 2) with overall responsibility for a youth group are the group leader(s).

By contrast, people who participate in a more limited way by assisting in running some aspects of the activities under supervision of a youth worker are known as helpers. Helpers may be giving occasional assistance, or helping with practical matters such door-keeping or providing refreshments. The supervision they receive should be regular and reasonable in all the circumstances to ensure protection of children. They would not be responsible for planning activities, and should not provide personal care to children, such as help with toileting, washing or dressing.

The appointment of all youth workers (including leaders) and all helpers will be subject to the following procedure. Once the appointment procedure is underway, a prospective youth worker or helper may at the discretion of the relevant leader assist in the running of activities but only under supervision, and must not be left alone with children, or provide personal care to children, such as help with toileting, washing or dressing.

## **6.2 Procedure**

In appointing people to ministry with children, the following procedure is to be followed:

- 1 All prospective youth workers and helpers will be asked to complete a registration form and give consent to such Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and other screening checks as required by law or by the Church's insurers.  
(See Form 2)
- 2 Those considered as prospective youth workers would normally have been known to the Church for at least 2 years and be Church members. Where this is not the case, the procedure for the appointment will involve investigating a potential worker to find out about their past and talking to others who may know the person, eg from a previous church, and/or taking up formal references. The Church Elders are also to be notified of the position being considered for the potential worker before they are approached.
- 3 The Policy will be discussed in detail with all wishing to become youth workers and helpers.
- 4 A new youth worker who has not previously worked with children and young people in the Church would operate under supervision of a more experienced youth worker for an initial period of time e.g. three months, after which, feedback from other youth workers will be considered before confirming the appointment – subject to regular review and/or an extended probationary period where there are particular concerns.
- 5 In appointing people to work with children, in addition to considering any references and obtaining, where appropriate, a DBS disclosure, consideration will also be given to whether their lifestyle or attitude is an inappropriate role model for children or young people.
- 6 If following successful completion of all necessary checks a decision is made to appoint, all youth workers and helpers will be given, and required to sign, a contract on appointment indicating acceptance of the Policy, the associated guidelines on safe conduct and the code of discipline. (See Form 3.)

- 7 All workers will be given opportunities to meet together with their group leaders to discuss work programmes and areas of concern including issues relating to guidelines and discipline and may raise any concerns with the **Co-ordinator**.  
(See Appendix 4 for code of discipline)

## **7. Arrangements For Supervision Of Group/Children's Activities**

### **7.1 Child supervision**

#### Ratio of adults to children.

Number of adults who should be present for a specific indoor/outdoor activity or holiday event. The ratios required in regulations governing day care for under 8's are:

Adults : Children

0 to 2 years                    1 : 3

2 to 3 years                    1 : 4

3 to 8 years                    1 : 8

These should be a guideline for our own activities with under 8's.

For older groups it is recommended to have at least 1 adult to 8 children/young people, subject to there being a minimum of 2 adults. Helpers aged below 18 are NOT counted in determining these ratios. For Sunday School this overall ratio should be applied. For an individual class within an adequately staffed Sunday School there may be a single teacher.

With groups of both sexes, where possible the supervising youth workers should include male and female workers. If changing clothes will be a part of any activity - for example, swimming or sports activities - a mixed groups must have male and female youth workers.

Where possible, a youth worker should not be alone with a child. Realistically there may be circumstances when this might happen briefly. Sensible precautions should be taken in such circumstances - e.g. leaving a door open. Where a confidential meeting is requested by a child (eg seeking counselling) attempt to obtain the child's agreement to a second person being present. If this is not possible and it is judged essential to proceed with the meeting alone with the young person, then ensure that others know the interview is taking place and that someone else is around in the building.

No person under 18 years of age should be left in charge of any children of any age. Nor should children or young people attending a group be left alone during the group activities.

### **7.2 Register and log book**

A register of people attending a group should be kept, indicating the youth workers and helpers present. This should include times of departure if any individual does not attend the whole session, and any unusual people present in the building at the time (i.e. other than other youth groups or those known to be dropping off or collecting their children).

Each youth group should keep a log. Unusual events should be recorded with each leader recording what they witnessed. This can be very helpful as a difficult young person may subsequently make accusations of assault. A young person who constantly makes throwaway sexual comments about church workers may later make an allegation of actual abuse. Records of previous examples of this behaviour will enable any allegation to be seen in context. Of course, if a number of young people all make similar comments about one worker, this should warn the leadership that they may have a problem with that person. Log books can protect both children and workers.

Workers should also record in the log book incidents requiring disciplinary action, and details of the action taken. As the information in the log book is likely to be very sensitive, the log book should not

be used to record any accidents or injuries, which should be recorded instead on the accident/ incident form (Form 4) Because accusations of abuse may be made many years later, log books should be preserved and when a log book is full or superseded, it should be kept in confidential filing system, indefinitely, in the church office.

### **7.3 Consent form**

A consent form (Form 5) should be completed and signed for each attendee at a youth group by a parent or person with parental responsibility. Additional consent forms should be completed and signed before a child /young person may participate in an unusual activity or day trip (Form 6) or where ability to swim is required (Form 7).

### **7.4 Boundaries**

Children requiring assistance with toileting, should only be assisted by a youth worker (and not a helper) normally of the same sex. However, a mature adult female worker may assist children of either sex.

Touch – e.g. physical contact between adults and children – can be quite healthy and acceptable in public places, but is to be avoided in circumstances where an adult/child is on his own. Our guidelines on touch for those who work with children are set out in Appendix 5.

All children/young people should be treated with dignity and respect in attitude, language used and actions.

The privacy of children should be respected, and questionable activity, eg rough/sexually provocative games and comments, should be avoided.

Arrangements for transporting children are made with the knowledge of the group leaders and have parental approval. In some circumstances it may be unwise to carry a particular child on their own. See Appendix 6 for Guidelines on transporting children.

Arrangements for residential holidays should be carefully considered, and particularly whether adults should share sleeping accommodation with children. This might be an unwise practice generally, but appropriate, say, with very young children or in a large dormitory situation or on an activity such as youth hostelling where it is the custom.

If people, other than workers assigned to a youth group, need to be there for a specific reason (eg guest speaker), their presence should be noted in your log book, with their name and the time they came/left.

### **7.5 Discipline**

The Church's discipline guidelines are set out in Appendix 4 and on the reverse of Form 5. It shall be provided to parent(s) of each attendee at a church group. In signing the consent form the parent is indicating an understanding and acceptance of the discipline policy in those guidelines. Appendix 8 provides additional guidelines for dealing with disruptive children.

### **7.6 Safety matters**

The Church should operate within its Health and Safety Policy in providing facilities for work with children.

If young people are transported in vehicles ALL drivers must have a full driving licence and valid insurance of their own for the activity (for example, insurance does not necessarily cover use of a vehicle for a car treasure hunt). The church's insurance does not extend to use of worker's cars. Seat belt rules must be followed. If minibuses are used the appropriate rules must be complied with. A fact sheet, "Driving a minibus in Great Britain", explains the rules in more detail and can be obtained from The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (tel: 01792 782318). See Appendix 6 for Guidelines on transporting children.

Group leaders must carry out a Risk Assessment in advance of any unusual activities within church or trips/visits off church premises, and provide this to the Co-ordinator. For guidance see Appendix 9.

For guidelines on activities involving swimming see Appendix 7.

### **7.7 Supporting/supervising workers**

Youth workers should act as a team and accept mutual accountability.

Supervision of helpers should be carried out by a youth worker on a regular basis. It should not be concentrated in the period when the helper has just started and then tailed off, but rather supervision should be ongoing even when the helper has been doing the activity for some time. In considering the level of supervision that is reasonable, the following factors should be taken into account: the age of the children; the number of children; whether other workers are helping to look after the children; the degree of contact with the children; how vulnerable the children are; and whether there are other helpers also requiring supervision.

Anyone seeing another youth worker or helper acting in a way which could be misinterpreted should speak to the individual about the concern .

For each group there should be regular workers' meetings to review procedures to ensure common approach, sharing of concerns and identifying other matters which may need clarification and guidance.

Following the Policy and its guidelines should be paramount, and if circumstances make it necessary to depart from agreed procedures, say in an emergency or for some valid reason (perhaps to protect a child), permission should be sought in advance from the group leader or reported immediately afterwards where this is not possible.

Any event during which the Policy and/or guidelines have not been adhered to must be reported to the Co-ordinator, to enable them to consider whether

- a. action needs to be taken to prevent the situation arising again or
- b. the policy and/or guidelines need revision.

This provides protection to the individual and draws the Co-ordinator's attention quickly to shortcomings and problem areas.

Key issues/decisions discussed at group meetings should be reported to the Co-ordinator.

### **7.8 Other users of church premises**

When letting individuals or organisations use the church premises where they are accompanied by children, or will be present when the church activities with young people are taking place, they should be provided with a copy of the Policy and its guidelines and required to adhere to it.

### **7.9 Children from the street**

Sometimes children playing outside or wandering the streets with no adult supervision will try to join in church organised activities without the knowledge of their parents. We recommend that they be given information on the group with an invitation to attend when they have parental permission, but they should be encouraged to return home rather than letting them participate.

### **7.10 Church-based young persons' peer group activities**

All youth activities (for those aged up to 18) should be overseen by youth workers who have been selected in accordance with the agreed recruitment procedures. Whilst there may be more informal peer groups of age 14+ (such as after-church meetings of the Contact age group) arranged by youth members, an adult should be readily available, ie in the same building.

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Note

This policy is based on a model child protection policy supplied by the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service – a project of PCCA Child Care. A copy of the policy and all amendments will be filed with CCPAS. This policy must not be copied by other churches/organisations without the written agreement of CCPAS.

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Revision history

**v1 rev 1**

Section 4

minor change in language of title to 4.1

replacement of “suspicions” by “concerns” throughout section 4

Section 7

7.7 2nd bullet amended to delete “or leader”

**v1 rev2** - revisions June 2009

**v1 rev3**

changes to reflect the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, November 2012

changes resulting from the Youth Team rather than YTL having oversight

**v1 rev4**

Changes resulting from the Co-ordinator having oversight

7.3 consent form 5 sets out the discipline guidelines