

## KickStart

Gets you started on key issues:

- What are the issues?
- Does it affect us?
- What do we do next?

*In a society where the abuse (and awareness of abuse) of children is growing, it is a sad fact that even Christian communities are not immune to the problem. Children's workers may be required to look after children who have been abused, are being abused or are capable of making allegations of abuse. One million children are harmed each year – statistically there **will** be people in your church who have suffered some form of abuse.*

*Churches can also be very attractive places for those wishing to be involved with children for the wrong reasons. A carefully thought-out Child Care Policy (CCP) can help significantly to minimise these risks.*

# Child Care

## What is child abuse?

*"Child abuse covers anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospects of a safe and healthy development into adulthood."*

'Abuse' includes: physical injury, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or neglect, physical neglect, ritualistic abuse.

## What are the legal requirements?

There is currently no mandatory requirement for a Child Care Policy (CCP). But, some children's activities may need to be registered with the local Social Services department (SSd), in which case a number of conditions must be met.

## Should our children's work be registered?

Each County's SSd is responsible for implementing registration and should be contacted for specific advice. As a general rule, registration of a scheme will be required under the following circumstances:

- any or all of the children are under 8 years, **and**
- the scheme operates for more than 2 hours in any one day, **and**
- it operates for 6 or more days in a year, **and**
- it uses any indoor premises.

Hence, most 'normal' church activities such as Sunday School, toddlers' groups, weeknight activities, after-school clubs, church fun days, holiday clubs and playschemes, etc. **will not** need to be registered.

However, regular shoppers' crèches and pre-school playgroups **will** need to be registered.

If foster children attend your activities there will be additional legal requirements, whether or not the work has to be registered. Contact the foster parents in the first instance.

## What does registration entail?

Specific requirements will be made regarding: qualifications of staff (including first aid), staff-to-child ratios, premises, record keeping, employer's liability insurance (where staff are paid even £1)

This list is not exhaustive – specific details should be obtained from the local DSS.

## What are the benefits of a CCP?

- A set of clear guidelines under which all children's work is administered throughout the church regarding how children's workers are appointed, how they should conduct themselves, etc.
- Practical advice for workers.
- Children's workers and other leaders are helped to identify the signs of possible child abuse and what procedures should be followed if abuse is suspected.
- A message is given that the church is responsible in the care of its children.
- The message is reinforced that children are important.

## Points to watch

A primary aim in children's work is to demonstrate God's love for them in a caring and affectionate manner. In our determination to eliminate any actual or accusation of child abuse, we must be careful not to write rules and regulations which actually inhibit that aim. We must also be careful not to let our **Child Care Policy** become a **Church Protection Policy**.

Being proactive can help assure the authorities, avoiding them imposing a heavy-handed approach.

## Resources

The PCCA Churches' Child Protection Service, P.O. Box 133, Swanley, Kent BR3 7UQ (01322 667207, Helpline 01322 660011) are the recognised Christian experts in this field, providing advice and information on any aspect, including the writing of CCP. They also run regular seminars nationwide.

Publications available include:

- *PCCA's Guide To The Children's Act 1989 – The Day Care Of Children Under 8 Years Of Age In Non-Domestic Premises*
- *Guidance To Churches – Protecting Children & Appointing Children's Workers*
- *Guidance To Churches – Policy Documents* (on disk)

*What on Earth are we Doing to our Children?* is a small pamphlet that provides facts, figures and personal stories relating to abuse and is produced by the Maranatha Community, Manchester (0161 748 4858).



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