Metropolitan Community Church of North London

Child Protection Policy as a Response to Pan London Child Protection Guidelines

**Statement of Intent**

\* As the people of God, we are concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God's purpose for everyone.

\* We seek to safeguard all members of the church community, of all ages. It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children, young people and those vulnerable by either physical or intellectual impairment.

\* It is the duty of a person working with children and young people to prevent abuse and report any abuse discovered or suspected.

In order to do this, we have adopted the Safe from Harm guidelines suggested by the Home Office. Our response to these guidelines is set out below:

**Guideline 1**

**Adopt a policy statement on safeguarding the welfare of children.**

Church response: The Board of Directors and the Pastor take responsibility for the overall protection of Children in the church’s care. This is delegated to a Child Protection Co-Coordinator whose name is Rev. Peta Evans. Whose role is to enact the guidelines below.

**Guideline 2**

**Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children may occur.**

Church Response: The Church undertakes that all activities where children are present there will be two adults (if possible one male and one female) to supervise any activities where Children are not within sight of their parent/s.

**Guideline 3**

**Introduce a system whereby children may talk with an independent person.**

Church Response: The independent person is the Child Protection coordinator.

**Guideline 4**

**Apply agreed procedures for children to all paid staff and volunteers.**

Church Response: As part of the membership classes, prospective members will spend time looking at the Church’s policy documents and procedures. There will be a statement of intent and also brief description of intent in the welcome pack.

**Guideline 5**

**Give all paid staff and volunteers clear roles.**

Church Response: All those in ministry will be expected to attend one on one sessions where their roles will continue to be clarified. There will be written records of these sessions kept in the Pastor’s Office.

**Guideline 6**

**Use supervision as a means to protecting children.**

Church Response: As above.

**Guideline 7**

**Treat all would-be paid staff and volunteers as job applicants for any position involving contact with children.**

**Guideline 8**

**Gain at least one reference from a person who has experience of the applicant's paid work or volunteering with children.**

**Guideline 9**

**Explore the applicant’s experience of working or contact with children in an interview before appointment.**

**Guideline 10**

**Find out whether an applicant has any conviction for criminal offences against children.**

Church Response: Those working with Children as part of the volunteering process must:

* Provide details of their full name, current and recent addresses and date of birth.
* Give details of previous experience, voluntary or paid that involved working with Children.
* Give permission to contact a referee
* Provide details of any criminal convictions against children, including any spent convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offender’s Act 1974.
* Give permission to conduct a police check.

**Guideline 11**

**Make paid and volunteer appointments conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period.**

Church Response: All pastoral appointments must be reviewed at 3, 6 and 12 months as part of ongoing one on one sessions.

**Guideline 12**

**Issue guidelines on how to deal with disclosure or discovery of abuse.**

Church Response:

**RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE**

Under no circumstances should a church worker carry out their own investigation into the allegation or suspicion of abuse. The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse will do the following:

Concerns must be reported as soon as possible to Rev Peta Evans (hereafter the "Coordinator") tel: no: 07766 221 120 who is nominated by the Board of Directors to act on their behalf in dealing with the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including referring the matter on to the statutory authorities.

If the Coordinator is not the Pastor, they will inform the Pastor. We may also be required by conditions of the Church Insurance Policy to immediately inform the Insurance Company. The Pastor will also immediately inform the Point Elder.

In the absence of the Coordinator, or if the suspicions in any way involve the Coordinator then the report should be made to the "Deputy Co-ordinator" tel no: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If the suspicions implicate both the Co-ordinator and the Deputy Co-ordinator, then the report should be made in the first instance to the Point Elder. The local Children’s Services office telephone number between 9.00am and 5.00pm is 020 7974 3317. The out of hours emergency number is 020 7974 4444. However, if you believe a child is in immediate danger, you should call 999 for the Police.

Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. A written record of the concerns should be made in accordance with church procedures and kept in a secure place.

Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Co-ordinator, the absence of the Co-ordinator or Deputy Co-ordinator should not delay referral to the Children’s Services Department.

The Pastor and the Board of Directors will support the Co-ordinator/Deputy Co-ordinator 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.

It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make a direct referral to child protection agencies, although the Pastor and the Board of Directors hope that members of the church will use this procedure. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Co-ordinator/Deputy Co-ordinator has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Co-ordinator(s) as to the appropriateness of a referral they are free to contact an outside agency direct. We hope by making this statement that the Pastor and the Board of Directors demonstrate the commitment of the church to effective child protection.

The role of the Co-ordinator/Deputy Co-ordinator is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information on to the Social Services Department. It is Social Services task to investigate the matter under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

This Church will also pay mind to and use the Pan London Child Protection Procedures, particularly the parts that relate to Churches and seek advice from the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service where necessary.

**ALLEGATIONS OF PHYSICAL INJURY OR NEGLECT**

If a child has a physical injury or symptom of neglect, the Co-coordinator/Deputy Co-ordinator will:

Contact Childrens Services for advice in cases of deliberate injury, if concerned about a child's safety or if a child is afraid to return home.

Will not tell the parents or carers unless advised to do so having contacted Children’s Services.

Seek medical help if needed urgently, informing the doctor of any suspicions.

For lesser concerns, (e.g. poor parenting), encourage parent/carer to seek help, but not if this places the child at risk of injury.

Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, offer to accompany them. In cases of real concern, if they still fail to act, contact Children’s Services directly for advice.

**ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE**

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the coordinator/Deputy Co-coordinator will:

Contact the Children’s Services Department Duty Social Worker for children and families or Police Child Protection Team direct. They will NOT speak to the parent/carer or anyone else.

**Guideline 13**

**Train paid staff and volunteers, their line managers or supervisors and policy makers in the prevention of child abuse.**

Church Response: All workers with children whether paid or volunteers shall agree to undertake training as preparation for the service applicable to the work they wish to do.

**On the recruitment of ex-offenders.**

* As an organization using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosure service to assess applicant’s suitability for positions of trust, MCCNL fully complies with the DBS Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed.
* MCCNL is committed to the fair treatment of its staff, potential staff or users of it’s services, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependents, age physical or mental disability or offending background.
* We have a written policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders, which is made available to all disclosure applicants on the outset of the recruitment (volunteer or paid) process.
* We actively promote the equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applicants from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. We select all candidates for interview based on their skills qualifications, and experience.
* A disclosure will only be requested after a through risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For these positions where a disclosure is required, all application forms, job adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that disclosure will be requested in the event of the position being offered to the individual.
* Where disclosure is part of the recruitment process, we encourage all applicants called for interview to provide details of their criminal record at an early stage of the application process.
* Unless the nature of the position allows MCCNL to ask questions about your entire criminal record we only ask about “unspent” convictions as defined in the “Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974,”
* At an interview, or in a separate discussion, we ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to the withdrawal of the offer of the position.
* We make the subject of every DBS disclosure aware of the existence of the DBS Code of Practice and make copies of this available on request.
* We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in the disclosure with the person seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.