

Bible Baptist Church, Ballincollig Child Protection Policies

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Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig Child Protection Policy

Foreword

A Christian Church can and does have a very powerful and positive influence on people - especially young people. Not only does the development of a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ develop valuable life qualities such as purpose, joy, self-esteem, teamwork, leadership, and personal worship, it also builds-up families and the entire community. Jesus and His words changed our world, from adults, all the way through to children.

A Christian Church has the privilege of promoting the Christian life, but also has the duty to do it responsibly. All Church leaders must know the importance of placing the welfare of all young and vulnerable people first, and adopting practices that support and protect them while they are in our care. The reality is that abuse does take place in churches, whether by official church leaders, or by parishioners and even "off-the-street" visitors.

The Bible Baptist Church has developed this policy and these procedures to create a safe environment where both children, and adults are protected and supported.

Everyone in a Church has a duty of care towards children who attend Church meetings to help to protect them from abuse. **The Bible Baptist Church** is currently developing a detailed policy and procedures to create a safe environment where both children, and adults are protected and supported. That policy is called ***The Child Protection Policies of the Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig***. This short-form document is a small subset of information that will be contained in the larger, more complete document when it is complete. This document is for quickly informing all relevant people of the requirements upon them for maintaining the safety of children and vulnerable people while in our care.

The Bible Baptist Church is committed to the protection of children and vulnerable people through the provision of detailed policies and procedures, and welcomes their consideration by all religious organisations.

We hereby require every individual who is involved with children-related Church function to agree to abide by this short-form policy and these procedures for the duration of their involvement with our Church e.g. a short-term helper whose services are used while involved with our church, either paid or unpaid.

A group of Child Protection Officers will be nominated and approved by the Church membership as qualified to protect and supervise children and vulnerable adults while visiting our Church meetings. A Child Protection Officer (CPO) has the main responsibility for managing child protection issues within Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig. The role and responsibilities of the Child Protection Officer are as follows: the monitoring of children while they are within the confines of the meeting place of the Bible Baptist Church so that they neither are alone at any time (without supervision by a qualified adult), and are under control (not running around and posing a danger to themselves or to others).

A Child Protection Officer is required to report all Child Protection related cases and concerns to the Pastor of the Bible Baptist Church, and each case will be reviewed speedily by the board of Elders (most often the same day as the reporting of the case or concern), and then brought to the attention of the parent(s) relevant to the case or concern. All allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. Based upon the severity of the suspected abuse, the pastor and board of Elders will determine whether to inform the Garda and the Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department. If a case or concern of abuse is made while on rented properties, the relevant head of that property/organisation will be immediately contacted and informed of the concern, and his or her input sought.

A valid concern exists if there is the suspicion of any of the following: Emotional Abuse, Neglect, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Negative Discrimination (including racism), and Bullying (includes bullying by gangs; bullying by family members; physical bullying; verbal bullying; teasing; and harassment).

People who will be required to abide by these policies include: The Pastor, All Sunday School Teachers, All Crèche workers, and All Leaders and Helpers involved in Church-related activities

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Responsibilities

The Bible Baptist Church, of Ballincollig will:

- Promote and implement appropriate procedures to safeguard the well-being of children and protect them from abuse.
- Recruit, train, support and supervise its members to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children from abuse and to minimise risk to themselves.
- Require members to adopt and abide by this Child Protection Policy and these Procedures.
- Respond to any allegations of misconduct or abuse of children in line with this Policy and these Procedures as well as implementing, where appropriate, the relevant disciplinary and appeals procedures.
- Review and evaluate this Policy and these Procedures on a regular basis.

Principles

The welfare of children is everyone's responsibility, particularly when it comes to protecting them from abuse. This Policy and these Procedures are based on the following principles:

- The welfare of everyone attending Church functions, especially children is the primary concern of our Church.
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief have the right to protection from abuse.
- It is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns about abuse, and the responsibility of the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Garda to conduct, where appropriate, a joint investigation.
- All incidents of alleged poor practice, misconduct and abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately by the Church leaders.
- All personal data will be processed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2003.

Review

This Policy and these Procedures will be regularly monitored and reviewed:

- In accordance with changes in legislation and guidance on the protection of children or any changes within **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig**.
- Following any issues or concerns raised about the protection of children within **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig**.
- In all other circumstances, at least annually.

Reporting

Reporting to the Gardai and the Health Services Executive is mandatory when anything other than usual childhood upset is suspected. All Church staff and volunteer workers are hereby required to report any suspected abuse or abusive behaviours in association with Church activities.

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1 Recruitment and Employment

All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and vulnerable adults.

For all positions that require regular contact with children or vulnerable adults the following recruitment procedures must be completed (whether paid, or volunteering).

1.1 Advertising

All forms of internal advertising used to recruit Church members for positions involving regular contact with children or vulnerable adults will include the following:

- The aims of **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** and, where appropriate, details of the particular programme involved.
- The responsibilities of the role.
- The level of experience or qualifications required (e.g. past experience of working with children is an advantage).
- Details of **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig's** open and positive stance on child protection.

1.2 Pre-application Information

Pre-application information for positions involving regular contact with children or vulnerable adults will be provided to applicants and will include:

- A job description including roles and responsibilities.
- A candidate specification (e.g. stating qualifications or experience of working with children or vulnerable adults required).
- An application form (CPP-001) and self-declaration form (CPP-002).
- Information on **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** and related topics.

1.3 Application Form and Self-Declaration Form

All applicants will be requested to complete an application form, and depending on their position in the Church and their association with children and vulnerable adults, they will be required to also fill-in a self-declaration form. The purpose of the application form is to obtain relevant details from the applicant for the position. The purpose of the self-declaration form is to collect information on criminal behaviour that may be relevant to the position e.g. criminal records or investigations. The self-declaration form is requested in a separate sealed envelope and is not opened until the applicant is selected for an interview. If the applicant is not selected the form is returned unopened to the applicant.

1.4 References

In some instances, references will be sought as required. Where possible, at least one of these references will be from an employer or a voluntary organisation where the previous position required working with children or vulnerable adults in any of the following capacities: as an employee; volunteer; or for work experience. If the person has no experience of working with children or vulnerable adults, specific training requirements will be agreed before appointment.

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1.5 Checks

Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig will seek an international check to be completed on a prospective paid employee. Volunteers may be deemed questionable, and a check may be conducted on them, but that will be at the discretion of the Church Pastor and Elders.

The following types of checks will be requested for positions requiring contact with children and vulnerable adults:

Standard Disclosure

Standard disclosures will be requested from those applying for positions that involve regular contact with children and young people under the age of 18; and the elderly, sick and handicapped people.

Enhanced Disclosure

Enhanced Disclosures will be requested for positions that involve a greater degree of contact with children or vulnerable adults. For example, positions that require regular contact with, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children and young people.

1.6 Interview

For positions that require regular contact with children or vulnerable adults, interviews will be carried out. An interview may include requests for additional information to support the application.

1.7 Offer of Position

Once a decision has been made to appoint an individual (whether to a paid or volunteer position), an offer letter will be presented to the applicant including the details of the position, any special requirements and the obligations e.g. agreement to the policies and procedures of the organisation, the probation period and responsibilities of the role. Confirmation of the position being accepted will require the offer letter to be formally accepted and agreed to in writing e.g. by the individual signing and dating their agreement on the offer letter and returning it to the organisation.

1.8 Induction

The induction process for the newly appointed member will include the following:

- An assessment of training, individual aids and any other needs.
- Clarification, agreement and signing up to the Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Clarification of the expectations, roles and responsibilities of the position.

1.9 Training

Newly appointed members will complete the following training over an agreed period:

- Protecting children and vulnerable adults.
- Working effectively with children and vulnerable adults (including presentation skills, developing child friendly resources and activities).
- Any other identified training needs.

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1.10 Probation

Newly appointed members will complete an agreed period of probation on commencement of their role.

1.11 Monitoring and Performance Appraisal

All members who have contact with children or vulnerable adults will be monitored and their performance appraised. This will provide an opportunity to evaluate progress, set new goals, identify training needs and address any concerns of poor practice.

Important Note:

The process outlined above will be completed for all positions that require contact with children and vulnerable adults. The degree of formality required for each part of the recruitment procedure will depend on the position in question.

Information about previous convictions disclosed on the self-declaration form may benefit from a clarification or additional information through discussion at an interview. Obtaining more information will help assess the risk this person may pose to our organisation. If a decision is made to appoint the person based on all the information gathered, it is probable that the person will be placed on a probationary period at least until a Garda Disclosure check is completed. A Disclosure check will enable clarification of the information that has been obtained from the applicant.

Applicants from overseas will be requested to provide a police check from their relevant country and where possible, the following information:

- A statement from the governing body in the country of origin of the applicant and/or the country from which they are transferring in regard to their participation and suitability for the position.
- A statement from their previous Church where they held membership in regard to their participation and suitability for the position.
- Any information that may be provided in addition to or in replacement of a Garda/Police check from the applicant's relevant country.

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2 Members with Specific Responsibility for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

2.1 Child Protection Officer

The Child Protection Officer has the main responsibility for managing child protection issues within **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig**. The role and responsibilities of the Child Protection Officer are detailed below. Specific responsibilities in relation to allegations against members are detailed in the Procedure for Managing Suspicions and Allegations of Abuse of a Child or Vulnerable Adult against Members (Section 7.5).

2.2 Role and Responsibilities of the Child Protection Officer

Within **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** the Child Protection Officer will:

- Attend training on the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- Implement and promote **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig's** Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Regularly report to the **Elders and Pastor of the Church**.
- Act as the main contact within **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** for the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- Provide information and advice on the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- Support and raise awareness of the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- Communicate with Church members and visitors on issues of child protection.
- Keep abreast of developments and understand the latest information on data protection, confidentiality and other legal issues that impact on the protection of children and vulnerable adults. This will be channelled through the **Head Child Protection Officer**.
- Encourage good practice and support of procedures to protect children and vulnerable adults.
- Establish and maintain contact with local statutory agencies including the Garda and Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department.
- Maintain confidential records of reported cases and action taken and liaise with the statutory agencies and ensure they have access to all necessary information.
- Organise training for members.
- Regularly monitor and review the **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig's** Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

2.3 Characteristics of the Child Protection Officer:

- A Child Protection Officer must be a full member of the Church in good standing.
- Have an understanding of the issues affecting children and vulnerable adults and the sensitive way in which they must be managed.
- Be able to communicate with children and vulnerable adults.
- Be able to communicate the implications of protecting children and vulnerable adults to all members.
- Be supportive of the introduction of Child Protection Policy.
- Have an understanding and appreciation of the need to respect confidentiality.
- Be able to follow procedures and recognise when to seek advice and not rely solely on their own judgement.

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- Be willing to challenge members who do not comply with the Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

3 Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

This code of conduct provides clear expectations of Church members and the specific responsibilities they must uphold as a member. It details the types of practice required by all members of **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** when in contact with children or vulnerable adults. The types of practice are categorised into good practice; practice to be avoided and practice never to be sanctioned. Suspicions or allegations of non-compliance of the Code by a member will be dealt with through the **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig's** Disciplinary Procedure for misconduct or through Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Abuse against a Member of **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** (Section 7.5).

3.1 Good Practice

Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig supports and requires the following good practice by all members when in contact with children and vulnerable adults.

When working with children or vulnerable adults:

- Make everything fun, enjoyable and enable fair play.
- Always work in an open environment e.g. avoid private or unobserved situations and encourage an open environment for activities.
- Treat all children and vulnerable adults equally, with respect and dignity.
- Put the welfare of each child or vulnerable adult first before winning or achieving performance goals.
- Be an excellent role model including not smoking, drinking alcohol, using foul language in the company of children or vulnerable adults. These acts can cause a member of the Bible Baptist Church to forfeit their access to children, and/or their membership.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Ensure that if any form of manual or physical support is required for a child or vulnerable adult, it is provided openly, the child or vulnerable adult is informed of what is being done and their consent is obtained.
- Deliver educational instruction first verbally; secondly role-modelled; and thirdly, and only if necessary, with hands on - which must be accompanied by telling the child or vulnerable adult where you are putting your hands and why it is necessary and obtaining their consent.
- Involve parents, guardians and carers wherever possible.
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust that empower children and vulnerable adults to share in the decision-making process.
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of children and vulnerable adults and avoid excessive training or competition and either pushing them against their will or putting undue pressure on them.

First Aid and Treatment of Injuries:

If, in your capacity as a member of **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig**, a child or vulnerable adult requires first aid or any form of medical attention whilst in your care, then the following good practice must be followed:

- Where practicable all parents/guardians of children under 16 must complete a **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig Medical Consent Form** before participating in risk-designated activities (Bible Clubs, Youth Camps, etc.). Every Church Activity requires this form to be filled out by all parents/guardians before a child is permitted to participate.

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- Be aware of any pre-existing medical conditions, medicines being taken by participants or existing injuries and treatment required.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Where possible, ensure access to medical advice and/or assistance is available.
- Only those with a current, recognised First Aid qualification should respond to any injuries. In the event that no one with a recognised First Aid qualification is directly available, a designated adult will take full responsibility for the child or vulnerable adult until the injured person is brought to a qualified medical facility, an ambulance arrives, or a qualified person with First Aid training arrives. The Bible Baptist Church's Liability Insurance covers this situation adequately.
- Where possible, any course of action should be discussed with the child/vulnerable adult, in language that they understand and their permission sought before any action is taken.
- In more serious cases, assistance must be obtained from a medically qualified professional as soon as possible.
- The child's or vulnerable adult's parents/guardians or carers must be informed of any injury and any action taken as soon as possible, unless it is in the child's or vulnerable adult's interests and on professional advice not to do so.
- A Notification of Accident Form must be completed and signed and passed to the Church Secretary as soon as possible, and notification sent to the facility grounds that the Church Activity may be being held on.

For taking and transporting children or vulnerable adults away from home:

If it is necessary to provide transport or take children or vulnerable adults away from home, the following good practice must be followed:

- Where practicable, request written parental/guardian consent if members are required to transport children or vulnerable adults.
- Always tell another member that you are transporting a child, give details of the route and the anticipated length of the journey.
- Ensure all vehicles are correctly insured.
- All reasonable safety measures are taken, e.g. children in the back seat, seatbelts are worn.
- Ensure, where possible, a male and female accompany mixed groups of children or vulnerable adults. These adults should be familiar with and agree to abide by **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig's** Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Always plan and prepare a detailed programme of activities and ensure copies are available for other members and parents/guardians.

3.2 Practice To Be Avoided

In the context of your role within **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig**, the following practice should be avoided:

- Avoid having 'favourites' from among the children/vulnerable adults - this could lead to resentment and jealousy by other children or vulnerable adults and could lead to false allegations.
- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children or vulnerable adults away from the view of others.

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- Ensure that when children or vulnerable adults are taken away from home, adults avoid entering their rooms unless in an emergency situation or in the interest of health and safety. If it is necessary to enter rooms, the door should remain open, if appropriate.
- Avoid taking children or vulnerable adults to your home unless it is a Church-wide designated activity that is regularly planned for and accepted by the Church.
- Avoid, where possible, doing things of a personal nature for children and vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves.

Important Note:

It may sometimes be necessary for members to do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults, particularly if they are very young or vulnerable. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the child or vulnerable adult and where possible their parents/guardians. It is important to respect young people's views. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible, particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child or vulnerable adult to carry out particular activities. Do not take on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

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3.3 Practices never to be sanctioned

In the context of your role within **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig**, the following practices should never be sanctioned:

- Never engage in sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Never engage in rough or physical contact except as permitted within the rules of the game or competition.
- Never form intimate emotional or physical relationships with children or vulnerable adults.
- Never allow or engage in touching a child or vulnerable adult in a sexually suggestive manner.
- Never allow children or vulnerable adults to swear or use sexualised language unchallenged.
- Never make sexually suggestive comments to a child or vulnerable adult, even in fun.
- Never reduce a child or vulnerable adult to tears as a form of control.
- Never allow allegations made by a child or vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Never share a room with a child or vulnerable adult for sleeping accommodation.
- Never invite or allow children or vulnerable adults to stay with you at your home.

Important Note:

In special cases sharing may be required for health and safety reasons or if the child is very young or particularly vulnerable and needs adult supervision. If so, explain why this is necessary to the child/vulnerable adult and their parent or guardian and seek their consent.

3.4 Reporting

If members have concerns about an incident involving a child or vulnerable adult that seems untoward or unusual they must report their concerns as soon as possible to the Child Protection Officer. Parents should also be informed of the incident as soon as possible unless it is not in the child's or vulnerable adult's interests to tell them (refer to Section 8, Sharing Concerns with Parents, Guardians or Carers).

Report, record and inform if the following occur:

- If you accidentally hurt a child or vulnerable adult.
- If a child or vulnerable adult seems distressed in any manner.
- If a child or vulnerable adult misunderstands or misinterprets something you have said or done.
- If a child or vulnerable adult appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a child or vulnerable adult needs to be restrained.

4 Identifying and Managing Bullying

The lives of many people are made miserable by bullying. Victims of bullying can feel lonely, isolated and deeply unhappy. It can have a devastating effect on a child or vulnerable adult's self-esteem and destroy their self-confidence and concentration. They may become withdrawn and insecure, more cautious and less willing to take any sort of risk. They may feel it is somehow their fault or that there is something wrong with them and at worst cause depression and/or feelings of worthlessness that lead to suicide.

To ensure **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** creates an atmosphere where bullying of children and vulnerable adults is unacceptable and to help members manage bullying issues, guidelines for identifying and managing bullying have been developed.

Any suspicions or allegations of bullying of a child or vulnerable adult against a member will be dealt with through the **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** Disciplinary Procedures and/or Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Abuse against a Member of **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** (Section 7.5).

5 Photographing, Videoing and Filming of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Church activities can provide an opportunity for some people to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children and vulnerable adults. The following procedures have been developed to protect children and vulnerable adults.

The following is required for **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** activities or events where children or vulnerable adults are participating:

- Where appropriate, all materials promoting **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** events or activities shall state that endorsed photographers will be present.
- Where possible, anyone wishing to use photographic/film/video equipment at a venue must obtain the approval of a **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig's** Child Protection Officer.
- An activity or event specific identification badge/sticker must be provided to and may be required to be clearly displayed at all times by endorsed photographers, film and video operators on the day of the activity or event.
- No unsupervised access or one-to-one sessions are to be permitted unless this has been approved in advance by the child or vulnerable adult, parent/guardian and the Church, and appropriate vetting has occurred e.g. a Disclosure check of individual wanting to photograph, film or video.
- **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** reserves the right at all times to prohibit the use of photography, film or video at any event or activity with which it is associated.
- Parents/guardians, and other children may be involved in taking photographs and or videos of Church events. The Child Protection Officers will be responsible for monitoring these people to ensure as much as possible that they are not abusing or intend to abuse the children or vulnerable adults that they may be photographing.
- The requirements above will be publicly promoted to ensure all people present at the event or activity understand the procedure and are aware of whom to contact if concerned.

5.1 Concerns about Photographers, Video or Film Operators

Any concerns with photographers or video or film operators are to be reported to **Bible Baptist Church's** Child Protection Officer and where relevant, the Garda.

6 Children or Vulnerable Adults in Publications, and on the Internet

Church websites and publications provide excellent opportunities to broadcast achievements of individuals to the world and to provide a showcase for the activities of young people or vulnerable adults. In some cases, however, displaying certain information about children and vulnerable adults could place them at risk. The following procedure must be followed to ensure **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** publications, and **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** information on the Internet do not place children and vulnerable adults at risk.

Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig publications and **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** information on the Internet must adhere to the following:

- Publications or information on an Internet site must never include personal information that could identify a child or vulnerable adult e.g. home address, e-mail address, telephone number of a child or vulnerable adult. Any contact information must be directed to either **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** or another relevant organisation's address, for example another Church.
- The content of photographs or videos must not depict a child or vulnerable adult in a provocative pose or in a state of partial undress other than when depicting a Church activity. Children and vulnerable adults must never be portrayed in a demeaning or tasteless manner.
- For photographs or videos of groups or teams of children or vulnerable adults, ensure that only the group or team is referred to, not individual members. Credit for achievements by a child or vulnerable adult are to be restricted to first names e.g. Tracey won First Place in the Scripture Memorisation Quiz.
- All published events involving children or vulnerable adults must be reviewed to ensure the information will not put children or vulnerable adults at risk. Any publications of specific meetings or child/vulnerable adult events (e.g. team training sessions), must not be distributed to any individuals other than to those directly concerned.
- Particular care must be taken in publishing photographs, film or videos of children or vulnerable adults who are considered particularly vulnerable e.g. the subject of a child or vulnerable adult protection issue or a custody dispute.
- Particular care is to be taken in publishing photographs, films or videos of children or vulnerable adults with physical, learning and/or communication or language disabilities, as they could be particularly vulnerable to abuse.

Important Note: Any concerns or enquiries about publications or Internet information should be reported to **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig's** Child Protection Officer.

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7 Responding to Disclosures

Information a Child protection Officer receives about or from a child or vulnerable adult may fall into one of the following categories:

- 1 Suspicion or allegation of misconduct against a member of **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig**
- 2 Suspicion or allegation of abuse against a member of **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig**
- 3 Suspicion or allegation of inappropriate behaviour against someone who is not a member
- 4 Suspicion or allegation of abuse against someone who is not a member

If unclear about the nature of the information (and therefore which category the disclosure falls into) advice must be sought from the Head Child Protection Officer or the Grada or Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department.

It is not the responsibility of anyone from **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** to decide whether or not a child or vulnerable adult has been abused. It is however everyone's responsibility to report concerns.

It is very important that **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** members understand what is meant by the term 'abuse'. The different types of abuse are:

- Emotional Abuse
- Neglect
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Negative Discrimination (including racism)
- Bullying (includes bullying by gangs; bullying by family members; physical bullying; verbal bullying; teasing; and harassment)

The definitions for the types of abuse and signs that may suggest abuse are detailed in Appendix A. It is very important that this appendix is read and understood.

7.1 How to Listen to a Disclosure

It is important to listen carefully to the information a child or vulnerable adult discloses. When listening to a disclosure the following good practice is required:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child/vulnerable adult.
- Listen to the child/vulnerable adult.
- Do not show disbelief.
- Tell the child/vulnerable adult that he/she is not to blame and that he/she was right to tell you.
- Take what the child/vulnerable adult says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what a child/vulnerable adult says, especially if they have a speech disability and/or differences in language.
- Do not pre-suppose that the experience was bad or painful - it may have been neutral or even pleasurable. Always avoid projecting your own reactions onto the child or vulnerable adult.
- If you need to clarify, keep questions to the absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said.

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- If you need to clarify or the statement is ambiguous, use open-ended, non-leading questions.
- Do not introduce personal information from either your own experiences or those of other children or vulnerable adults.
- Reassure the child or vulnerable adult.

Actions to Avoid

When receiving a disclosure:

- Avoid panic.
- Avoid showing shock or distaste.
- Avoid probing for more information than is offered.
- Avoid speculating or making assumptions.
- Avoid making negative comments about the person against whom the allegation has been made.
- Avoid approaching the individual against whom the allegation has been made.
- Avoid making promises or agreeing to keep secrets.
- Avoid giving a guarantee of confidentiality.

7.2 Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Inappropriate Behaviour or Misconduct against Someone who is Not a Member of Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig

In the course of your role within **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig**, a child or vulnerable adult may disclose information to you about a person who is not a member that leads to a suspicion or allegation of inappropriate behaviour or misconduct.

If the disclosure is about an incident that occurred during a **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** event or activity:

- Listen to the child as detailed above.
- Acknowledge the information received.
- Pass the information to both the manager of the event or activity and the Child Protection Officer and if appropriate the parents/guardians/carers of the child or vulnerable adult as well as the head of the property upon which the Church Activity was being held (refer to Section 8 Sharing Concerns with Parents, Guardians or Carers).
- Make a full written record of the disclosure on the day you receive the disclosure.
- Sign and date the record then pass it to the Child Protection Officer.

7.3 Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Inappropriate Behaviour or Misconduct against a Member of Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig

If you receive a disclosure that leads to a suspicion or allegation of inappropriate behaviour or misconduct against a member:

- Listen to the child as detailed above.
- Acknowledge the information received.

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- Pass the information to both the manager of the event or activity and the Child Protection Officer and if appropriate the parents/guardians/carers of the child or vulnerable adult as well as the head of the property upon which the Church Activity was being held (refer to Section 8 Sharing Concerns with Parents, Guardians or Carers).
- Make a full written record of the disclosure on the day you receive the disclosure.
- Sign and date the record then pass to the Child Protection Officer.

Establishing the Basic Facts

The Child Protection Officer must clarify the basic facts to establish whether there is reasonable cause to suspect or believe that misconduct has occurred. If the basic facts support a suspicion or allegation of misconduct by a member, the matter will be dealt with in accordance with the **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig's** Disciplinary Procedure.

7.4 Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Abuse against Someone who is Not a Member of Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig

All allegations of abuse must be taken seriously. Although false allegations of abuse do occur, they are less than usual. If a child or vulnerable adult says or indicates that he/she is being abused or information is obtained which gives concern that a child or vulnerable adult is being abused, you must react as soon as possible that day in line with the following procedures.

Where there is uncertainty about whether the concern relates to abuse or misconduct, the Child Protection Officer must firstly be consulted for advice on the appropriate course of action. If the Child Protection Officer is unavailable, external agencies such as the Garda and Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department must be consulted for advice. This is important because they have an overview of child protection issues and they may well have other information that together causes concern.

On receiving information about a non-member that leads to a suspicion or allegation of abuse:

- Listen to the child or vulnerable adult as detailed in section 7.1 How to Listen to Disclosures.
- Pass your concerns to the Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department or the Garda in the area where the abuse is alleged to have occurred immediately. Act on any advice given. At the earliest opportunity tell the Child Protection Officer about the action taken.
- Make a full written record of what has been seen, heard and/or told as soon as possible in the child/vulnerable adult's own words. The information must, where known, include the following:
 - Name of child/vulnerable adult.
 - Age, date of birth of child/vulnerable adult.
 - Home address and telephone number of the child/vulnerable adult.
 - The nature of the allegation in the child/vulnerable adult's own words.
 - Any times, dates or other relevant information.
 - Whether the person making the report is expressing their own concern or the concerns of another person.
 - The child/vulnerable adult's account of the event, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any injuries occurred.
 - The nature of the allegation (include all of the information obtained during the initial account e.g. time, date, location of alleged incident).

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- A description of any visible (when normally dressed) injuries or bruising, behavioural signs, indirect signs (do not examine the child/vulnerable adult).
- Details of any witnesses to the incident.
- Whether the child/vulnerable adult's parents/guardians/carers have been contacted.
- Details of anyone else who has been consulted and the information obtained from them.
- If it is not the child/vulnerable adult making the report, whether the child/vulnerable adult has been spoken to, if so what was said.
- Record, sign and date on the day what you have seen, heard or been told.
- If making an electronic copy do not save to the hard drive or floppy disk. Print off the record, sign and date, then delete the electronic copy, that day.
- Pass the record to the Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department and/or the Garda.

Remember: Listen; Respond; Report and Record

7.5 Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Abuse against a Member of Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig

The feelings caused by the discovery of potential abuse by a member will raise different issues, e.g. disbelief that a member would act in this way. It is not the responsibility of a member to take responsibility or to decide whether or not a child or vulnerable adult has been abused. However, as with allegations against non-members, it is the responsibility of the individual to act on any concerns.

Any information that raises concern about the behaviour of a member towards a child or vulnerable adult must be passed on as soon as possible that day, in accordance with these procedures. No member in receipt of such information shall keep that information to himself/herself or attempt to deal with the matter on their own.

These Procedures aim to ensure that all suspicions and/or allegations of abuse against a member are taken seriously and are dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner. They must be read in conjunction with the **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig's** Disciplinary Procedures.

7.5.1 On receiving information about a member that leads to a suspicion or allegation of abuse:

- Listen to the child or vulnerable adult as detailed in section 7.1 How to Listen to Disclosures.
- Pass your concerns to the Child Protection Officer on the day or if not available, the Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department or the Garda in the area where the abuse is alleged to have occurred. Act on any advice given.
- Make a full written record of what has been seen, heard and/or told as soon as possible in the child/vulnerable adult's own words.
- Sign and date the record including what you have seen, heard or been told, that day.
- If making an electronic copy do not save to the hard drive or floppy disk. Print the record, sign and date, then delete the electronic copy, that day.
- Pass the record to the Child Protection Officer or the Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department or Garda.

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Important Note: Where the concern is about the Child Protection Officer it must be reported to the **Pastor AND all Church Elders**.

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7.5.2 Actions for the Child Protection Officer when Concerns are Reported

Before taking any action, the Child Protection Officer must always seek advice from the Garda or Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department. Thereafter:

- **Establish Basic Facts** - the Child Protection Officer must initially clarify the basic facts to establish whether there is reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a member may have abused a child and/or vulnerable adult.

Important Note:

- This may necessitate the child(ren) or vulnerable adult(s) involved being asked some basic, open-ended, non-leading questions solely with a view to clarifying the basic facts. It may also be necessary to ask similar basic questions of other children, or other appropriate individuals (e.g. teachers, or activity leaders). After seeking advice from the Garda and/or Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department, the parents/guardians may be approached to provide consent to speak to a child/vulnerable adult.
- Advice must be sought from the Garda and/or Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department as to whether the member about whom the allegation has been made may be approached as part of the initial enquiry.
- This process will not form part of the disciplinary investigation.

Making a Referral in Cases of Suspected and/or Alleged Abuse – If the basic facts support a suspicion or allegation of abuse:

- The Child Protection Officer will refer the suspicion and/or allegation to the Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department and the Garda, as soon as possible that day.
- Appropriate steps may be required to ensure the safety of the child(ren) or vulnerable adult(s) who may be at risk.
- A record should be made on the **Incident Form** of the name and designation of the Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department member of staff or the Garda Officer to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow up is required.
- Following advice from the Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department and/or Garda, the parent/guardian of the child or vulnerable adult should be contacted as soon as possible.

Important Note:

- Reporting of the matter to the Garda or Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department must not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information. A form for Reporting Suspicions and/or Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig** must be completed as soon as possible that day. Where possible, a copy of this form must be sent to the Garda and Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department within 24 hours.

Possible Outcomes following advice from Garda

Where the initial enquiry reveals that there is reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a member has abused a child and/or vulnerable adult there will be an investigation. There are three types of investigation that can result:

- A disciplinary investigation
- A child protection investigation
- A criminal investigation

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Following advice from the Garda, disciplinary action may be taken in cases where a criminal investigation is ongoing provided sufficient information is available to enable a decision to be made and doing so does not jeopardise the criminal investigation.

Procedures 7.5.1 and 7.5.2 are summarised in Flowchart 1.

7.5.3 Managing the Member Against Whom the Allegation has Been Made

Following advice from the Garda, if the decision is made that the member against whom the allegation has been made is to be informed, the member should be told an allegation has been made which suggests abuse. It is essential to preserve evidence for any criminal proceedings while at the same time safeguarding the rights of the member.

7.5.4 Suspension

- Suspension is not a form of disciplinary action. The member may be suspended whilst an investigation is carried out.
- Suspension will be carried out by **the Church Pastor** in accordance with **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig's** Disciplinary Procedures.
- At the suspension interview, the member will be informed of the reason suspension is taking place and given the opportunity to give a statement should he/she wish. Notification of the suspension and the reasons will be conveyed in writing to the member in accordance with **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig's** Disciplinary Procedures.

7.5.5 Managing False or Malicious Allegations

- Where, after investigation, the allegation is found to be false or malicious, the member will receive an account of the circumstances and/or investigation and a letter confirming the conclusion of the matter. The member involved may wish to seek legal advice.
- All records pertaining to the circumstances and investigation will be destroyed.
- Where this involves a member of **Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig**, they will be advised of the appropriate counselling services available.

7.5.6 Managing Allegations of Historical Abuse

- Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event e.g. an adult who was abused as a child by a member who is still currently working with children. Where such an allegation is made the procedures for managing allegations of abuse, detailed in Sections 7.4 and 7.5, must be followed.

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8 Sharing concerns with Parents, Guardians or Carers

8.1 Where it is Not Abuse

There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents/guardians/carers where there are concerns about a child/vulnerable adult. Therefore in most situations, not involving the possibility of the abuse of a child or vulnerable adult, it would be important to talk to parents/guardians/carers to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a child or vulnerable adult seems withdrawn, he/she may have experienced an upset in the family, such as a parental separation, divorce or bereavement. Common sense is advised in these situations, however advice should be sought from the Child Protection Officer if there is any uncertainty about the appropriate course of action.

8.2 Allegations of Abuse

There are circumstances in which a child or vulnerable adult might be placed at even greater risk if concerns are shared with their parents/guardians/carers (e.g. where a parent/guardian/carer may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately). **In all cases of suspected or alleged abuse, advice and guidance must first be sought from the local Relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) Department or the Garda as to who contacts the parents.**

If your organisation has members of staff, the Policy should be amended to include reference to the Line Manager when dealing with suspicions or allegations of poor practice and abuse. Staff should be supported by their Line Manager to take the appropriate action outlined in the Procedures.

Failure to report concerns, turning a blind eye or failing to protect a child or vulnerable adult may result in legal action.

Defamation

Concerned adults may be reluctant to report suspicions of abuse for fear that the person suspected will sue them for defamation. An allegation of abuse will always be defamatory but damages will not be awarded if the maker of the allegation can prove that it is true. Such allegations should not be made unless the maker of the allegation has a legal duty to make it and the Receiver has such a duty to receive it. Thus a person may safely express concerns to, for example, the Garda, a relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) reporter, the Child Protection Officer or a Church Elder. The making of untrue allegations for purely malicious reasons would always be actionable.

Confidentiality

Members receiving information about possible abuse should always treat that information as confidential in the sense that it must not be disclosed to anybody except those having a legal duty to receive it, for example the Garda, a relevant department in the Health Services Executive (Southern Area) reporter, the Child Protection Officer or a Church Elder. Communicating information obtained from a Disclosure Certificate is a criminal offence.

The Procedure for Managing Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse against members must be read in conjunction with your organisation's Disciplinary Procedure.

9 Forms

See the following forms attached to this document

- CPP-001 Application Form for Working with Children and Vulnerable Adults
- CPP-002 Self-Declaration Form
- CPP-003 Notification of Incident Form
- CPP-004 Reporting Allegation of Abuse Form

10 Signatories to This Policy

The following people act as the current **leaders** of the Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig, and form **the Board of Elders** of the Church, and by their signature, agree to the basic Child Protection Philosophy as spelled out briefly in this document, and are part of the development of the overall detailed Child Protection Policies currently under development:

1. **Craig Ledbetter**, Pastor, Ballincollig
Date signed _____
2. **Martin Monaghan**, Ballincollig
Date signed _____
3. **William Daunt**, Macroom
Date signed _____
4. **Paul Layton**, Cork City
Date signed _____
5. **Tony Mahony**, Carrigaline
Date signed _____
6. **Kevin O’Keeffe**, Carrigaline
Date signed _____
7. **Denis Linehan**, Ballyphehane
Date signed _____

The following people are the current acting **Child Protection Officers** elected by the Church Membership:

1. **Paul Layton**, Cork City
Date signed _____
2. **Tony Mahony**, Carrigaline
Date signed _____
3. **Nita Ledbetter**, Ballincollig
Date signed _____
4. **Eileen O’Keeffe**, Carrigaline
Date signed _____

Flowchart 1: Procedure for Responding to Suspicions and/or Allegations of Abuse of a Child or Vulnerable Adult against a Member

