

Child Protection Policy

of

Wexford Bible Church

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

“Wexford Bible Church (previously Calvary Church Wexford)
is committed to providing an environment where
children enjoy themselves,
feel safe from harm
and their physical, sexual and emotional welfare is protected.”

2. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this document:

- a ‘Child’ is anyone who is under the age of 18 years.
- a ‘Worker’ is a person who is involved in leadership in a youth/children’s ministry.

3. PROTECTING THE SAFETY, WELFARE & ENJOYMENT OF THE CHILD

a) The Rights of the child

We believe that children have the right

- To be safe, happy and have as much fun as possible
- To be protected from violence and harmful treatment
- To be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect
- To be listened to and talked with
- To be treated equally regardless of race, gender, religion, class or ability
- To choose/determine their own beliefs and values and to express their opinions at appropriate times
- To have personal privacy and to regard their bodies as their own property

b) Awareness of Abuse

i) Definitions of Abuse

Abuse occurs when the behaviour of someone in a position of greater power than a child causes the child harm.

There are 4 types of abuse:

- Neglect – failure to provide the care, food and physical conditions and protection necessary for the normal growth of a child
- Physical abuse – deliberate physical injury to a child
- Emotional abuse – persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection
- Sexual abuse – the use of children by others for sexual gratification

ii) Recognising Abuse

Recognition is not always easy or straightforward. However, sometimes we might be in situations where it becomes apparent that a child is being harmed or is at risk of harm. Some indicators (although not conclusive proof of abuse) are: under-nourishment, lack of suitable clothing, lack of proper care and supervision, injuries, sexual knowledge that is unusual for the child's age, running away, increased behavioural disorder, withdrawal from others.

c) Responding to Suspicions or Allegations of Abuse

If you become aware of anything that causes you to feel uncomfortable or if an allegation of abuse is made to you, you should not investigate the incident or allegation. Instead you should talk immediately to the Child Safety Co-ordinator.

i) Guidelines

If a child reports an allegation to you it should be handled very sensitively. Some guidelines are:

- Stay calm and listen – give the child time to say what she/he wants
- Don't ask leading questions or details, or make suggestions
- Don't stop the child recalling significant events, but don't make him/her repeat the story unnecessarily
- Reassure the child, but don't promise to keep it a secret

- Explain what needs to be done next
- Record the discussion as carefully as possible

A Report Form should be filled in to record the allegation &/or evidence of your suspicions. See *Appendix 1*.

ii) Reasonable Grounds

When the Child Safety Co-ordinator receives a report about a suspected/alleged case of abuse they should consider whether there are reasonable grounds for reporting to the Health Board. The Child Safety Co-ordinator may discuss this decision with a professional social worker, public health nurse or child protection agency who can advise them on what to do.

Reasonable Grounds for reporting to health board:

- Specific indication from child that she/he was abused
- An account by someone who saw the child being abused
- Evidence such as an injury or behaviour that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way
- Consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect

iii) Reporting

The Child Safety Co-ordinator will inform the worker who reported the situation of action taken or reasons why no further action is to be taken at this point.

If decided upon, the Child Safety Co-ordinator will report to the Child Care Manager in Wexford in writing or by telephone (See Appendix 2). Further actions will be taken as advised by a social worker.

The Child Safety Co-ordinator will inform the parents/carers if a report is to be submitted to the health board unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or undermine an investigation.

The Child Safety Co-ordinator will also inform the church leadership unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or undermine an investigation.

d) Guidelines for Protecting the Child

i) Workers should never:

- Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games with children
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Use corporal punishment
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child even in fun
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged or unrecorded
- Do things of a personal nature for a child, which they can do for themselves

ii) Contact with children

When a worker is alone with a child, it must only take place in the sight of others and even then it is inappropriate to spend excessive amounts of time with one child.

Workers should try to minimise physical contact.

- Any physical contact should be in public
- Touch should be age and circumstance appropriate
- Touch should generally be initiated by the child rather than the worker
- Touch should be related to the child's needs, not the workers

iii) Discipline

Workers should use discipline as far as possible in the form of positive reinforcement.

When challenging behaviour is being dealt with it is recommended that

- More than one worker is present
- A report of the incident is kept on an Incident Report Form (Appendix 3).
- Physical force will not be used unless
 - It is for the child's safety
 - Or it is for the safety of other children or property
 - Or the child is extremely disruptive
 - And the child has refused to respond to other forms of non-physical discipline

iv) Anti-discrimination

Workers will aim to treat all children fairly and equally regardless of their race, gender, religion, class, ability or friendliness.

v) The Worker at Home

A worker will not take a child to their own home without parental consent.

Deciding to allow a child into a worker's home who comes to visit them, should be made under the following guidelines:

- It is not something that should be encouraged, especially for younger children.
- Ideally it should happen when someone else is present, and when there is more than one child.
- We would advise extreme caution for a female worker alone and would advise a male worker not to do this when alone.
- If it becomes more than a once-off visit, workers should contact parents to get their consent.

vi) Adequate Supervision

Each work should aim to maintain the following child/worker ratios:

- For children 0-2 years old – 1 worker for every 3 children.
- For children 2-3 years old – 1 worker for every 4 children.
- For children 3-18 years old – 1 worker for every 8 children.

Each work should also aim to have at least one male and one female worker present when there are children of both sexes.

vii) Parental Consent

Parental consent is required for

- All children under 12 years of age coming to clubs.
- Every child being transported
- And every child taken on an outing

See Appendix 4 for sample Parental Consent Form.

e) Transport

- Hired transport must be from a reputable company and a worker must travel as well.
- Cars and minibuses must not be overcrowded.
- Each child transported should have a seat each with a seat belt fitted.
- Each child must wear a seat belt.
- All vehicles used must be adequately insured and properly maintained.
- Drivers must drive carefully in accordance with the law when transporting children.
- If at all possible, workers should not travel alone with a child.
 - To avoid this the last two children could be dropped off together.
 - The worker may need to take another worker with them.
 - If it is not avoidable then the child should travel in the back and the worker should let another worker know about this situation.

f) Accidents

i) Premises & Equipment

The premises used for every work must be suitable and safe

- With adequate toilet facilities.
- With adequate heat and light.
- With adequate facilities in the event of fire.
- In the interest of safety and health of all concerned, smoking by children or workers is prohibited.

Equipment used must be suitable and safe, and properly maintained.

Any defect in premises or equipment should be reported to the Child Safety Co-ordinator.

ii) First Aid

- A First Aid box must be accessible at all times.
- A telephone with the number of a local GP should be available at all times.
- It is our aim to have a worker trained in first aid present.

iii) Accident Reporting

Any accident which involves injury to a child should be reported on an Incident Report Form (Appendix 3).

4. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE WORKERS

a) Appointment of Workers

It is our aim to ensure that every worker is suitable to care for children and has a desire and ability to share the good news of Jesus with them.

Suitability will include:

- No criminal convictions for offences against children.
- A commitment to treat all children as individuals and with equal concern.
- Emotional stability, integrity, flexibility and patience.
- Willingness to work under, and be accountable to, the leadership of the work and church.
- A committed Christian who is growing in their relationship with Jesus.
- A desire to see children get to know God personally.

i) Application Process

- All workers must complete an Application Form (See Appendix 5), providing two referees and signing the declaration.
- All workers will be interviewed by the leader of the work and the Child Safety Co-ordinator.
- The Child Safety Co-ordinator will follow up on references given on the reference forms (Appendix 6).

b) Child Safety Co-ordinator

i) Who

The Child Safety Co-ordinators for Wexford Bible Church is:

Johanna Austin
59 Cluain Dara
Clonard
Wexford
053 9140987
joaustin@eircom.net

ii) Roles and Responsibilities

The Child Safety Co-ordinator

- Should be easily accessible to all the workers.
- Has the responsibility to work to make sure that a high standard of child protection is being followed by the workers.
- Will check that all activities are adequately insured.
- Will be ready to support and advise workers in accordance with this policy, especially in situations when child abuse is suspected or alleged.
- Will take the responsibility for dealing with disclosures and also for liaison with the appropriate authorities.
- Will ensure that the workers are adequately informed and trained for the work that they are involved in.
- Will maintain and keep the records of applications, incident reports, disclosures etc.

c) Responding to Allegations made Against a Worker

We have a dual responsibility in respect of both the child and the worker.

The primary goal is to protect the child while taking care to treat the worker fairly.

Guidelines:

- All allegations against a worker should be treated seriously.
- Keep records of all allegations.
- Allow the child to explain to a worker what happened.
- The Child Safety Co-ordinator should be informed when an allegation has been made.
- The Child Safety Co-ordinator should discuss this matter with the worker involved, keeping a record of what information was shared and the responses given.
- The Child Safety Co-ordinator (with the help of church leadership or child protection agency) should then decide whether there are reasonable grounds for reporting this allegation to the Health Board, using the guidelines as before.
- If the Child Safety Co-ordinator feels that the allegation is serious enough to report this to the Health Board then the worker involved should be asked to leave the work until the matter is resolved.

d) Informing and Support of workers

Workers in each work should meet regularly with the leaders and Child Safety Co-ordinator:

- To encourage and pray for each other.
- To pray for the children.
- To share problems and ideas.
- To inform workers of the Child Protection Policy.
- For the Child Safety Co-ordinator to raise any concerns.
- To ensure adequate training and support.

Appendix 1

Form for Reporting Child Protection and/or Welfare Concerns

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

1. Date of Report: _____

2. Details of person Reporting Concerns:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Occupation: _____

Nature and extent of contact with Child/Family: _____

3. Details of person completing form (if different):

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Occupation: _____

4. Details of Child Concerned:

Surname: _____

Forename: _____

Age/D.O.B.: _____

Male/Female: _____

Alias (known as): _____

Address: _____

Correspondence address (if different): _____

Telephone Number: _____

5. Is this report to indicate (a) suspected or actual child abuse or (b) need for family support, give reasons

6. Household Composition:

Name	Relationship to Child	Age	School/ Occupation	Location

Public Health Nurse: _____

School: _____

G. P.: _____

Any other agency or professional involved (describe nature of any involvement)

7. Referral Details

Describe as fully as possible the nature of the problem or incident being referred, giving details of times and dates of individual incidents, the circumstances in which they occurred, any other persons who were present at the time, and their involvement.

Has any explanation been offered by the child, and/or parents/carers, which would account for the current problem or incident?

As far as possible, describe the state of the child/ren's physical, mental and emotional well-being.

8. If child abuse is being alleged, who is believed to be responsible for causing it?

Name: _____

Address: _____

Degree of contact with child: _____

Degree of contact with other children: _____

9. Describe any risk to which the child/ren in this situation are believed to be exposed

10. How did this information come to your/the referrer's attention?

11. What has prompted you/the referrer to report your concern at this time?

12. What evidence of harm exists at present?

13. Are there any factors in the child and/or parents/carers' present situation that may have relevance to the current concern? (e.g. recent illness, bereavement, separation, addiction, mental health problem)

14. Are there any factors in the child and/or parents/carers' situation that could be considered protective or helpful (e.g. extended family or community support)?

15. Has any action been taken in response to the current concern or incident?

16. Are the child's parents/carers aware that this concern is being reported to the health board? (if not, why?)

17. Is there a need for urgent protective action at this point?

18. Any other comments?

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2

Useful Addresses

Child Care Manager for Wexford:

Community Care Centre, Grogan's Road, ACC Building, George's Street, Wexford.

Tel: 053 9165112 or 053 9123394

Fax: 053 9165113

ISPCC

40 Abbey St, Wexford

Telephone 053 9123864

Childline 1800 666 666

Garda Station:

Enniscorthy, District HQ

Telephone 053 92 42580

Wexford, Divisional HQ

Telephone 053 91 65200

Appendix 3
Incident Report Form

1. Reason for reporting:

Accident: Discipline Problem: Other: (specify): _____

2. Name of person completing report: _____

3. Details of child concerned:

Name: _____ Age/D.O.B.: _____

4. Details of the incident

What happened: _____

People involved: _____

Any injury or hurt caused to the child: _____

Any property damaged: _____

5. Further Action Taken

6. Other Comments

7. Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature of other witnesses: _____

Appendix 4
Parental Consent Form

I give permission for my child(ren) to attend: _____

Name of child(ren)

Date of Birth

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Medical conditions we should know about:

SIGNED _____ **(Parent/Guardian)** **Date** _____

Appendix 5

Application Form for Potential Children's/Youth Worker

This application form must be completed by anyone interested in becoming a children's / youth worker.
All information will be securely held and will not be copied or divulged.

1. Name of children's/youth work you want to work in

2. Name

Title: _____

Surname: _____

First Name: _____

Any Former Names: _____

3. Address

Home Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

If resident at this current address for less than 2 years, please give previous recent address:

4. Date of Birth: _____

5. Occupation: _____

6. Do you have a full driving licence? _____

7. Please give details of previous experience of working with children (if any)?

8. Are you prepared to undergo appropriate training?

9. Please give your reasons for wanting to be involved in working in this group:

10. Referees

Please supply the names, addresses and telephone numbers of two people as referees. These people must:

1. Have known you for at least two years.
2. Not be related to you.
3. Be willing to provide a reference for you, and may be contacted in response to any of the answers given.
4. And one of them must not be a worker in the children's/youth work you wish to join.

Referee 1

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

How does this person know you: _____

Referee 2

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

How does this person know you: _____

11. Self-disclosure

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been cautioned by the garda/police or bound over to keep the peace? _____

Have you ever been held liable by a court for a civil wrong, or had an order made against you by a matrimonial or family court? _____

Has your conduct ever caused or been likely to cause harm to a child or put a child at risk, or to your knowledge, has it ever been alleged that your conduct has resulted in any of these things?

12. Declaration

I declare that I have disclosed to the Child Safety Co-ordinator any Criminal Conviction involving children and any unspent Criminal Conviction for any offence involving dishonesty or deception and he is authorised to approach the people named above for a reference on my behalf.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 6 Reference Form for Potential Worker

_____ has expressed an interest in becoming a children's / youth worker with this church and has given your name as a referee.

This post will involve substantial access to children and as a church we are committed to the welfare and protection of children. All information contained in this reference will remain absolutely confidential and will only be shared with the applicant's immediate leaders and the Child Safety Co-ordinator.

1. Do you have any reason to be concerned about this applicant working with children?

2. How long have you known this person? _____

In what capacity? _____

3. What attributes does the person have that would make them a suitable children's worker?

4. How would you describe their personality?

Please rate the applicant on the following (please tick one)

	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
Responsibility				
Maturity				
Self-Motivation				
Able to motivate others				
Commitment				
Energy				
Trustworthiness				
Reliability				

5. Any other relevant comments you have on this applicant?

6. Referees details:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Occupation: _____

7. Signed: _____ **Date:** _____