
Aston Clinton Baptist Church

“We are called to serve God and to share his love with others”

Child Protection Policy

This statement was agreed at the Church Business Meeting held on 2nd February 2016.

It will be read annually at the Annual Church Meeting held in the month of January/February where progress in carrying it out will be monitored. The policy may be changed by a majority vote at a Church Business Meeting that has been duly convened according to the Constitution of Aston Clinton Baptist Church.

Mission Statement

We are called to serve God and to share his love with others”.

Aston Clinton Baptist Church recognises the importance of its ministry to children and young people and its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people entrusted to its care.

As part of our mission, the Church is committed to:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting children and young people as well as promoting their welfare and protection.
- Safe recruitment, supervision and training for all the children and youth workers within the Church.
- Adopting a procedure for dealing with concerns about possible abuse.
- Encouraging and supporting parents/carers.
- Supporting anyone affected by abuse in the Church.
- Maintaining good links with the statutory childcare authorities and other organisations.

Church Policy

- As members of Aston Clinton Baptist Church, we commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all, especially children and young people.
- It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children and young people, and to report any abuse discovered or suspected to the Minister, Secretary, Deacons or Child Advocate.
- We recognise that our work with children and young people is the responsibility of the whole Church.
- We undertake to exercise proper care in the selection and appointment of those working with children and young people, whether paid or volunteer and everyone working with children or young people will have a current Criminal Record Bureau check or have submitted their details to start the CRB check process.
- The Church is committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with children and young people, and to providing adequate supervision.
- The Church is committed to following the Home Office Code of Practice “Safe from Harm” and adopts the guidelines and procedures published by the Baptist Union of Great Britain in its publication “Safe to Grow” (revised edition).
- All children’s and young people’ workers must know the recommendations, and undertake to observe them. Each worker shall be given a copy of the Church’s agreed procedures and Good Practice guidelines as stated in the “Safe to Grow” (revised edition).
- As part of our commitment to children and young people, the Church has appointed Mrs Karen Dunnell to be the Child Advocate. The Child Advocate’s role will be regularly explained to children, and her name, address and telephone number will be publicly displayed.

Creating a Safe Environment

- Aston Clinton Baptist Church aims to minimise situations where it is possible for adults to abuse children or where it is possible for children to make false accusations against adults. All children and youth workers (paid or voluntary) must plan their work accordingly.
- Children and youth workers should only work alone with a child or one young person when it is absolutely necessary and where another adult can easily observe what is going on.

Situations should be avoided which could put a child at risk or could expose the worker to malicious allegations, for example:

1. Do not give a child or young person a lift home on your own.
 2. Do not invite a child or young person into the church building or your own home when you are alone.
 3. Do not make home visits on your own or without the permission of their parents or carers.
 4. Do not be alone with a child or young person in any part of the church building where no-one else can see you.
 5. If you have to talk to a child or young person in private, try to do it in the corner of a large room where other people can see you or in a room with an open door or window through which other people can see you.
- Avoid working with a group of children or young people on your own; always have at least two adults in each children's/young people's working group.
 - Avoid sending any personal letters or e-mails to children or young people you are working with.
 - Avoid sending personal text messages or messages using other internet media, e.g. Myspace, Facebook or any other chat rooms.
 - If you consider it is necessary to send a personal letter or e-mail, be very careful to avoid saying anything which could be misinterpreted. Consider asking the advice of another worker before sending the letter or email. Wherever possible, a letter or e-mail to a child or young person should be sent to his or her parent/carer with a request that they read it and pass it on if they are happy for them to have it. Always keep a copy of such letters or e-mails.
 - Be very careful about physical contact with a child or young person.
 - If you have to physically restrain a child or young person to protect someone else or yourself, make it very clear to that child or young person what you are doing and why.
 - Be especially careful about physical contact with teenagers who may develop crushes or infatuations with adults. Do not encourage these and think carefully about how physical contact can be interpreted. Youth workers are in a position of trust and it is therefore unacceptable for them to encourage any behaviour which might allow an overly close or sexual relationship to develop.

Creating a Safe Environment for Residential Activities

It is good practice to have meetings prior to the residential visit so that all aspects of the visit, where children or young people are concerned, are discussed in detail especially supervision. Consider sleeping arrangements prior to the visit.

- Ensure written permission is received prior to the visit and all contact information is recorded and taken to the residential visit with a copy held in the Minister's office if required.
- Sleeping accommodation must be single sex and adults should only enter dormitories or tents which are occupied by members of the opposite sex if they are accompanied by another adult.
- There must also be an adult who will take responsibility for the safety of all children or young people on the visit, and who is also first aid trained.

Awareness

- Let children and young people know that children and youth workers have a child protection responsibility and are available to help them if they have concerns about the way other adults treat them.
- Be observant to changes in children and young people's behaviour and discuss this with the Minister or Child Advocate.

How to deal with disclosures or discovery of abuse towards children or young people

If a child or young person makes a disclosure about emotional or physical abuse or neglect or sexual abuse you **MUST** report this to the Minister or Child Advocate. All subsequent conversations with children or young people should be conducted in the presence of a second adult, i.e. Church Secretary or a member of the Diaconate.

Do not offer complete confidentiality; there are legal requirements regarding the protection of a child or young person which do not allow children or youth workers to offer them total confidentiality. Be clear about this with the child or young person, especially if they ask you if they can tell you something in secret.

Listen to what the child or young person has got to say. Reassure them that he or she did the right thing and that you are taking what they say very seriously. Ask open-ended questions but do not quiz them, do not ask leading questions and do not physically examine them. Never stop a child who is freely recalling significant events. If abuse has taken place, the child or young person will need a lot of reassurance and support and you need to be ready to give this.

If a child or young person has disclosed to you that they are being harmed, be sure to explain to them what you must do with the information they have given you. If you have to report the issue to someone else, offer to do it together with the child or young person as this tends to maintain more confidence between you. Always tell them you will let them know what happens.

As soon as possible make a written record of what has been said or noticed, sign it and date it. Make sure it is clear and factual and try to write down exactly what you and the child or young person said. Make a note of the time it happened, the setting, who was there and what happened immediately beforehand. Keep this record safe and then pass copies to the Child Advocate, Minister and Church Secretary. All disclosures of abuse by a child or young person should be written up and securely stored in this way.

Report the discovery or disclosure to the Child Advocate, Minister and Church Secretary as soon as possible. Say nothing to the child's or young person's parents/carers or alleged abuser (even if it is someone you know well) which might then compromise the child's or young person's safety or investigation by police or social services. Report the abuse that has been disclosed even if it was in the past and the victim says it has stopped. Report any abuse that you think may fall within the definition given above, even if the abuse is alleged to have been carried out by someone who has no connection with the Church.

Make a record of all the contacts made in following this procedure and keep them with your initial report. Continue to keep records of the child's or young person's well being and relationships, even after any referral has been made. These records are not open to the child or young person; the records must be securely stored.

These situations are complex and difficult to handle, they may even cause extreme distress for the adults involved. Children and youth workers should always seek support and guidance from their Minister and Leaders, especially where they are involved in an investigation. The Minister and/or members of the Diaconate should offer any support, prayer and guidance to anyone who is involved in this situation.

Where a child or young person may require urgent first aid or medical treatment, this must take priority over procedures for reporting child protection concerns.

If you think there is an immediate danger to the child or young person, make immediate contact with the Child Advocate, Minister and Church Secretary; if they are not available then with a member of the Diaconate, who if necessary will call the Police. If you cannot make contact with any of these persons, you must call the Police yourself. If you are not sure what to do, always speak to a member of the Diaconate, do not leave it and hope the situation will go away.

Allegations against paid workers, volunteers or others attending the Church

Aston Clinton Baptist Church will take seriously any allegation of abuse by paid workers, volunteers or those attending the church from whatever source (child, young person, parents/carers or member of the community).

The allegation must be reported to the Minister and Church Secretary immediately.

The Church recognises that it has a duty of care to all parties involved. Therefore, whilst any investigation is carried out, the person against whom the allegation has been made must be withdrawn from frontline duties to protect both the accuser and the accused. However, the Church also recognises that a person is innocent until proven guilty and if necessary be restored as soon as possible. The Church will always exercise discernment in these matters, offering support to all individuals involved with any allegations made.

If the allegation is of a serious or criminal activity, the matter must be referred to the Police.

If the allegation is not judged to be serious, then the Minister, Church Secretary and Diaconate will investigate and a number of outcomes are possible, depending on what is discovered:

- No action - because the allegation is shown to be without foundation.
- If it is established that there has been inappropriate behaviour, the individual will be spoken to by the Minister, Church Secretary and Diaconate and further action will be taken; with the possibility of contacting Social Services and the Police.

If there has been inappropriate behaviour and the person works with children and/or young people in the Church, the person may be suspended or permanently barred from working with children/young people and a note will be made that it would not be appropriate for him or her to do so in the future.

31st January 2012/2nd February 2016