

THE APOSTLES' CONTINUATION CHURCH INTERNATIONAL YORKSHIRE DISTRICT LEEDS ASSEMBLY

Head Pastor: Kwaku Opoku Amoah
Reference: ACCI/LA/OD01020



St. Peters Community Centre
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TAKING CARE POLICY

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

1.1 Overview

Every person, i.e. child, young person or adult, has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of male and female in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God's recreation of us in Jesus Christ. To sustain God's renewal of us in Jesus Christ, many thousands of children, young people and adults come onto church premises every week to take part in worship and other activities. This happens because thousands of people give their time to work with and to care for them. Among other things, this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm. For the overwhelming majority of children, young people and adults the experience is good.

Unfortunately, this is not true for all. Very occasionally a child is injured in an accident which could have been prevented if there had been more vigilance by the church concerned. Even more rarely a child is hurt or abused by another member of the church community. This could be anybody. Although most abuse happens at home it can, and does, take place in the church. Therefore, the church has a duty to care for the children, young people and adults with whom it works with, and to amend its practice accordingly to minimise the risk of abuse.

This abridged version of the 'Taking Care Policy' for safeguarding children, young people and adults concerns all (whether paid individuals or volunteers) who work directly with children, young people and vulnerable adults in the life of the church, all who come into contact with them, and all who have to make decisions within the church community. This includes senior officers, the board of trustees, paid Church workers, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, students and anyone working on behalf of The Apostles' Continuation Church International (hereinafter called 'the Church' or 'ACCI').

1.2 Legal Framework

Following reviews of high profile media cases of child abuse and safeguarding issues, there have been many changes in safeguarding procedures in recent years. In response to these changes the The Apostles' Continuation Church International's UK Regional Presbytery Council adapted the Church of England's children and young people safeguarding policy (i.e. House of Bishops *4th edition* of Protecting all God's children, published in 2010) for use as its children and young people safeguarding policy. This policy document issued in September 2016, sets out the essential features of the Church's safeguarding children and young people policy on which this current revision of the policy for the Leeds Assembly (hereinafter called 'the local assembly' or 'Assembly') is based.

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- Children Act 1989;
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Sexual Offences Act 2003;
- Children Act 2004;
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups 2006;
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012;
- Children and Families Act 2014;
- Special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice: 0 to 25 years – Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities; HM Government 2014;
- Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers; HM Government 2015;
- Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; HM Government 2015; and
- Data Protection Act 2018.

1.3 Aims and Purpose

The purpose of this policy document is to identify and outline the issues and principles of child protection for the Church. Thus, this policy resolves:

- To protect children and young people who receive and/or use services from the Church; and
- To provide all who work directly with children and young people in the life of the Church (i.e. Church workers and volunteers), all who come into contact with them, and all who have to make decisions within the Church community with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and child protection.

The Leeds Assembly of the Church believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. Our Statement of Values is as follows:

As members of the Leeds Assembly of The Apostles' Continuation Church International, 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 protect children and young people from physical, sexual and emotional abuse and/or neglect.

We are committed to:

- The care, nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and all adults;
- The safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable; and
- The establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is 'informed vigilance' as to the dangers of abuse.

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989;
- all children regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sent, or sexual orientation;
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues; and

- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

1.4 Our Theological Approach

Every human being has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of male and female in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this potential fulfilled by God's re-creation and renewal of us in Christ (Ephesians 4:17-24). Among other things, this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm. Christ saw children as demonstrating a full relationship with God (Matthew 18:3-5; 19:13-15). He gave them status, time and respect.

Every person is equally precious to God. Each one needs the assurance that respect for this brings. Individuals who suffer abuse often experience a loss to their identity and worth; there is often shame and a misplaced guilt. The Church is intended to be a place where men, women and children, including those who are hurt and damaged, may find healing and wholeness. It is our calling to be agents of healing and recovery in such a way that enables all who have suffered from abuse to lead lives with dignity in a context that is as safe as possible. It is about speaking words of peace. It is communication of shalom; that is, of justice, healing and peace for the whole of the individual, as well as for the community.

God is present and at work in the world in many ways. A Church empowered by the Holy Spirit is especially a place where the wonderful character of God is manifested. The Church is called to witness to that truth. As individual Christians and as part of the Church, our vocation is to reflect the character of God. We are called to welcome and care for the oppressed, the marginalized, and the victims of injustice. Safeguarding good practice concerns the development of safer expressions of care to all and underpins the love and welcome of God for all people.

Justice is part of the outworking of love. The Church must hold in tension concerns for both justice and compassion. Nevertheless, those who have suffered child abuse have sometimes found an unsympathetic hearing. They may be disbelieved, discouraged and damaged further. Some people may side with the alleged perpetrator. This occurs in all parts of society, but it is particularly hurtful when it occurs within the Church. Such actions compound the sense of injustice that many feel. In answer to the question "What does God require of us?" the need to act justly is set alongside the need to love, to show mercy and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

Many who have endured child abuse consider that mercy towards those who have sinned is set above the need for the victims to be enabled to find justice. Both are essential. In creating humankind, God made us to be together, and to live in community. When one suffers we all suffer. We are all made poorer by every incidence of child or adult abuse as by all sin. In finding the grace to act righteously towards those who suffer, we also experience transformation through grace. Hence, we become better people and our churches become safer places for all.

In similar ways, offenders may also be assured that they are precious to God and find healing and wholeness. Because redemption and the possibility of forgiveness are so central to the Gospel, the Church is not only well equipped to assist in the rehabilitation of offenders but is also challenged by the issues their presence raises for us. The Church is part of a society where collusion with violence in families, emotional abuse or certain taboos on sexual abuse often holds sway. It is our calling to hold on to both justice and grace and to build safer church communities, often in challenging circumstances. Church people have sometimes required those who have suffered abuse to forgive. We need to understand forgiving and receiving forgiveness as lifelong processes.

Our congregations can be a refuge for those who have perpetrated abuse but are seeking help in maintaining a non-abusive way of life. We have to also be aware that some who abuse may see church membership as an opportunity to be close to children or vulnerable parents in order to continue their abusive patterns of behaviour. Experience shows that whether penitent or not, those who abuse need support in taking responsibility for their own actions and in stopping their abusive behaviour: in addition, of course, the vulnerable need protection from them. The genuine penitent will accept the need for careful arrangements, including some restrictions, for his or her return to church fellowship. This is in line with the Church's realistic understanding of sin and its effects, and the Church's responsibility to love all God's people.

The Gospel accounts remind us of Jesus' humanity and vulnerability throughout his life. He gave up all but the power of love. He gave up wealth, security and status. He listened to and ministered to those who were powerless and vulnerable; he appointed fallible and weak disciples who needed to discover their limitations and find strength by living in God's grace with each other. Those who are humble and vulnerable themselves are often gifted with a ministry with those who are most in need, including with children and with adults who have suffered. There is therefore a challenge for the Church to encourage ministry, service and leadership in ways that promote discernment of one's boundaries and limitations, reliance on God and our brothers and sisters in Christ, thus developing compassionate, collaborative and enabling ministries which value careful listening to all.

Child abuse is a scourge on individuals, on our Church and in our society and we must name it as such—doing everything we can to prevent it. We are to nurture children as fully as we can in Christ's name (Proverbs 22:6). A Christian approach to safeguarding children will therefore expect both individuals and communities to:

- create a safe environment for children and their families ;
- act promptly on any complaints made;
- care for those who have been abused in the past;
- minister appropriately to those who have abused; and
- provide opportunities for healing and flourishing.

God's mission is a message of good news—to love and welcome the poor and marginalised. The Church must take seriously both human propensities to evil but also the God-given resources of goodness, peace, healing and justice, in short his love, his life.

1.4 The Role of the Church

This sub-section clarifies the respective roles of Church members and those in different leadership positions within the assembly, in the event of a child protection enquiry and its aftermath. It outlines the possible support needs of all those potentially affected and how these might be met. It is important that those with leadership roles in the Assembly are familiar with the content. As a Church, we will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them;
- appointing a Designated Safeguarding Officer and a deputy (where possible) for children and young people;
- adopting child protection and safeguarding practices through procedures and a code of conduct for Church workers and volunteers;
- developing and implementing an effective e-safety policy and related procedures;
- providing effective management for Church workers and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures;
- recruiting Church workers and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made. We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility towards children and young people within the Church, in line with safer recruitment principles,

including the use of criminal records disclosures and registration with the relevant vetting and barring schemes;

- recording and storing information professionally and securely, and sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children, their families, Church workers and volunteers via leaflets, posters, group discussions or talks, and one-to-one discussions;
- using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately;
- using our procedures to manage any allegations against Church workers and volunteers appropriately;
- creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have a policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise;
- ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place. We will respond without delay to every complaint made which suggests that an adult, child or young person may have been harmed, co-operating with the police and local authority in any investigation;
- ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, Church workers and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance;
- working with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care;
- challenging any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust; and
- offering pastoral care and support, including supervision and referral to the proper authorities, to any member of our church community known to have offended against a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

In all these principles we as a Church will follow statute, guidance and recognised good practice. These principles have already been considered and accepted by Church's UK Regional Presbytery Council. These principles are not to frustrate the work of the Assembly but to help in the Church's Christian responsibility to care and demonstrate love to all children and young people in the life of the Church and the wider community.

1.4.1 Role of Church members and leadership of the Leeds Assembly

Ultimate responsibility of child protection and for the safe recruitment of suitable children's workers and youth workers lies with the Head Pastor in charge of the local assembly.

There are a variety of ways in which a member of the Church or its leadership may become involved pastorally with issues involving child protection. It may be that a Church leader will approach you for help on discovering that their child has been abused, possibly a child in a family you visit regularly will confide in you, a youth group leader may express concerns regarding a child in the group, or perhaps an allegation of abuse will be made against a member of the congregation. In these situations, you will often feel exposed and vulnerable. There are many theological and pastoral questions to be asked. For example:

- What if someone admits to child abuse during a conversation?
- What support can you expect?
- How can a victim and the accused both be cared for by the Church?
- What about the families of both?
- What relationship should you have with other agencies, and which agencies?
- How does this situation marry with your theology?
- What does it say about sin, forgiveness, justice?
- What about other people in the congregation?

Your first instinct might be to try to ignore the whole thing and hope it goes away. This is not an option—you have a duty and a responsibility to act! The first and most important thing to realize is that you are not expected to deal with such situations on your own, even though

confidentiality is a central part of your role. The Safeguarding Lead of the local assembly (i.e. the Designated Safeguarding Officer) is there specifically to offer guidance, support and expertise, and has contact with the statutory services.

Within the Church's congregation, people have been appointed as Designated Safeguarding Officers in child protection. Their role is to work with Church members and Church leaders of children's work to ensure that correct procedures are in place and are being followed. Consequently, the responsibility for following the correct procedures is a shared one. It may seem unusual to share confidential pastoral matters, and you need to be clear about who should have access to what information. However, our duty as a Church is to focus on the protection of children.

As outlined in the Church's 'Taking Care Policy' for safeguarding children and young people, if you (as a Church member or leader) become aware of a child protection matter, you should, after following the guidelines set out in the policy (see Section 3) refer the matter to the Designated Safeguarding Officer within the Assembly (for contact details see Appendix A). Where the Designated Safeguarding Officer is not the Head Pastor, he/she will report accordingly to the Assembly's Head Pastor. If this route is not available to you, (for example, an out of hours emergency), you should refer your concerns directly to children's social care services (via their Children's Emergency Duty Team if necessary) and/or the Police (see contact details below).

3.0 TAKING ACTION

This section describes in detail what action must be taken when there are concerns about children and young people. It provides clear procedures to follow at a time often characterized by high anxiety.

It includes information on what happens when children's social care services and the police pursue a matter reported by the Church. This is included in order to clarify the roles of the statutory organizations involved and the role of the Church.

Assemblies must ensure that both those who are in direct contact with children and young people, and other leaders are aware of these procedures.

3.1 When you have Concerns or Suspicions About the Welfare of a Child

You may have concerns about the welfare of a child or suspicions about the behaviour of an adult, because of something a child tells you, because another adult voices concerns, and/or because of the behaviour or appearance of a child.

An **allegation** is when someone, who may or may not be the child concerned, makes a direct statement that abuse has taken place. All allegations of child abuse, from whatever source, should be referred to children's social care services as soon as possible.

A **suspicion** is where there are indicators that child abuse may have taken place but where there is no direct allegation or disclosure to confirm this. Indicators may include:

- The behaviour or appearance of a child;
- The emotional responses or reactions by a child to a particular situation;
- Physical signs, such as the presence of unexplained injuries;
- Environmental factors, e.g. knowledge of domestic violence within the family, the presence of a known abuser in contact with the family, parents experiencing significant stress;
- Worrying behaviour of an adult.

Please see Section 2 of this Policy for some guidelines on how to **recognise abuse**.

Responding to a suspicion of abuse or neglect tends to be less straight forward than when a direct allegation has been made. It is important, however, that the absence of an allegation does not deter someone from taking action when they are concerned about the welfare of a child.

The protection of children is a shared responsibility and, regardless of our position within the Church, we should never feel that as an individual we have to adopt sole responsibility for making decisions. It is important that concerns or suspicions are shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis at Local, District or Regional level. When procedures are being followed and information is being shared appropriately, we are then able to feel confident that carefully considered decisions are being made about children.

Making an initial decision about how to respond to concerns or suspicions will depend on a number of factors. For example, in some situations it will be necessary to take immediate action to ensure a child's safety and there may not be the opportunity to consult with designated people within the Assembly. For example, the following situations would require immediate action:

- When a child has sustained injuries as a result of abuse that require urgent medical attention (ensure that the child sees a doctor);
- When a child is refusing to return home because of the abuse (contact children's social care services or the Police);
- When a child has disclosed that there is a likelihood of them suffering significant harm on returning home (contact children's social care services or the Police).

If a child is in need of urgent medical attention as a result of being abused by others or by themselves, arrangements should be made for the child to be seen by a doctor and the medical staff made aware of any concerns about the child's welfare. Health service staff have a duty to refer concerns about child abuse to children's social care services or the Police.

Most situations will not require such urgent action. Where there are suspicions of abuse but where no allegation of abuse has been made, you should share your concerns with, and seek guidance from the Head Pastor and/or the Designated Safeguarding Officer (see Figure 1).

If you are unhappy with the advice provided and believe that a child continues to be at risk of significant harm, then you should consult directly with children's social care services (see Figure 1). You do not have to give the child's specific details at this stage and you would need to be clear when speaking with the social worker that you are seeking advice as to the appropriateness of making a referral. If you subsequently decide that it is in the child's interests to make a referral to children's social care services in your own right, then the Designated Safeguarding Officer should be informed immediately (see Figure 1).

Whatever the circumstances, it will be necessary to make a judgement about the extent to which a child may be at continued risk of significant harm as a result of any delay in taking further action.

The Assembly must make a written note of these discussions and of the decisions you reach (see Appendix E on record keeping). Given the sensitive nature of the records the Assembly keeps in all child protection matters, such records must be securely kept, preferably in a locked cabinet or safe, access to which is restricted to the Head Pastor and one or two other named people in responsible positions. The Assembly is strongly advised to ensure that any records kept electronically are password protected.

The action will be:

- a. to continue to monitor the situation closely; and/or
- b. to speak to the parent(s)/carer(s) about your concerns;
- c. to report the matter to children's social care services (see Section 3.3 and Appendix C); or
- d. to take no further action

Note of Caution: If you suspect that the parent or carer is the abuser or has allowed the abuse to take place (for example from the parent's partner/spouse, relative or friend), you should not speak to the parent without first consulting the Designated Safeguarding Officer and/or children's social care services and/or the Police.

3.3 Making a Referral to Children's Social Care Services

If a referral to children's social care services is necessary, you should contact the children's social care services area for where that child lives (see Appendix F). If information about a suspected child abuse situation is obtained out of normal working hours, you will need to contact children's social care services Emergency Duty Team. Contact number and address of both the emergency duty teams and the Daytime children's social care services Department are found in Appendix F.

If there is immediate danger to the child, or if children's social care services cannot be contacted, you must inform the Police. Contact number and address are found in Appendix F.

When you contact children's social care services, have your written account of the incident to hand. State clearly and assertively your name and role in the Assembly, and the matter you want to refer. Ask for the name and role of the social worker you are speaking to, and note this. Some suggested referral forms appear as Appendices G and H to this Policy.

Be prepared for the social worker to ask for information about the following areas. This is the normal procedure. Do not be concerned if you cannot provide answers to all the questions. Questions you may be asked includes:

- the reason for the referral;
- have you discussed your concern with the parent/carers? If not, why not?;
- nature of the alleged or suspected abuse;
- date and frequency of the abuse (if known);
- name of the child;
- age / date of birth of the child;
- address of child or current whereabouts;
- ethnicity of the child;
- gender of the child;
- disability / special needs of the child;
- names and addresses of parents;
- brothers and sisters in the family;
- name and address of school or nursery attended;
- name of General Practitioner;
- how long you have known the child / family;
- details of why you are making this referral.

Having given as many details as you can (even if the details to hand are vague), you should then ask the social worker what will happen next. Give the social worker the name, telephone number and address of the Designated Safeguarding Officer, and explain that he/she is the liaison person in the Assembly. Clarify what should be said to family members at this stage, if anything.

Having made the referral, record the date and the name of the social worker, details of any guidance given to you, and information about what children’s social care services will now do. Government guidance ‘What to do if you are worried a child is being abused’ recommends that you then confirm the referral in writing within 48 hours (see Figure 2).

The children’s social care Team should now send you a letter acknowledging receipt of the referral. It is quite common for the referrer to be filled with doubt about whether he/she has done the right thing, so he or she too will need support and advice.

Remember:

- the child's welfare is the paramount consideration;
- if abuse is happening it needs to be stopped;
- you are clear that what you have learned is a cause for concern. It is now for others—the professionals in the statutory sector—to determine what happened and what to do next.

Police and children’s social care services may identify you as a trusted adult, and may ask you to support the child or otherwise ask you to assist with their enquiries.

APPENDIX A: Leeds Assembly’s Staff relevant to this Policy

Designated Safeguarding Officers

Dr Nana Osei (Safeguarding Officer)

safeguarding@accileeds.org

Dickson Acheampong (Safeguarding Officer)

safeguarding@accileeds.org

Other Useful Contact

NSPCC Helpline	Tel: 0808 800 5000
CEOP	www.ceo.police.uk
Police	For emergencies call 999 (or 112) and for non-emergencies call 111
Crimestoppers	Tel: 0800 555 111
Leeds Police Safeguarding Unit	Tel: 0113 3859590 leeds.safeguarding@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk
Leeds City Council - Keeping children safe (Report a child protection concern)	Tel: 0113 222 4403 (Normal Office Hours) Tel: 0113 3760469 (Children’s Emergency Duty Team)
Leeds Domestic Violence Services	Tel: 0113 246 0401 Email: administration@leedswomensaid.org.uk

As a Church, we recognise that laws and regulations regarding safeguarding are relatively transient. Hence, we are committed to reviewing our policy and good practise annually. This policy was last reviewed on 30 August 2018.



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