



Guidelines for Developing a Child Protection Policy for UK based organisation or UK church sending staff or volunteers overseas

These guidelines have been developed in consultation with the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS)

Approved by Global Connections Personnel Forum January 2006

INTRODUCTION TO CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES

The Global Connections Child Protection Guidelines are designed to apply to any UK based organisation or UK church sending staff or volunteers overseas. The principles should be applied to all types of staff such as mission partners, volunteers working overseas, national staff of UK mission agencies and UK staff visiting field locations. Agencies and churches should also apply them in all contexts, both long and short term, although different procedures might be needed in each context. These guidelines have been formed specifically with cross-cultural contexts in mind, but it can also be useful in UK situations, both same-culture and cross-cultural.

They are also designed to help national churches and agencies with whom the UK agency or UK church partners.

These are guidelines for good practice. Our motivation in producing them is based on our desire that God is glorified in all that we do. We recognise the risks to children and our responsibility as Christians in protecting and safeguarding them to the highest standards possible. If children are to be protected from abuse, exploitation and inequalities, staff and other representatives must conduct themselves with the utmost professionalism and integrity at all times.

For these goals to be realised a systematic approach to child protection is required and the guidelines contained in this document provide the basis for producing practical policies and procedures for UK agencies and UK churches to ensure their staff are well placed to protect children.

They are designed to help develop agreed policies relating to the following:

- Procedures for recruitment, appointment, supervision and debriefing of staff
- Implementation in overseas location
- Responding to allegations/concerns
- Helping UK agencies and churches to consider how their staff and mission partners are informed of policies advice and resources

All UK agencies and churches should appoint a representative as a Child Protection Coordinator, in the UK or International Office, who is responsible throughout the organisation for ensuring that their agency develops, completes and implements its child protection policy and that they are consistent with the required standards set out in these guidelines. Wherever possible each project location should appoint a Child Protection Officer and a deputy, to cover for absence, as appropriate.

Section 1

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

A Child Protection Policy is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children from harm and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and to show that the agency/church is taking its responsibilities seriously.

1. All UK agencies and churches should have a child protection policy regardless of whether they work directly with children or not.
2. The policy should be written clearly and should be easily understandable. This may include the use of national languages.
3. The policy should be given to all staff and volunteers who work or visit overseas locations. It should be an integral part of the staff handbook, orientation and training programme.
4. Child Protection issues should be kept at the forefront of practice. Therefore the policy should be reviewed on a regular basis, preferably every year, in view of continual change in legal legislation, or when there is a significant change in the UK agency/church.
5. In overseas locations where international staff are seconded to a local partner, the local partner should also be encouraged to develop a child protection policy.

Section 2

A GENERAL STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT AND OWNERSHIP

- 1. A child protection policy helps protect children**
A child protection policy helps to create a safe and positive environment for children, and although no standards or processes can offer complete protection for children, implementing a policy minimises the risk to children from abuse and exploitation.

- 2. A child protection policy helps protect staff and volunteers**
A child protection policy clarifies what is required of staff and volunteers in relation to the protection of children. It sets out standards of behaviour for staff and volunteers when they are around children and what to do if they notice, or are told about, inappropriate behaviour in others.

- 3. A child protection policy helps to protect agencies and churches**
A child protection policy is a statement of intent that demonstrates an agency's/church's commitment to safeguard children from harm. This is particularly important where an organisation's beneficiaries are children and young people.

In adopting the Global Connections guidelines on child protection, the agency/church should include the following statement:

"We are committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and young people and protecting them from abuse. We believe that it is never acceptable for a child to experience abuse of any kind and that child protection is everyone's responsibility within our organisation".

Section 3

PROTECTION FROM ABUSE

In addition to the general principles of good practice for the welfare of children, guidelines should also be provided in relation to and supervision of children. It is easy to assume that everyone knows what is appropriate. This is rarely the case when there is an absence of specific expectations. Clear guidance needs to be given to protect children from abuse and staff and visitors from false accusation.

It is important that all staff and others who come in contact with children should be aware of the following:

- Be able to recognise situations which may present risks
- The need to plan and organise the work and workplace so as to minimise risks as far as possible and be visible to other adults when working and talking with children
- It is inappropriate to spend excessive time alone with children
- It is inappropriate to take children to your home, or to stay overnight, especially where they will be alone with you.
- Particular care needs to be taken into account for the needs of disabled children and other vulnerable children as research has shown that abuse can often go unrecognised and unreported due to people's attitudes and assumptions about disability.
- Where confidentiality is important and a young person is being seen on their own, ensure that others know the interview is taking place and that someone else is around in the building.
- In normal circumstances no person under 16 should be left in charge of any children of any age. However, some local/national legislation may require this to be 18 years of age. Nor should children or young people attending any group be left alone at any time.

Staff and others should **not**:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault children
- Develop physical/sexual relationships with children
- Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice, which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse, discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.

Section 4

SELECTION, ORIENTATION, SUPERVISION AND DEBRIEFING

Policies and procedures should cover the following areas:-

- All potential personnel and volunteers working overseas should be informed of the agency's/church's policy at the start of any recruiting process.
- The application process should ensure basic screening of applicants.
- During the interview process, applications should be asked about previous work with children
- Where possible and permissible by local law, applications must give permission for a criminal record or police background check for any conviction related to abuse of children and adults.
- CRB checks for all staff working regularly with children are mandatory.
- In the best interests of children, agencies/churches should not employ anyone with a prior conviction for child abuse, paedophilia or related offences. In the event that local law prohibits this rule, no person with a conviction for child abuse, or related offences will be hired into any position that includes direct access to children or information about children.
- Any offer of employment will be contingent pending the results of the police and other checks.
- The child protection policy should be integrated into the staff handbook and all personnel should be required to acknowledge in writing that they have received and understood the child protection policy.
- Orientation should be provided for all categories of staff and volunteers relating to recognising abuse and how to deal with it.
- Certain groups of staff and volunteers will have regular contact with children, such as youth workers, youth teams and short-term teams. They will be provided with appropriate training in areas such as consent and accident forms.
- Provision should be made for the appropriate use of technology to make sure that children are not made vulnerable to abuse and exploitation (e.g. prevent downloading pornographic material from the internet and inappropriate emails)
- The Child Protection Coordinator should keep knowledge, policies, procedures and best proactive requirements up to date and ensure CPOs are adequately trained.
- As part of debriefing, child protection issues should be addressed.
- Provision must be made for the scenario of a staff member being accused of abusing a child. It should be made clear to all staff that there should be clear procedures dealing with this situation, which may include immediate removal from the situation followed by independent investigation, with dismissal being the norm if proven.

Section 5

IMPLEMENTATION IN OVERSEAS LOCATION

Policies and procedures should have sections on

- All project locations should appoint a Child Protection Officer (CPO)
- Child Protection Coordinators should develop clear guidelines on procedures which should be communicated to the Child Protection Officer (CPO).
- All CPOs should be appropriately trained or qualified to clarify information received and provide skilled support/therapy
- All visitors should formally agree to child protection guidelines and to receive clear induction in this regard
- Staff, volunteers, UK staff visitors, and visitors of families, friends and casual acquaintances should not have unsupervised contact with children and young people.
- The isolation of a project should be taken into account, as supervision can be poor and cover-up relatively easy.
- It should be noted that there may be differences in the legal framework in the country concerned.
- Rules of appropriate and proper behaviour based on local sensitivities, will be included in child protection policies.
- A process should be in place for dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- There may be no equivalent to our statutory agencies to ensure an independent and thorough enquiry. However there should be an acceptance to work with local statutory agencies of the country in which the work is operating. Inaction by the local authorities does not mean that the agency will not then deal with the issue directly. The standards operating in the UK will apply.
- All concerns/incidents should be reported to the local CPO and there should be a clear procedure as to what should happen next.
- Mechanisms should be in place for responding to a child wanting to talk about abuse and actions to take once a child has talked about abuse.
- Anyone speaking to a child or adult about concerns should follow the general CCPAS principles. (See resources)
- In conjunction with authorities, there should be clear procedures for repatriation, if appropriate.
- A child protection policy should be clear about confidentiality.

Section 6

RESPONDING TO ABUSE OR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

Child abuse is distressing for all concerned and it is often difficult to accept that it may have occurred, to the point that there is denial or that warning signs are dismissed. The danger is that under-reaction resulting from this lack of acceptance may mean children remain unprotected and exposed to further abuse. If the policy is to achieve its intentions of preventing abuse and protecting children, it is essential that staff and volunteers understand their responsibility to raise any concerns they may have regarding the safety of children.

Mechanisms must be put in place for actions to take when a child has talked about abuse. It is necessary to have an effective response plan in the event of a concern or allegation of child abuse. This should include:

- The responsibility for anyone who sees, suspects or is told of abuse or allegation of abuse to report to the local Child Protection Officer.
- Being specific about whom to report to, giving names and contact details as appropriate.
- Reporting only to those who need to know.
- Ensuring the protection and safety of the child or children.
- Ensuring that girls who are alleged victims of abuse speak to a woman, not a man. In the event that reporting has to be to a man within any given culture, then girl victims must be protected by a trusted woman being present during the reporting session. Vice versa, boy victims should be reported to a trusted man.
- Preventing further abuse
- The need for care and concern – a child may fear retribution, punishment while a staff member accused of child abuse will be concerned for his/her privacy and legal rights.
- If an international staff member is suspected, due regard must be given to the potential extraterritorial proceedings by that person's country of origin.
- The need to remove the accused person from the situation, with clear guidance on when the person be should repatriated to their country of origin
- Disciplinary procedures that will follow a concern or allegation
- Action to be taken in relation to the alleged abuser's family members, specifically where their own children need to be considered.
- The steps to follow if an allegation proves to be untrue, or even fabricated – with the person who has been accused, the child and the person who did the reporting.

Appendix 1

THE WELFARE AND RIGHTS OF CHILDREN STATEMENT

Agencies and churches will ensure that the welfare and rights of children are paramount in all their policies and procedures. In particular it is recognised that a key element in working to safeguard the welfare of all children is the promotion of their rights. A child or young person has the right:

- to have their health, safety, well-being and best interests considered paramount
- to have their welfare and development promoted and safeguarded so that they can achieve their full potential
- to be valued respected and understood within the context of their own culture, religion and ethnicity, and to have their needs identified and met within this context and within the context of their family wherever possible.
- to be listened to and to have their views given careful consideration, and to be encouraged and helped to participate in decisions which affect them.

In order that these rights are respected, when staff, volunteers and others are in contact with children, they should:

- at all times treat children with respect and recognise them as individuals in their own right
- regard them positively and value them as individuals who have specific needs and rights and a particular contribution to make
- work with them in a spirit of cooperation and partnership based on mutual trust and respect
- value their views and take them seriously
- work with them in ways that enhance their inherent capacities and capabilities, and develop their potential
- strive to understand them within the context in which they live.

Words to this effect should be incorporated into any child protection policy.

Appendix 2

DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

In developing any child protection policies, it is important to set out the local and national definitions of “child abuse” for the country where the agency or church works. There is sometimes a different cultural understanding of what constitutes child abuse, and therefore clear guidance needs to be given to staff and partners on how a child protection policy will be applied in their context.

However the following four categories of abuse are universally found. These will be used as a starting point in developing policies and procedures and guidance in exploring the nature that these different forms of abuse take in a local setting.

Physical Abuse

Actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent injury or suffering to a child (includes hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning, biting, administering poisonous substances, suffocation/drowning and excessive force e.g. in feeding or changing a baby).

Sexual Abuse

Actual or likely involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children or adolescents in sexual activity they do not comprehend or to which they are unable to give informed consent, or which violate the social taboos of family roles.

Neglect

Persistent or severe neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

Emotional Abuse

Actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional development of the child caused by persistent or severe ill treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment.

A slightly fuller version is available from CCPAS (see Appendix 5 for contact details)

All staff coming into contact with children should be made aware of these definitions.

Appendix 3

HOW TO RECOGNISE ABUSE

It is important to know how to recognise abuse, and the following definitions will be taken into account in any agency/church policies and procedures.

Physical Signs of Abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given to them
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc.
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc. which do not have an accidental explanation
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse

Indicators of possible Sexual Abuse

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbance, with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations.

Signs of abuse by Neglect

- Under nourishment, Failure to grow
- Constant hunger, stealing or gorging food
- Untreated illnesses
- Inadequate care

Emotional Signs of Abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging. Also depression/aggression, extreme anxiety
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

Appendix 4

Confidential

GENERIC SPECIMEN FORM – RESPONDING TO ABUSE

Name of Agency/Church _____

Name of child/young person _____

Address _____

Date of birth _____

Name of person reporting event _____

Name of person reported to _____

Date _____ Time _____

Sequence of events/actual words used/observations

Action taken _____

Name of person contacted _____

Additional notes _____

Appendix 5

USEFUL ADDRESSES AND RESOURCES

Churches Child Protection Advisory Service

PO Box 133, Swanley
Kent BR8 7UQ
Tel: 01322 667207
Fax: 01322 614 788

Provide support and training across all Christian denominations and can advise and support in policy formulation and helping in individual cases of abuse.

NSPCC

42 Curtain Road
London EC2A 3NH
Tel: 0171 825 2500

Child Protection Helpline: 0800 800 500 (open 24 hours)

Helpline gives advice to anyone about child abuse issues. They are excellent publicity information and leaflets.

Viva Network

PO Box 633
Oxford
OX2 0XZ
Tele: 01865 320100

Has useful advice and help on their website on how to develop a child protection policy. www.viva.org

Save the Children Fund

17 Grove Lane,
Camberwell
London SE5
Tele: 0207 703 5400

Useful information on how to develop a child protection policy

Kidscape

152 Buckingham Palace Road
London SW1W 9TR
Tele: 0207 730 3300

National charity teaching children how to keep safe. They publish a lot of useful information on protecting children from both abuse and bullying.

People in Aid

Regents Wharf
8 All Saints Street
London N2 9RL
Tele: 0207 520 2548

In conjunction with others has produced "A common approach to Child Protection for international NGOs"