CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

River of Life
Metropolitan Community Church Dorchester

ADOPTED BY THE

BOARD OF TRUSTEES 30th SEPTEMBER 2008

Statement of Intent

* As the people of God, we are concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God's purpose for everyone.
* We seek to safeguard all members of the church community, of all ages. It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children, young people and those vulnerable by either physical or intellectual impairment.
* It is the duty of a person working with children and young people to prevent abuse and report any abuse discovered or suspected.

In order to do this, we have adopted the Safe from Harm guidelines suggested by the Home Office. Our response to these guidelines is set out below:

Guideline 1
Adopt a policy statement on safeguarding the welfare of children.
Church response: The Board of Trustees and the Pastor take responsibility for the overall protection of Children in the church's care. This is delegated to a Child Protection Co-Coordinator whose role is to enact the guidelines underneath.

Guideline 2
Plan the work of the organization so as to minimize situations where the abuse of children may occur.
Church Response: The Church undertakes that all activities where children are present there will be two adults (if possible one male and one female) to supervise any activities where Children are not within sight of their parents. Both adults will hold a current CRB Check

Guideline 3
Introduce a system whereby children may talk with an independent person.
Church Response: The independent person is the Child Protection coordinator .

Guideline 4
Apply agreed procedures for children to all paid staff and volunteers.
Church Response: As part of the membership classes, prospective members will spend time looking at the Church's policy documents and procedures. There will be a statement of intent and also brief description of intent in the welcome pack.

Guideline 5
Give all paid staff and volunteers clear roles.
Church Response: All those in ministry will be expected to attend six monthly one on one sessions where their roles will continue to be clarified. There will be written records of these sessions kept in the Pastor's Office.

Guideline 6
Use supervision as a means to protecting children.
Church Response: As above.

Guideline 7
Treat all would-be paid staff and volunteers as job applicants for any position involving contact with children.
Church Response: This includes the undertaking of full CRB Checks.

Guideline 8
Gain at least one reference from a person who has experience of the applicant's paid work or volunteering with children.
Church Response: This should not include family members or friends.

Guideline 9
Explore the applicant's experience of working or contact with children in an interview before appointment.
Church Response: A guideline for interviewing will be adopted.

Guideline 10
Find out whether an applicant has any conviction for criminal offences against children.
Church Response: Those working with Children, as part of the volunteering process must:

- Provide details of their full name, current and recent addresses and date of birth.
- Give details of previous experience, voluntary or paid that involved working with Children.
- Permission to contact a referee
- Details of any criminal convictions against children, including any spent convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offender's Act 1974.
- Permission to conduct a full CRB.

Guideline 11
Make paid and volunteer appointments conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period.
Church Response: All pastoral appointments must be reviewed at 3, 6 and 12 months as part of ongoing one on one sessions.

Guideline 12
Issue guidelines on how to deal with disclosure or discovery of abuse.
Church Response :

1. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

Under no circumstances should a church worker carry out their own investigation into the allegation or suspicion of abuse. The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse will do the following:

▶ Concerns must be reported as soon as possible to The Child Protection Officer (hereafter the "Coordinator") Tel: 07870805404 who is nominated by the Board of Trustees to act on their behalf in dealing with the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including referring the matter on to the statutory authorities.

▶ The Coordinator will also inform the Pastor, (if the Coordinator is not the Pastor). We may also be required by conditions of the Church Insurance Policy to immediately inform the Insurance Company. The Coordinator will also immediately inform the Regional Elder.

▶ In the absence of the Coordinator, or if the suspicions in any way involve the Coordinator then the report should be made to a member of the Board Trustees. If the suspicions implicate the Coordinator and or the Pastor, then the report should be made in the first instance to the Regional Elder. The local Social Services should be contacted and/or the NSPCC Helpline.

▶ Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. A written record of the concerns should be made in accordance with church procedures and kept in a secure place.

▶ Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Coordinator, the absence of the Coordinator or Board of Trustees should not delay referral to the local Social Services Department or the NSPCC.

▶ The Pastor and the Board of Trustees will support the Coordinator in their role, and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.

▶ It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make a direct referral to child protection agencies, although the Pastor and the Board of Trustees hope that members of the church will use this procedure. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Coordinator/Board of Trustees has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Coordinator(s)/Board of Trustees as to the appropriateness of a referral they are free to contact an outside agency direct. We hope by making this statement that the Pastor and the Board of Trustees demonstrate the commitment of the church to effective child protection.

The role of the Coordinator/Board of Trustees is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information on to the Social

Services Department/NSPCC. It is Social Services' task to investigate the matter under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

2. ALLEGATIONS OF PHYSICAL INJURY OR NEGLECT

If a child has a physical injury or symptom of neglect, the Coordinator/Board of Trustees will:

▶ Contact Social Services/NSPCC for advice in cases of deliberate injury, if concerned about a child's safety or if a child is afraid to return home.

▶ Not tell the parents or carers unless advised to do so having contacted Social Services.

▶ Seek medical help if needed urgently, informing the doctor of any suspicions.

▶ For lesser concerns, (e.g. poor parenting), encourage parent/carer to seek help, but not if this places the child at risk of injury.

▶ Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, offer to accompany them. In cases of real concern, if they still fail to act, contact Social Services direct for advice.

3. ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Coordinator/Board of Trustees will:

▶ Contact the Social Services Department Duty Social Worker for children and families or Police Child Protection Team direct. They will NOT speak to the parent/carer or anyone else. ROLMCC will not speak to the parent/carer at all about this.

Guideline 13
Train paid staff and volunteers, their line managers or supervisors and policy makers in the prevention of child abuse.
Church Response: All workers with children whether paid or volunteers shall agree to undertake training as preparation for the service applicable to the work they wish to do.

On the recruitment of ex-offenders.

- As an organization using the criminal records bureau (CRB) disclosure service to assess applicant's suitability for positions of trust, River of Life

MCC fully complies with the CRB Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed.

- River of Life MCC is committed to the fair treatment of its staff, potential staff or users of it's services, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependents, age physical or mental disability or offending background.

- We actively promote the equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applicants from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. We select all candidates for interview based on their skills qualifications, and experience.

- A disclosure will only be requested after a through risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For these positions where a disclosure is required, all application forms, job adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that disclosure will be requested in the event of the position being offered to the individual.

- Where disclosure is part of the recruitment process, we encourage all applicants called for interview to provide details of their criminal record at an early stage of the application process. We request that this information is sent under a separate and confidential cover to the pastor within River of Life MCC and we guarantee that this information is only seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process.

- Unless the nature of the position allows River of Life MCC to ask questions about your entire criminal record we only ask about convictions as defined in the "Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974,"

- At an interview, or in a separate discussion, we ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to the withdrawal of the offer of the position.

- We make the subject of every CRB disclosure aware of the existence of the CRB Code of Practice and make copies of this available on request.

- We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in the disclosure with the person seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.