

Child Protection Policy and Procedures: Working with Children and Young People

Summary Document for General Reference



Synod of the Diocese of West Malaysia

St Mary's Cathedral

Making disciples of Jesus Christ

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1. Child Protection Policy

The Cathedral takes its responsibilities to the children and young people in its care extremely seriously. We are delighted that many talented members of the Church community are willing to give their time and skills to helping our children and young people nurture and develop their Christian faith. The Cathedral seeks to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all the children and young people under its care.

1.1. Statement of Commitment:

The Cathedral and members of the Church Community recognise the necessity of and are committed to keeping children and young people safe by:-

- Ensuring the welfare and wellbeing of the child is upheld as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, the Child Act 2001 and the Child Act (Amendment) 2016
- Ensuring that all children in our care have a right to protection from all types of harm, abuse and neglect
- Valuing children, listening to them and respecting them. Recognising that all children and young people are entitled to equal levels of protection regardless of age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation
- Adhering to the principle of the “best interests of the child” in all decisions impacting on children
- Adopting child protection and safeguarding practices through the implementation of this Child Protection Policy and related procedures

1.2. Aims and Principles

1.2.1. This document outlines:

- a. the issues and principles of safeguarding children within St. Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur;
- b. the procedures for responding to, documenting, and reporting a concern or complaint of abuse regarding children within the Cathedral, and follow up actions.

1.2.2. It is our goal to create a safe and loving environment in which the children and young people who are entrusted to our care are able to learn about God, discover Biblical truths, and learn what it means to follow Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. It is our desire that our children, being precious and created in the image of God, grow in the love and delight of God in a safe environment.

1.2.3. Effective child protection is essential as part of wider work to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children. All individuals and ministries within the Cathedral should aim to proactively safeguard and promote the welfare of children so that the need for action to protect children from harm is reduced.

1.2.4. Although a policy cannot completely prevent child abuse, it can certainly reduce the risk to children¹ as well as seek to educate children, children's ministry workers, youth workers, and the congregation.

¹ This policy is aimed at safeguarding children and young people but it is recognised that the tenets outlined could additionally be adopted in the protection of vulnerable adults within the Cathedral community.

1.3. Purpose of the Child Protection Policy

- 1.3.1. As children may face potential harm in many ways, it is necessary to have a policy to protect our children and young people. Child abuse can take a variety of forms and it can be physical, emotional or sexual in nature. When child abuse occurs, the consequences are devastating to all who are involved. Therefore, it is important to take steps to educate the congregation about child protection and to prevent abuse.
 - a. The church is concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God's purpose for everyone.
 - b. The church seeks to safeguard all members of the church community, of all ages.
 - c. It is the responsibility of each member of the congregation to seek to prevent harm to and abuse of children.
- 1.3.2. It is the duty of all Cathedral workers and volunteers who work with children to prevent abuse. All members of the Cathedral are encouraged to raise concerns they may have about the wellbeing of any child.

1.4. Definitions

1.4.1. In this document:

- a. **"Abuse"** may be physical abuse and / or emotional abuse and / or sexual.
- b. **"Child Protection Team"** or **"CPT"** refers to members listed under section 1.5.
- c. **"Child"** or **"Children"** is used to denote anyone who has not yet reached the age of eighteen.
- d. **"Child protection"** is used for responding to concerns where it appears that a child may be harmed or be in danger of harm.
- e. **"Complaint"** or **"Concern"** relates to any report /information received concerning abuse or suspicion of abuse against a child.
- f. **"Complainant"** relates to a person raising / making / lodging / alleging a complaint or concern either about the welfare of a child or against another person in a case of suspected abuse against a child.
- g. **"Victim"** refers to the child or person who is the subject of the concern or complaint received.
- h. **"Survivor"** refers to a child or adult who has lived through alleged abuse which is no longer currently happening.
- i. **"Child care-giver"** refers to any person within the Cathedral who has been entrusted with the care of any child or children within the Cathedral
- j. **"Helpers"** refers to individuals who have been approved by an authorised person to assist duly appointed workers or leaders or as and when necessary;
- k. **"Leader"** includes duly appointed workers for any child care, protection; education; instruction; activity programme organised by the Cathedral;
- l. **"Respondent"** or **"Perpetrator"** refers to a person against whom a complaint has been lodged.

- m. **“Safeguarding”** covers vetting and safer recruitment, safer working practices, responding to concerns, dealing with allegations against those responsible for children, and matters related to the safety of children.
- n. **“SCAN”** stands for ‘suspected cases of abuse and neglect’. Government hospitals have in place a designated SCAN team comprising professionals trained to deal with these specific cases. This includes nurses and doctors. A child can present at a hospital emergency room or clinic as a SCAN case and their protocol should be implemented.

1.4.2. Physical abuse

According to the Child Act 2001, physical abuse is substantial and observable injury to any part of the child’s body as a result of the non-accidental application of force or an agent to the child’s body that is evidenced by, amongst other things, a laceration, a contusion, an abrasion, a scar, a fracture or other bone injury, a dislocation, a sprain, haemorrhaging, the rupture of a viscous membrane (the layer between solid or liquid or connective tissues), a burn, a scald, the loss or alteration of consciousness or physiological functioning, or the loss of hair or teeth.

1.4.3. Emotional abuse

According to the Child Act 2001, emotional abuse is substantial and observable impairment of the child’s mental or emotional functioning that is evidenced by, amongst other things, a mental or behavioural disorder, including anxiety, depression, withdrawal, aggression or delayed development. It may involve:

- a. conveying to the children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person.
- b. not giving the child opportunities to express their views.
- c. deliberately silencing them or ridiculing what they say or how they communicate.
- d. age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.
- e. interactions that are beyond the child’s developmental capability, as well as overprotection.
- f. limitation of exploration and learning.
- g. preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.
- h. seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another (for example in domestic violence situations).
- i. causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or involving the exploitation or corruption of children.

1.4.4. Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is the participation of a child whether actively, partially actively and/or as an observer in any activity which is sexual in nature for the purposes of any pornographic, obscene or indecent material, photographic, recording, film, videotape or performance, and/or sexual exploitation by any person for that person’s or another person’s sexual gratification. This may include:

- a. forcing or enticing or encouraging or grooming a child to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.
- b. activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching (either underneath or through clothing).

- c. non-contact activities such as involving children in the viewing of or in the production of sexual images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- d. Sexual abuse which is not solely perpetrated by adult males but also by women and other children .
- e. Encouraging sexual abuse includes consenting to sexual activities where the child is the initiator.

1.4.5. Neglect

Neglect is the persistent and/or severe neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care (physical, emotional, and developmental) resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health, education, development, nutrition, safety, or protection. This may include:

- a. failure to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment).
- b. failure to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
- c. failure to ensure adequate supervision.
- d. failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- e. neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

1.4.6. Child Trafficking

Child trafficking is the unlawful transfer of possession, custody or control of a child. A child suspected to be unlawfully in the care of a 'parent' or 'spouse' either through abduction, adoption, marriage or other circumstances is deemed to be at risk and in need of protection.

There are further points under this section omitted in this summary document.

2. Safe Working Procedures and Policies

Having established a Policy of seeking to protect and safeguard children and young people from harm, the Cathedral will implement procedures that ensure that those goals are met. The Cathedral commits to review these safeguarding procedures regularly and refine them to ensure their effectiveness and applicability within our evolving context.

2.1. Appointment of Workers (Paid and Voluntary)

- 2.1.1. To ensure the safety of our children and young people, the Cathedral requires all childcare providers and care-givers *i.e.* workers, whether paid or volunteers, who interact with children to read and agree to abide by the Child Protection Policy and Procedures prior to taking up a post. A rigorous process for ensuring appropriate screening shall be undertaken of workers with children. This protects not only the children but also the workers and we are grateful to all our children's workers who comply with this process to ensure the safety of the young people in their care.

- 2.1.2. All persons (applicants) who wish to serve as a childcare provider or care-giver must fully complete:
- a. An Application Form
 - b. A Confidential Disclosure Form
 - i. Further official background checks may be required and requested
- 2.1.3. As part of the screening process an applicant will be required to submit two references from people who know the worker well and at least one should be able to comment on their ability to work with children and young people. Depending on the position, there may also be a requirement for an interview.
- 2.1.4. The Dean or Superintendent of ministries is able to ask any person to change ministry at any time without reason.
- 2.1.5. Example forms are provided in the Appendix of this *Child Protection Policy and Procedures* document.

2.2. Guidelines for Safe Working with Children and Young People

2.2.1. Ministry Sessions

a. Spaces for Ministry

- The designated area must be kept safe and be suitable for children's ministry. This should include appropriate cleanliness. Equipment and materials provided should be age appropriate and in good, workable condition.
- The area should be visible but not accessible to those outside of the ministry activities.
- Children should not be able to exit teaching areas without the knowledge and permission of the childcare-giver, helper, or leader.
- A well-stocked first aid kit should be kept near and all childcare-givers, helpers, and leaders should be trained in basic first aid for children.

b. Recruitment and training of volunteers and workers

- Under the oversight of the Dean or his representative the Children's Work or Youth Group Team Leader shall be responsible for the recruitment and training of ministry workers and volunteers (activity group leaders). They shall be responsible for suitably screening candidates using the procedures provided in the *Child Protection Policy and Procedures* document and providing training for childcare-givers, helpers, and leaders.
- Leaders should be trained in all the responsibilities of caring for children, treating them properly, and reporting suspected child abuse.
- Visiting helpers, leaders, and volunteers from within or outside of Malaysia will be expected to adhere to our child protection policies. They will also be expected to read and sign our forms and provide references. If they are from overseas (eg. UK), they will be expected to provide a criminal disclosure document readily obtainable from their country of residence.

c. Consent and Documentation

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) should complete a registration form (see Appendix) giving details of:

1. Names, address and phone numbers of child and parent(s)/guardian(s).
 2. Name and phone number of a contact person for an emergency situation.
 3. Important medical information *e.g.* allergies, disabilities and special diets.
 4. Permission for leaders to obtain medical treatment in an emergency.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be kept informed of details about the group, such as names of leaders, current and future curriculum, special events coming up, contact details for the group leader (if appropriate), etc.
 - Attendance registers or headcounts shall be taken at the start of all activities.
 - All data held on children must comply with our guidelines on data protection. Data on children should not be shared outside of the ministry or for any other purposes than it was expressly given.

d. Safe Practices

- Treat all children with dignity and respect.
- All those working with children and youth should be aware of appropriate physical contact. Regardless of a child's age, permission should be sought from the child before touching, stroking, hugging, kissing, holding hands. This helps to model consent to both the child and others present whilst respecting the child's body and autonomy over their body. It also protects the leader from accusations of inappropriate or unwarranted physical contact.
- All those working with children and youth should be aware of their language and tone. Do not belittle, scapegoat, put down, or ridicule a child or young person (even in 'fun'). Do not use language or behaviour with sexual connotations (e.g. flirting or innuendo).
- Leaders should take care not to engage in slandering or gossiping about children or their families to those within or outside of their ministry. This includes relaying difficult situations which may have arisen, frustrations with a child's behaviour or struggles a child is having. If needed, leaders should instead discuss with their heads of ministry for further support and guidance.
- Act inclusively, seeking to make every child feel welcome and valued. Do not exclude other children unless there is a good reason. Do not show favouritism or encourage excessive attention from a particular child.
- As much as possible, leaders shall work in pairs. If groups have only one leader they shall meet where they can be clearly seen by others. Ratios of leaders to children/young people will be reviewed periodically by the relevant Children's Work and Youth Group Team Leaders.
- At least two leaders must be present when first aid is administered and treatment documented. Particular care shall be taken with hygiene. Examination/surgical gloves shall be used wherever possible.
- Male leaders shall be particularly aware of their behaviour towards children, keeping unavoidable physical contact (such as allowing children to sit on a leader's lap) to a minimum.
- Younger children (age 0-9) shall be accompanied by an appropriate female leader/designated helper over the age of 18 when requiring a visit to the toilet, as appropriate to their age. Older children shall obtain the permission of their leader to leave the class in order to visit the toilet. These toilet breaks will be scheduled.

- Children will be accompanied by a female leader to either the female toilet or the toilet for the disabled during unscheduled toilet breaks.
- If a child is uncomfortable going to the toilet with a leader/helper then the child's parent or guardian should be located to help them go to the toilet. They should not be pressured or made to feel embarrassed that they do not want to go with the leader/helper.
- Leaders and parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be alert for people wandering around who are unknown to the leaders.
- Leaders shall have developed clearly thought-out procedures for the conclusion of the program, including ensuring safe exiting of the children.
- Children shall only be able to leave the teaching area when collected by a parent or appointed guardian. This is applicable for children aged 9 years and under.
- Enough leaders shall be available to deal with the number of children that could attend, as appropriate to the activity, in order to ensure that children are supervised at all times.
- Individuals who have been approved by an authorised person may be appointed as helpers to leaders. Any such individual must be briefed of the responsibilities they are expected to undertake over children under their care
- Leaders shall have contingency plans in place in case of larger-than-expected numbers.
- Each child and leader shall have a name badge and the leader's badge shall also carry the church logo and role title.

e. Behaviour Management

- Leaders shall not physically discipline a child. Where discipline is required, a verbal tone shall be used that is consistent with dealing with the child using appropriate language and with a suitable tone and volume.
- Physical restraint is only to be used as a last resort to prevent injury. This should use minimum force.
- Consequences can be imposed on a child that oversteps stated boundaries. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are informed when a child has exceeded boundaries.
- Don't discriminate or leave discrimination or bullying unchallenged.

2.2.2. External activities guidelines

- a. Appropriate Risk Assessments (see Appendix) shall be completed for any activities that involve taking groups of children or young people out of Cathedral premises.
- b. Enough leaders shall be available to deal with the number of children that could attend to ensure that children are supervised at all times.
- c. Extra helpers (including parents) shall be informed of the responsibility they have for the children.
- d. There shall be contingency plans in place in case of larger than expected numbers.
- e. Each leader shall have a name badge and the leader's badge shall also carry the church logo and role title.
- f. Children shall be easily identifiable to the teaching team, and have with them some contact details of the adult or group responsible.
- g. Leaders shall conduct a risk assessment exercise prior to carrying out any external activity and give adequate consideration to whether additional insurance cover is required for the planned activities.

- h. Where appropriate the existing Sunday School Ministry Guidelines, if any, shall be applied.

2.2.3. Use of transport guidelines

- a. Children using church or externally provided transport may only do so with written consent of the parent or guardian. This includes by electronic means.
- b. Leaders shall ensure that vehicles used provide adequate seating for the number of children and seatbelts shall be used.
- c. Leaders shall ensure that vehicles and drivers possess a valid license and vehicle insurance shall be in place.
- d. Leaders shall ensure that a headcount or attendance list is used to ensure passengers are all accounted for.
- e. One leader shall be designated as the lead person to ensure that guidelines have been complied with and this person will be the main point of contact for the duration of the use of transport
- f. All transport providers shall be briefed on compliance with the CPP upon appointment.
- g. There shall always be a minimum of 3 people per vehicle.

2.2.4. Social Media Guidelines

Increasing participation in social media programmes such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat etc. by children and young people provides a further avenue for communication and relationship building. It is also another context which requires safeguarding.

- a. Leaders shall be cautious in one to one communications with a child or young person, particularly if it is a member of the opposite sex.
- b. There should be no discussions of a sexual or suggestive nature including 'sexting'.
- c. There should be no discussions of an aggressive, bullying, shaming or demeaning nature.
- d. No pictures containing obscene or indecent images should be sent.
- e. Parents will be asked for permission to communicate individually with their children through social media or other methods of communication.
- f. Leaders are encouraged not to communicate via social media with children or young people between 10pm to 7am.
- g. Posts on social media should not include photos or videos of young people without parental consent nor should there be identifying information visible such as personal details, names, or addresses.
- h. Social media discussions such as Facebook messenger or WhatsApp may periodically be requested by the CPT for accountability and transparency purposes. Similarly a leader is free to voluntarily submit private conversations that may have arisen for transparency purposes.
- i. Where there is interaction via social media it is expected that leaders would continue to exhibit godly and upright behaviour.

2.2.5. Photography and videos

There is evidence that photographs of children can be used inappropriately. Therefore, the following guidelines will be observed in this regard:

- a. Permission will be sought from the Cathedral Child Protection Advisor before photographs of children are taken in Children's ministry spaces. (e.g. classrooms, crèche, children's events).
- b. Staff members, teachers and other assistants working with children will not take photographs of children for any reason other than specified official reasons after permission is given by the Cathedral Child Protection Advisor.
- c. Photographs and videos of children in our activities may only be taken where there is parental consent and for ministry purposes.
- d. In addition to parental consent the child should also consent to the photograph.
- e. No photographs or videos of partially clothed children are to be taken.
- f. Photographs and videos of children at Cathedral events or ministries should not be placed on the personal online profiles of child-care givers, helpers, or leaders.
- g. Photographs of children may not be used for ministry purposes e.g. Facebook, magazine, brochures unless there is written permission from the child's parents.
- h. Where parents choose to photograph or video their children during public performances where other children may be in the frame, it will be requested that they refrain from circulating this or posting it on social media without permission from the parents of the children captured in the photo or video. Whilst this cannot be controlled it can be strongly suggested for child protection purposes.
- i. Official photographers for ministry purposes should only take photographs when a recognised leader is present. They should not be allowed unsupervised access to children.
- j. Children's names and identifiable information should not be included in photograph captions.
- k. Inappropriate use of images of children must be reported to the Children's ministry leader, Child protection advisor and the Dean.
- l. Any person who sees photos being taken without permission is to request that they be deleted.

2.2.6. Children with disabilities

Children with disabilities are at increased risk of abuse due to communication barriers, increased isolation, and dependency on others. Below are additional guidelines:

- a. Discuss with parents or guardians regarding:
 - Communication methods
 - Appropriate 'safe touch'
 - Intimate care such as going to the toilet or washing
- b. Where necessary an additional helper should be assigned to support a child with disabilities in order to allow them to participate as fully as possible within an activity.
- c. Training should be provided for all those working with children with disabilities.

3. Procedures and Policies for Reporting

This section provides guidelines for dealing with concerns, complaints or reporting suspicions of abuse relating to Cathedral activities, children, members or leaders.

- The Cathedral is committed to responding promptly and sensitively to concerns, complaints and reports of suspected abuse, inappropriate behaviour or violations of our safe working guidelines. Responses may vary depending upon the nature of what has been raised, but the guidelines provided here should be adhered to in order to ensure compliance with Cathedral policy and to maintain fairness of treatment to all parties. Most importantly the protocol exists to ensure that children and young people remain protected and their best interests are maintained at all times.
- The Cathedral's role is not primarily an investigative one, except in order to inquire into a complaint and to collect, clarify, and document information in order to pass it on to the relevant individuals or authorities (e.g. parents, police, medical professionals, Department of Social Welfare , etc.)

3.1. Who has a duty to make a complaint?

- 3.1.1. Any member of the Cathedral congregation, including lay, clergy, staff members, childcare providers or care-givers, youth or children who have a concern or suspect that a child has been or is being abused has a duty to report such information directly to the relevant civil authorities or to either a member of the Child Protection Team or Pastoral Team. Where the latter is contacted they shall immediately inform a member of the Child Protection Team.
- 3.1.2. If the person reports the matter to the Pastoral Team or CPT it will be dealt with according to the guidelines in this document. The person reporting does not have the responsibility to determine the Cathedral's course of action. If a person reports the matter directly to the civil authorities it is expected they would inform the CPT of their actions so that internal safeguarding measures can be applied, where applicable.
- 3.1.3. Any information about alleged abuse shall be kept confidential to the highest degree appropriate in the circumstances and in compliance with the law in force. However confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as it may be in the best interests of the child to disclose the information to other parties eg. Parents, police, welfare, medical professionals. The person raising concerns should be made aware of this.

3.2. The source of the complaint

The source of the complaint or concern can include but is not limited to the following:

- the alleged victim.
- a witness to the alleged abuse or violation of safeguarding guidelines of the child.

- a person to whom the alleged victim reported the matter, such as a teacher or volunteer or family member of the child in question or any other party.
- an individual who has noticed unusual or out-of-character behaviour in a child. This may include, but is not limited to, a clear change in the mental health of the child, inappropriate or unusual language, the appearance of unexplained bruises, or adverse reactions to touch.
- an individual who has concerns over the well-being of a child or suspects abuse of some nature may have taken place.
- an individual who notices a person within the church grounds who poses a potential safety risk to a child.

3.3. How can a concern or a complaint be raised?

3.3.1. Modes of raising a concern or complaint

A concern about unusual behaviour, suspected child abuse or a violation of our safeguarding guidelines can be raised in any one of or a combination of the following manners to either a member of the Pastoral Team or a member of the Child Protection Team (the former will forward on to the CPT):

- in writing.
- verbally on the phone or face to face. The details are to be recorded in writing either at the time or as soon as possible after by the person receiving the verbal complaint.
- via e-mail to childprotection@stmaryscathedral.org.my which will be managed by the CPT.

3.3.2. Information to be reported

The complaint or concern raised should ideally include as much information as possible. Where possible the following is helpful:

- details of the complainant such as name, contact number, address.
- details or description of the respondent.
- details of the alleged abuse/ reasons for suspicions of such abuse.
- if there is any imminent risk or danger to the child in question.

There are further points under this section omitted in this summary document.