

4. The Young Persons' Advisor

4.1 Introduction

At Rushmere Baptist Church, two independent and trustworthy people (preferably one male and one female), who are Church Members but are currently not involved in youth work, will be appointed to be Young Persons' Advisors. They will be given the responsibility of establishing some contact with young people in the care of the Church, and will be available to listen to whatever young people wish to share, whether it is about home life, school, church, faith, friendships or any other matter.

Access to an "independent person" gives young people more rights and reduces the potential for undiscovered abuse.

If a child, within the confidence of this relationship, should disclose any matters of concern, the Young Persons' Advisor will know the procedures to follow and will act appropriately.

The Young Persons' Advisor will act as "advocate" and be the person who will speak for them, especially when they may not be able to easily express their particular views or feelings. This becomes especially important when, in the ordinary business life of the Church, young people are not consulted and when their views are not taken into account.

The Young Persons' Advisor will help the Church to combine the guidelines of *Safe to Grow* with good practice. It must be remembered that Government Guidelines (*Safe from Harm*) recommend that young people have access to an "independent person" to minimise the possibility of any abuse going undetected.

4.2 The Role of the Young Persons' Advisor

Ideally, the Young Persons' Advisor will:

- a) **Become a voice for the young people**
 - by encouraging the Church to reflect on the impact of its plans for young people and in ensuring that their opinions and feelings are heard.
- b) **Act as a contact person for young people and their families**
 - by being an "independent person" listening to their concerns, comments, suggestions and complaints regarding any aspect of the Church's work and relationship with young people.
- c) **Support and monitor the implementation and use of the Rushmere Baptist Church *Safe to Grow* Policy within the stated boundaries of safe practice**
 - by becoming familiar with the policies and procedures of our *Safe to Grow* Policy and its associated documents and by being vigilant in promoting their adherence at all times.

4.3 The Function of the Young Persons' Advisors

- a) **As a voice for the young people**
 - The Young Persons' Advisors might speak for them in a variety of ways on practical matters or spiritual issues. They will:
 - listen to what the young people are saying, either directly or through their leaders;
 - stand alongside them as they represent their views;
 - encourage them as they speak; and
 - represent their views.

b) As a contact person for young people and their families

- The Young Persons' Advisors will have their names, photographs and telephone numbers publicised in a prominent position within the Church. Young people, parents and carers will also be given a leaflet annually and be invited to raise with one of the Advisors any concerns they have that they might not be able to take to other Church leaders.
- The Advisors must know how to listen to children when disclosures are made and must be supportive of the Church's policy to report any abuse discovered or suspected.
- It is also important that children should receive the message that it is "OK" to talk about harm that is caused to them. This will be reinforced by advertising the *Childline* number on the young people's noticeboard.

c) In supporting and monitoring the implementation and use of the Church's *Safe to Grow* Policy within the stated boundaries of safe practice

- As part of a team, the Young Persons' Advisors will work with other leaders to ensure that all aspects of the guidelines are adopted and that regular training in child protection is given to all workers.

4.4 Person Specification for Appointment

a) A Young Persons' Advisor will ideally demonstrate the following qualities:

- maturity
- ability to keep confidences
- emotional stability
- experience with children
- have a good rapport with children and young people
- have available time
- be respected by the Church leadership
- willingness to co-operate with others
- willingness to undergo training
- ability to reflect and act independently if necessary
- ability to consult.

b) It would also be beneficial if the Young Persons' Advisor had time and opportunity to visit the youth activities.

4.5 The Appointment

The procedure for the appointment of Young Persons' Advisors will be as follows:

1. Suitable people will be identified by the diaconate, in consultation with the Youth Co-ordinator.
2. They will be interviewed by the Minister and Youth Co-ordinator. This interview will involve some discussion of the Church's and the candidate's expectations.
3. Two character references will be sought.
4. The candidates will be asked to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau (see information given in Appendix 3) and to sign a Criminal Records Declaration (Appendix 4) pending the receipt of the Disclosure from the CAS.
5. A limited term of appointment will be agreed. This will initially be for three years, but will be renewable after this period. (A review meeting will be held by the Minister and Youth Co-ordinator before the end of the period.)
6. The Church Meeting will confirm the appointment.