

Child protection policy for Ramsey Baptist Church, 2024

This policy is based on guidance from NSPCC Learning (nspcc.org.uk/learning). An up-to-date copy of the policy will be stored in the children's work folder in the vestry at Salem Baptist Chapel, in the office at Great Whyte Chapel and on the church website.

What are the goals and objectives of this ministry?

1. To introduce children and young people from our community to the gospel and ground them in a Christian worldview.
2. To provide Christian teaching tailored to the specific needs of the children and young people within the church family.
3. To model Christ's love to children and young people.
4. To build relationships with the children which will draw them to love the Lord Jesus Christ and the church.

This policy applies to all children's workers, voluntary or paid, working with children and young people on behalf of Ramsey Baptist Church. This can be within the context of organised activities or when providing support as a representative of the church. Each organised activity has a nominated leader or leaders responsible for ensuring policies and procedures are adhered to in their activity.

The purpose of this policy:

- to protect children and young people who attend our activities.
- to provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection and enable us to work safely.

Ramsey Baptist Church believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount.
- all children have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- Valuing them, listening to them and respecting them.
- Appointing a nominated child protection committee consisting of a lead elder for child protection, a child protection coordinator, a child protection trustee and an officer responsible for children and youth work.
- Adopting child protection practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- Recording, storing and using information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers.
- Making sure that children, young people and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern.
- Sharing concerns with agencies who need to know and involving parents and children appropriately.
- Using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately.
- Creating and maintaining an antibullying environment and ensuring that we have a policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise.
- Ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place.
- Ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance.
- Building a safeguarding culture where staff and volunteers, children, young people and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

Pastor: Jonathan Chell

Child protection coordinator: Yvonne Chell

Elder responsible for children and youth work: Andy Beale

Safeguarding Trustee: Rachel Fletcher

This policy was last reviewed on (date)

Signed:.....(Child Protection Co-ordinator)

Signed.....(Pastor)

Child protection procedures

1. Responding to concerns about a child's welfare.

Identifying signs of abuse

Children and young people may disclose abuse in a variety of ways: directly (specific statements about what has happened), indirectly (ambiguous statements that something is wrong), behaviourally (displaying behaviour that signals something is wrong, sometimes deliberately) and non-verbally (eg writing letters, drawing pictures or communicating in other ways). If an adult notices signs that a child might be distressed it is important that action is taken.

Categories of abuse

The categories of abuse are physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and emotional abuse.

Examples of signs of abuse:

Physical abuse - unexplained injury, bruising or illness.

Neglect - poor hygiene, being left alone, poor self esteem.

Sexual abuse - fear of an individual, over-sexualised language or behaviour for their age.

Emotional abuse – being overly affectionate towards strangers, being aggressive to other children, having poor social skills.

We must also be aware of the risk of domestic abuse, bullying, cyberbullying, child trafficking and female genital mutilation.

How to respond to signs or suspicions of abuse

When a volunteer or staff member is concerned about the possibility of abuse, the adult can show they care about the young person by giving them attention, let them talk by giving them time, and show they understand by reflecting back what they have said. If a child tells you about abuse, reassure them that they are safe to talk about it, but you will need the activity leader to join you in the conversation (or another member of the team). Listen to the child and let them talk, but do not question them. This is not the role of the staff and volunteers in the children's work programme but is the role of the police and social services.

Do not promise the child confidentiality. However, do not share what is said with anyone who does not need to be informed. The child has a right to privacy.

Sharing information

Any concerns should be discussed with the activity leader and the child protection co-ordinator.

Current leaders:

Sunday School - Mike Smith

Bible Class – Yvonne Chell

Toddler group - Ros James and Jo Smith

Primary age - Yvonne Chell

Secondary age - Andy Beale

If abuse is suspected this should be discussed with the parent or guardian (referred to throughout as 'parent') as soon as possible by the most appropriate person. The only time a parent should not be informed is if it is believed that doing so would cause further harm to the child. Parents should be informed of what was said, what was done in response and what was documented. They should be directed to the child protection policy and procedures document.

If a child is thought to be in immediate danger the police should be informed on 101. If it is an emergency call 999.

If there is concern but the child is not thought to be in immediate danger then social services should be informed on 0345 045 5203 between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday. If it is outside office hours, call the First Response and Emergency Duty Team on 01733 234724.

These procedures apply, regardless of who the alleged perpetrator of abuse is. If a child is the alleged perpetrator, they are also in need of protection and their protection and welfare must also be considered.

Once action has been taken (parent, child protection co-ordinator, elder, and if necessary, social services or the police informed) document briefly:

- who is the subject of the concern with family contact details
- when the conversation took place or concern was raised
- who was involved in the conversation and what was said
- when the parent was informed (or if not, why not)
- what was done
- sign and date the document

The completed documentation should be stored in the incident book in the children's work folder in the vestry of Salem Baptist Chapel, and destroyed after six months. Before destroying the documentation, the child protection co-ordinator and trustee should review that the appropriate actions have been carried out for each record.

How to respond to allegations of abuse against a member of staff or volunteer

If a child, parent, member of staff or volunteer alleges abuse against a member of the team working in the children's work programme, the parent, child protection co-ordinator, police and social services should be informed in the same way. The person against whom the abuse has been alleged should be asked to leave the premises - this may involve asking someone else to come to the premises to ensure childcare is still provided.

2. Storing child protection records

Any records held about children must be held in compliance with data protection regulations. Information must be relevant, accurate, up to date and only kept for as long as is necessary.

Contact details for parents should be held by the activity organiser, along with any information on the needs of the child. This must be kept securely. A hard copy should be kept in the locked box in the vestry at Salem Chapel, and an electronic copy can be kept as long as it is password protected. Any information should be deleted if a child has not attended for a year. If an activity organiser needs to hold hard copies at home they must ensure these are kept securely.

Records of child protection concerns should be stored securely in the locked box in the vestry at Salem Chapel. These should be reviewed within six months by the child protection coordinator and destroyed if no further action is required.

3. Bullying

Ramsey Baptist Church children's work programme does not tolerate bullying. Any child who repeatedly behaves in a way that is intended to physically or emotionally hurt another child will have their behaviour highlighted privately, in the presence of two leaders, and their parents will be informed. The conversation will be documented in the incident book. If the behaviour does not improve, they will be asked not to return to the group or activity.

Evidence of bullying by group staff and volunteers will be dealt with in the same way as any inappropriate behaviour.

To prevent our activities putting children at risk of cyberbullying, children and young people will be discouraged from bringing their own electronic devices to activities that are not run online.

No photos should be taken on digital devices at events, unless a group leader takes photos with the knowledge of the parents for use for on-site displays. No photos of individual children will be published on the internet.

4. Safer recruitment

All staff and volunteers in the children's work programme are appointed with the approval of the church eldership. They are normally church members, known to the church eldership to be of good character, and their beliefs and lifestyles are in accordance with the teaching of the Baptist Church. All staff and volunteers have Enhanced DBS checks. This is performed by the child protection co-ordinator through a third party organisation. Evidence of an enhanced DBS check by another agency in which they work with children, which has been performed since the subject became known to the eldership, will be accepted and a further check will not be necessary. Results of DBS checks will be shared with the eldership before approval is given to commence working within a group. Any volunteers visiting a group to see if they would be suitable to be involved, who have not had the DBS check, must be supervised at all times by a member of the team.

People on the barred list must not have a role within the children's work of Ramsey Baptist Church. If someone on the barred list applies to work with children, the police must be informed.

If the enhanced DBS check raises a concern, a risk assessment must be carried out involving the child protection committee. Information must only be shared with those who need to know and the applicant must be told who has been informed. The risk assessment must include consideration of the nature of any previous offence, the relevance of that offence to the role and whether the role provides opportunities to reoffend.

Copies of DBS certificates should not be stored but a record must be kept of the date the check was completed, the level of the check, the reference number on the certificate and the decision made about whether the person was allowed to take up a role within the children's work.

All new volunteers will be given a copy of the child protection policy and procedures, and asked to agree to work within this. The membership will have an annual update on the child protection policy to form part of the annual child protection training.

Whilst young people under 18 are often willing to help with children's activities, for the purposes of child protection they will be considered as one of the children.

If a barred person is known to attend general church activities, the eldership and child protection team would agree a plan with the person to ensure protection of the individual and the children on site. The Baptist Union safeguarding policy provides a suggested contract which could be used to support the discussion.

5. Behaviour management and codes of conduct

Behaviour of staff and volunteers

Everyone working with children within Ramsey Baptist Church children and youth activities is acting in a position of authority and responsibility. They are often seen as role models, so their behaviour must be appropriate, in person and online.

Workers should avoid being left alone with a child, and should support one another to ensure they do not leave another worker alone with a child. This principle applies when transporting children in vehicles.

Do not take any unnecessary risks. To maintain safety, do not physically touch a child, unless to restrain them from injury. If a child seeks physical contact with a worker this should be kept to a minimum and it should be discouraged. If a worker sees a child attempting to make physical contact with another worker they should offer support to their colleague and encourage the child to express affection another way. Do not smoke, consume alcohol or use any illegal substances. Do not engage in any conversation that could be considered threatening, patronising, belittling, insensitive or sexually suggestive.

Where children are left in the care of the leaders without parents being present, a maximum ratio of 8 children to 1 adult is recommended. Children under the age of four would not normally be left at a children's activity of the children's work programme without a parent or carer on the premises.

Members of churches regularly invite each other, with their children, into each other's homes, as an expression of friendship and fellowship. However, when children and young people are coming into a group leader's home as a designated youth event, child protection procedures will apply. As at all events, parents must be aware of where their children are and who will be supervising them. No adult should have

children and young people attending their home for a youth event without a second adult present. Whilst church members who are not part of the group's leadership team may host an event in their home, at least one member of the group's leadership team should be present with the young people at all times.

Any volunteer or paid worker at a group whose behaviour is noted to consistently fall below the standards outlined above should be reported to the group leader, eldership team and child protection coordinator. Depending on the seriousness of the behaviour they may be given further training, asked to step away from involvement in children's work or, in serious allegations, be reported to the police or social services. There may also be implications for the individual's standing within the church.

Behaviour of children and young people

Children attending church activities should be encouraged to show respect to God, to the leaders, the other children and the premises. However, church activity leaders are not responsible for disciplining children. Ground rules can be laid down and rewards can be used to encourage good behaviour, but if children persistently fail to adhere to these rules the parents should be advised that this is not an appropriate activity for them to attend. Decisions about these situations should be made with the full involvement of all the activity leaders.

6. Safer activities and events

Parental consent must be obtained for children attending activities at Ramsey Baptist Church. This will involve parents supplying contact details and normally providing transport to and from the event. If transport is provided, this will be with parents' consent. Parents can show consent through online communication. If children are taken off site parents should be informed and if appropriate, a signed consent form should be returned.

Group leaders are responsible for completing a register at the start of every activity and ensuring a telephone is accessible at all events.

Any accidents or incidents should be reported in the incident book in the children's work folder in the vestry at Salem Chapel. Parents should be informed as soon as possible.

Any information regarding planned activities should be communicated directly to parents, via hard copies of letters, email, text or messaging on social media. Young people may be included in written communications but should never be communicated with directly without parents' knowledge.

All workers have a responsibility to take action if the premises are dangerous. The deacon responsible for property should be informed if there are any risks noted within the building. The group leader should be informed if there is damaged equipment. Risk assessments should be completed for all church sites and for off-site activities.

Fire safety policies will be overseen by the deacons of the church and all volunteers will be aware of these. All volunteers involved in food preparation will be expected to have accessed the Food Standards Agency online training. A first aid box will be

maintained on site for all activities. High risk activities, for example, residential trips, should have a designated trained first aider.

Transportation of children in vehicles should only be done with parental permission and with the correct insurance cover.

7. Social media and online safety

Social media and online activities can offer benefits for children and young people, helping them stay connected and find new ways of learning. It can also have benefits for organisations, enabling them to maintain contact with children and young people outside of face-to-face activities, and giving opportunity for promoting events and for livestreaming activities. We want to develop policies that enable safe online communication, rather than stopping it or making it difficult for our children and youth workers.

Our general principle of not being alone with a child applies to all online communication, as well as face-to-face activities.

This policy will give details of how we behave through the following mediums:

- Personal posts on social media, for example Twitter and Facebook.
- Personal communication with under 18s on social media, for example Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger, or by SMS or email.
- Group chats that might be useful with a youth group, for example on Whatsapp.
- Group meetings online, for example on Zoom or MS Teams.
- Public videos, for example on YouTube.

Personal posts:

- Staff and volunteers should be aware that children and young people can look up their personal social media accounts. They must be careful not to have any inappropriate or harmful content, and privacy settings should be turned on unless the account is used only for church purposes and all content is appropriate for the children and young people to see. We should all already be aware that everything we post reflects on our church and Christ as his representatives. As staff and volunteers in Ramsey Baptist Church Children's Activities we are also role models for the children and young people.

Personal communication:

- Children and young people should only have online contact with activity leaders through accounts approved by the organisation. Staff and volunteers should avoid private communication via any digital device or platform with an individual child or young person (and therefore should not accept '*friends requests*' from children and young people). Communications should, wherever possible, be sent from an account approved by the organisation, and should either be sent to a group that includes at least two activity leaders, or if information is being sent to individual children then parents should be copied into all communications. The authorised account could be a personal account if this is deemed appropriate because of the nature of the platform and the nature of the account. However, where possible an account linked to the church activities should be used. All communication to children and young people should be relevant to the work of the activities and should be

appropriate to the age of the child or young person, and should use a platform that is appropriate for the age of the children and young people involved.

Group chats:

- Parents must consent to children joining a group chat hosted by Ramsey Baptist Church Children's Activities. Any online forums hosted by Ramsey Baptist Church children's activities must be restricted to the relevant age range, on a secure platform, with regular moderating by leaders. Guidance should be clear regarding what the purpose is and what can be posted. Platforms should be appropriate for the age of the children and young people involved.

Online group meetings:

- Parents must consent to children joining any online events. This is generally achieved by sending links to parents so they are responsible for joining the event, unless a parent requests an alternative arrangement. Events involving children will not be recorded and will be supervised by at least two leaders who are visible at all times. They will not be publicly streamed. Leaders must consider their backgrounds to ensure they are appropriate for the children joining.

Public videos:

- No images of individual children will be posted publicly online.

8. Complaints

Parents are welcome to discuss concerns with group leaders, the child protection co-ordinator and the eldership. Any formal complaints should be addressed to the eldership in writing, whose response will depend on their investigation and their legal obligations. Parents can expect a written response.