

APPENDIX 4 RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO POSSIBLE ABUSE (ADDITIONAL INFORMATION)



Version 1

The following signs **may** be indicators that abuse has taken place but should not be taken in isolation.

TYPE OF ABUSE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
Physical	Where children's or young people's bodies are hurt or injured.
Sexual	Where adults (and sometimes other children or young people) use children to satisfy sexual desires, not necessarily involving physical contact. e.g. exposure to pornography or being made to watch a sexual act.
Neglect	Where adults fail to care for children or young people and protect them from danger, seriously impairing health and development.
Emotional	Where children/young people don't receive love and affection, may be frightened by threats or taunts, or are given responsibilities beyond their years.
Organised	Is sexual abuse where there is more than one abuser and the people concerned appear to act in agreement to abuse children, sometimes under cover of a position of authority.
Spiritual	Is when someone's spiritual being is violated. It can occur through a leadership which is oppressive and excessively strong and controls the church family through fear.
In some instances of abuse, God can be used or scriptures read by the abuser. This is also a form of spiritual abuse as well as sexual abuse.	

Indicators of possible physical abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them.
- Injuries, which occur to the body in places, which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc.
- Injuries that have not received medical attention.
- Neglect – under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care etc.
- 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.
- Eating disorders – anorexia, bulimia.

Indicators of possible emotional 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.

Indicators of possible neglect

- Looking ill-cared for and unhappy.
- Being withdrawn or aggressive.
- Having lingering injuries or health problems.

Who abuses children and young people?

- Very rarely a stranger.
- Often someone who knows the child/young person. e.g. parent, carer, baby-sitter, sibling, relative, or friend of the family.
- Sometimes someone in authority such as a teacher, youth leader, children's worker, or a church worker.
- Sometimes paedophiles and others who set out to join organisations (including churches) to obtain access to children. Remember that such people are often very plausible and may outwardly seem to be the last person you would suspect.

What to do if abuse is disclosed, discovered or suspected

- Do not panic. Do not delay. Do not start to investigate.
- In most scenarios you will just have collected a small piece of information. It will be for others with more training and experience, to evaluate this information.
- Overreaction can be extremely harmful to the child or young person, the accused, the group, the authorities and yourself!
- Your immediate responsibility is to contact the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or Deputy. If the suspicions or allegations involve the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, contact the Deputy, or if the suspicions in any way implicates both, then the report should be made in the first instance to our church's safeguarding advisory service, who will guide you through the next steps:

Thirtyone:eight
 PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ.
 Telephone: 0303 003 11 11 Email: info@thirtyoneeight.org.

Alternatively contact Social Services or the Police:

LCC Social Care (children):	0300 123 6720
LCC Social Care (adults):	0300 123 6721

LCC Social Care out of hours emergency number:	0300 123 6722
The Public Protection Unit Lancashire:	01772 209122
Lancashire Police HQ at Hutton:	101 or 01772 614444

- A flow chart detailing “What to do when you suspect child abuse” is available (see Form 2). This is a guide only and not a substitute for carefully following the procedures detailed in our safeguarding policy.

How the church will respond

- The Safeguarding Co-ordinator will collate the information and refer to the Safeguarding Policy to assess what action should be taken.
- The Safeguarding Co-ordinator may also be required by conditions of the Church Insurance Policy to immediately inform the Insurance Company.
- Suspicions will not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above.

What to do once a child has talked to you about abuse

- Make notes as soon as possible (preferably within one hour of the child talking to you), writing down exactly what the child said and when s/he said it, what you said in reply and what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. a description of the activity).
- Record the dates and times of these events and when you made the record. Keep all hand written notes, even if subsequently typed. Such records should be kept safely for an indefinite period.
- An action Sheet and chart is available (See Form 2).
- Report your discussion as soon as possible to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator. If the latter is implicated report to the Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator. If both are implicated, report to Thirtyone:eight (see notes above) or to Social Services if preferred.
- You should not discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone other than those nominated in the above point.
- Once a child has talked about abuse the worker should consider whether or not it is safe for a child to return home to a potentially abusive situation. On rare occasions it might be necessary to take immediate action to contact Social Services and/or Police to discuss putting into effect safety measures for the child so that they do not return home.

How to respond to a child / young person wanting to talk about abuse

Children’s workers are in a unique position and their relationship with children/young people cannot be underestimated. The church may be providing a safe haven and perhaps the only place where a child feels comfortable and able to talk to adults. It is therefore possible that a child may approach people in the group to talk about abuse.

It is not easy to give precise guidance, but the following may help:

General points

- Show acceptance of what the child says (however unlikely the story may sound)
- Keep calm, look at the child directly and be honest.
- Reflect back what the child has said.
- Don’t ask the child ‘leading questions’.
- Tell the child that you will need to let someone else know – **don’t promise confidentiality.**
- Even when a child has broken a rule, they are not to blame for the abuse.
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened or bribed not to tell.

- Never push for information. If the child decides not to tell you after all, then accept that and let them know that you are always ready to listen.

Helpful things you may say or show

- “I believe you” (or showing acceptance of what the child says)
- “Thank you for telling me”
- “It’s not your fault”
- “I will help you”

Don’t say

- “Why didn’t you tell someone before?”
- “I can’t believe it!”
- “Are you sure this is true?”
- “Why? How? When? Who? Where?”
- “Never make false promises”
- Never make statements such as “I’m shocked, don’t tell anyone else.”

Concluding

- Again, reassure the child that they were right to tell you and show acceptance.
- Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens (you might have to consider referring to Social Services or the Police to prevent a child or young person returning home if you consider them to be seriously at risk of further abuse).
- Contact the person in your church responsible for co-ordinating child protection concerns or contact an agency such as Thirtyone:eight for advice or go directly to Social Services / Police / NSPCC.
- Consider your own feelings and seek pastoral support if needed.