

1. Introduction

1.1 Children and young people are valued yet vulnerable members of the Christian community who need our special care. Each one is a whole person with qualities, gifts, needs and rights, and should be honoured and respected by us all. At Rushmere Baptist Church we have many children in our care, entrusted to us by their parents, and we take very seriously our responsibility to welcome, nurture and protect them. We will not be satisfied until we are sure that we have done all in our power to protect them from harm of any kind.

1.2 The Children Act, passed in 1989, was a landmark in promoting good, safe practice in long-term child care and was followed in 1993 by the Home Office Code of Practice *Safe from Harm*. This aimed to help volunteer organisations working with children for shorter periods by providing a framework for the promotion of children's welfare and the prevention of abuse. The Baptist Union's response was a document entitled *Safe to Grow*, containing guidelines which can be adapted to individual church situations. As our Church commits itself to the adoption of these guidelines, we are making a positive contribution to the safe growth of children in the life God intends them to enjoy.

1.3 At Rushmere Baptist Church we aim to be a community where:

- children are listened to, given a sense of belonging, nurtured and kept safe;
- parents are supported and encouraged;
- those who work with children and young people are supported and protected.

1.4 We have produced the following documents for use within our youth organisations:

- **A Policy Statement on Young People and the Church** (a version adapted specifically for parents is also included in Appendix 14)
- **The Young Persons' Advisor**
- **The Responsible Person**
- **The Youth Co-ordinator**
- **Good Practice Guidelines for the Prevention of Abuse** (including Church rules and some suggestions which will help to protect youth workers from false accusations of abuse)
- **Procedures if Abuse is Disclosed or Discovered**
- **The Appointment Process** (outlining the procedure to be followed when new youth workers are appointed.)
- **Model Job Profile for Youth Workers** (for the use of the Youth Co-ordinator and Principal Leaders when writing youth workers' job profiles)
- **Application Form for Voluntary Work with Children and Young People at Rushmere Baptist Church** (to be completed by anyone wishing to work in our youth organisations)
- **Information on How to Apply for an Enhanced Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau**
- **Criminal Records Declaration**

- **Request for Reference** (a letter to be sent to the referees named by an applicant)
- **Reference Form** (to be completed by the referees)
- **Youth Worker Agreement** (to be signed by new workers to show that they understand the nature of the work they are about to undertake)
- **Registration and Consent Form for Under 18's** (to be signed by parents when their children join one of our youth organisations)
- **Event and Activity Checklist for the Use of Youth Leaders** (listing information which should be given to parents by youth leaders before special events, activities or residential holidays take place)
- **Parental Consent and Medical Form for Special Events, Activities and Residential Holidays for Under 18's** (to be signed by parents when their children are going to participate in day trips, dangerous activities or overnight stays)
- **Sample Letter and Parental Consent Form for Other Events and Activities for Under 18's** (a guide for youth leaders preparing consent forms for short and non-hazardous activities away from the Church premises or outside the group's normal meeting times)
- **Incident Record** (to be completed by any youth worker who observes an incident or obtains information of concern about a child or worker)
- **Incident Report Form** (to be used by the Responsible Person as a written record of concerns expressed and any action taken)
- **Useful Contact Numbers**

1.5 Copies of the Policy Statement and information about the Young Persons' Advisors will be given to parents, and copies of the above documents will be made available to parents and other interested parties on request.

1.6 It is anticipated that this policy will cover most situations which are likely to arise in our church. However, there may be incidents which will fall outside its scope. In these cases, it may be necessary for the Minister, Youth Co-ordinator or Responsible Person to take advice from other agencies or from the Baptist Union.

1.7 The terms "children", "young people" and "youth" in our documentation are interchangeable.

1.8 The use of the term "parent" in our documentation includes carers.