



Shenley Christian Fellowship Code of Working Practice When working with children and young people

This must be read in conjunction with:

SCF Safeguarding Statement &
Safeguarding Children Policy

1.0	Introduction	Page 3
2.0	Respecting Children and Young People The role of staff, leaders, helpers and volunteers	Page 3
3.0	Health and Safety	Page 7
4.0	Electronic Communication	Page 9

1.0 Introduction

Shenley Christian Fellowship places the wellbeing and safety of children and young people as one of our core priorities. Therefore, the Fellowship has adopted a code of working practice for all who are appointed to work with children and young people so that all children and young people are shown the respect that is due to them.

This document has been written to sit alongside our Safeguarding Children Policy and sets out the expectations where we believe boundaries can be applied to promote the welfare and safety of children and young people.

Good practice is not a restriction, designed to stop workers doing things. On the contrary, it is to enable the Fellowship to do the things children and young people enjoy in a safe environment. Indeed, much of what is presented as good practice is good practice irrespective of safeguarding issues. These are the standards we would want to operate because we strive to do the very best for children and young people.

While the code of practice is first and foremost about protecting children and young people, it will also help to protect workers from false accusation or unnecessary and unwarranted suspicion.

This document is a live document and is updated as the church grows and develops. All staff and volunteers working with children and young people are expected to work with in this code of safe working practice.

2.0 Respecting Children and Young People: the role of staff, leaders, helpers and volunteers

Each child and young person should be respected and treated with dignity. SCF recognises that all children and young people are individuals, with their own unique needs, likes and dislikes, abilities and skills. We will work at all times to ensure that the rights of children and young people are upheld and promoted and will achieve this through the following measures.

We will:

- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity. On the rare occasion that a child or young person has to be spoken to about their behaviour within a session this must be done with the child's best interests in mind and in a respectful manner. Parents must also be made aware of the conversation.
- Use age-appropriate language and tone of voice when communicating with children and young people, taking into account their age and understanding.
- Be aware of our own body language and the effect we are having on the individual child or young person.
- Listen well to children and young people.

- Be careful not to assume we know what a child or young person is thinking or feeling.
- Always aim to work with or within sight of another adult.
- Encourage all parents to, where possible, take the children to the toilet before the session. If a child needs the toilet during the session, another adult is informed that a child needs to be taken to the toilet. If a child needs help a parent must be called to take the child. For younger children who need nappy changes, parents must be called.
- Make sure another adult is present if, for example, a young child has soiled their underclothes and needs to be thoroughly washed. In every case where possible, the child's own parent or carer should be called in to carry out such a task.
- Ensure that on the rare occasional that it may be necessary to restrain a child or young person who is harming her/himself or others. Use the least possible force and inform the parents as soon as possible. All such incidents MUST be recorded on an incident form and the information given to the designated officer on duty. This must also be shared with the parent.
- Ensure workers and helper response appropriately to a child's need. Putting the child's needs first not their own, particularly in relation to seeking physical contact.
- Train and ensure all workers and helpers are aware of the importance of supporting each other but also confident to act or speak out if they think any adult including a team member is behaving inappropriately.
- Provide all workers with their own name badge and this must be worn when on duty so parents, children, young people know who the 0-18 years team are.

We will not:

- Initiate physical contact. Any necessary contact e.g. for comfort, should be initiated by the child this must be in sight of another worker.
- Invade the privacy of children or young people when they are using the toilet or showering.
- Play rough physical or sexually provocative games.
- Use any form of physical punishment.
- Be sexually suggestive about or to a child.
- Touch a child inappropriately or obtrusively.
- Scapegoat, belittle, ridicule, or reject a child or young person.
- Respond to, or encourage, excessive attention-seeking that is overtly sexual or physical in nature.
- Where ever possible, allow workers to be alone with children and young people.
- Permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying.
- Show favoritism to any one child or group.
- Smoke tobacco in the presence of children or young people.
- Drink alcohol when responsible for children or young people.
- Share sleeping accommodation with children or young people.
- Invite a child or young person to your home alone.
- Allow unknown adults access to children. Visitors should always be accompanied by a known person.

2.1 Physical Contact that is appropriate when working with children and young people.

It is hard to conceive how you can be a nurturing, caring worker with children and young people without some physical contact happening at least occasionally. For example, if a child or young person is distressed it is natural to put an arm round their shoulder. It could even be thought of as abusive not to respond by touching a child in such circumstances. However, we must be conscious that what to most is an innocent touch may have another, more sinister meaning for children who have experienced abuse. We must also be aware that some people use the opportunity of physical contact with others not as a way of conveying love and support, but as a means of satisfying their own cravings.

The following guidelines are helpful when considering whether or not touch is appropriate in any given situation.

- If no-one else is present, it is always advisable to avoid physical contact.
- Touch should be related to the child's needs, not the worker's.
- Use physical contact in a way that conveys appropriate concern but in a way that is least likely to be misconstrued. For example, an arm around the shoulder standing by the side of a child or young person may be more appropriate than a full 'hug'.
- Keep everything public in plain sight.
- Touch should be age-appropriate and only initiated by the child not the worker.
- Workers should avoid any physical activity that is, or may be thought to be, sexually stimulating to the adult or the child.
- Children have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in exceptional circumstances such as when they need medical attention.
- When giving first aid (or applying sun cream, etc), workers should encourage the child to do what they can manage themselves, but consider the child's best interests and give appropriate help where necessary.
- Team members should monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They should help each other by constructively challenging anything which could be misunderstood or misconstrued.

2.2 Children and Young People with additional physical, behaviour and /or learning needs

SCF welcomes children and young people who have additional needs to be part of the 0-18 years groups. SCF considers the premises, toilets and access suitable for children and young people with disabilities.

Children and young people who have additional needs can be more vulnerable to abuse or neglect. They will often require more help with personal care, such as washing, dressing, toileting, feeding, mobility, etc, and may have limited understanding and behave in a non-age-appropriate way. It is

good practice to speak with the parents/carers of children/young people with additional needs and find out from them how best to support the child or young person.

Consideration will be given to writing a joint plan with the parents /child and young person of things that they like and what approaches are best to the individual child and young person. Additional leaders/helpers for 1:1 support will also be discussed with parents.

2.3 Children with no adult supervision

When children and young people turn up to and want to join in with church activities without the knowledge of their parents/carers, workers will:

- Welcome the child/young person and try to establish their name, age, address and telephone number.
- Record their visit in a register.
- Ask the child/young person if a parent/carer is aware of where they are. Where possible, phone and make contact.
- Without interrogating the child/young person, find out as soon as possible whether they have any specific needs (e.g. medication) so that you can respond appropriately in an emergency.
- Give the child/young person a consent form and explain that it needs to be filled in and brought back next time.

2.4 Visiting Children or Young People at Home

If a need arises where a pastoral home visit to a child or young person is needed or requested by the child, young person or family member consideration as to who is best place to do this must be given. This may need discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Senior Church Leader.

2.5 Mentoring /Discipleship

If a worker is working with a child or young person offering support, mentoring or discipleship, this may be due to a difficult situation they are facing or for personal devolvement. The parents of the child or young people will be made aware that it is happening.

- Meetings should only be held in agreed places, and should be in view of other people.
- A mentoring meeting should have an agreed start and end time and someone should be aware that a meeting is taking place and where it is being held.
- A basic record should be kept of dates of significant meetings and any text messages or emails.
- Appropriate communication should take place (see Communication section of this code of practice).
- A written record should be kept of issues/decisions discussed at meetings.

Workers need to maintain a healthy self-awareness when working one to one. Phrases such as, "You're the only one who understands me," may be flattering but should ring alarm bells. Is there a

possibility of drawing someone else in to work alongside you or having a cooling off period of a few weeks whilst they reflect upon advice given to them?

Workers need to maintain a professional distance, and not be at the beck and call of the individual young person. Workers need to have adequate knowledge of where to refer a young person, if necessary. It is the worker's responsibility to know what to do with the information given to them and when to involve other agencies.

3.0 Health and safety

3.1 Registration and Consent

All children and young people who are attending any activity hosted by SCF must be signed in on a register. Children under the age of 11 years must be given a name sticker and the parents/carer of that child/ren identified to ensure that all are collected from an activity by their rightful parent/carer.

A registration form must be completed for every child or young person who attends groups or activities hosted by SCF 0-18s team. The form should be updated annually. The registration form includes personal contact details, consent for emergency treatment and consent for photos /videos to be taken. Wherever possible the child/young person should complete the registration form on their first attendance. On the rare occasion this is not possible the group leader must ensure that a record of the child/young person's name, medical emergency information and parents' contact details are collected.

All personal details and consent must be stored securely on a database. The database and storing of registration forms are managed through the SCF office and over seen by the officer manager. All processes for collecting and storing personal data are in line with GDPR requirements and are monitored by SCF information governance lead.

Consent needs to be obtained from a parent or person with parental responsibility. Consideration can be given to a young person giving consent themselves, if that young person is of sufficient age and has understanding of the specific issues. So, for example, whilst parental consent is always required for a group residential holiday/outing, consideration can be given to a young person be able to consent to the photos from the holiday/outing being displayed in church (unless a child is a looked after child in which case parental consent would still be required).

3.2 Ratios

When working with children the following recommended minimum ratios of workers to children apply:

Age range	Recommended minimum ratio for INDOOR activities	Recommended minimum ratio for OUTDOOR activities
0 – 2 years	1:3 (minimum 2)	1:3 (minimum 2)
3 years	1:4 (minimum 2)	1:4 (minimum 2)
4 – 7 years	1:8 (minimum 2)	1:6 (minimum 2)

8 – 12 years	1 for the first 8, then one for every additional ten children (preferably one of each gender) with an extra adult for every 10 additional children	2 adults for up to 15 children (preferably one of each gender) with an extra adult for every 8 additional children
13 years and over	2 adults for up to 20 children (preferably one of each gender) with an extra adult for every 10 additional children	2 adults for up to 20 children (preferably one of each gender) with an extra adult for every 10 additional children

This does not take into account special circumstances such as behavioural issues, developmental issues, disability and so on, which may mean an increase to the recommended ratios. In calculating the ratios of workers to children, young leaders who are under the age of 18 should be counted as one of the children, not one of the workers.

3.3 Venue

- Meeting places should be warm, well-lit and well ventilated. They should be kept clean and free of clutter.
- Toilets and hand basins should be easily available with hygienic drying facilities.
- Group leaders must have access to a phone at all times in order to call for help if necessary
- All leaders must be aware of the fire procedures.
- A First Aid Kit and accident book should be available on the premises and all accidents should be recorded in an accident book and parents must be informed.
- There must be a person with First Aid knowledge on the premises during each session.

3.4 Transporting Children on Behalf of the Church

- Children & young people should not be transported in a private car without the prior consent of their parents or carers. This also applies to formally arranged lifts to and from a church activity.
- All those who drive children on church-organised activities should have held a full and clean driving license for over two years and their car must be in roadworthy condition.
- Drivers who are not children's/youth workers or a parent should be recruited for the task through the normal recruitment process.
- Parents should give permission for their child /young person to be given transport and should be informed at what time to expect their child home.
- Any driver who has an unspent conviction for any serious road traffic offence should not transport children for the church.
- Drivers must always be in fit state i.e. not over-tired; not under the influence of alcohol; not taking illegal substances; not under the influence of medicine which may induce drowsiness.
- All children must wear suitable seat belts and use appropriate booster seats. If there are insufficient seat belts additional children should not be carried.
- At no time should the number of children in a car exceed the usual passenger number.

Although it can sometimes be impractical, whenever possible two adults should be present in a car with children and young people. If in an emergency a driver has to transport one child on his or her own, the child must sit in the back of the car.

3.5 Residential and Outings

THINGS TO ENSURE ARE IN PLACE AND THAT HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED FOR RESIDENTIAL OUTINGS.

- Ensure that robust registration and consent form has been completed by every child and young person's parent who has parental responsibility.
- Ensure a risk assessment has been completed prior to the event.
- Ensure the transport guidance set out in the safer working document has been adhered to.
- Ensure the number of team members is appropriate for the number of children or young people you are taking, in line with the guidance set out in the safer working document.
- Ensure that all team members have had all the relevant safeguarding checks and training, and have a clear understanding of SCF Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures.

4.0 Electronic Communication

Electronic communication has become enormously important and popular over recent years. It is an easy way to communicate with young people in particular.

However, there are dangers associated with electronic communication that call for vigilance:

- Electronic communication is often an extremely informal mode of communication which can create the potential for communication to be misunderstood.
- Because of the informal style of electronic communication, workers can easily cross appropriate boundaries in their relationships with children and young people.
- Some adults who are intent on harming children and young people choose to use electronic communication as a way to meet and 'groom' children and young people.

The following principles will help to ensure that SCF's overriding concern is for the well-being of the children and young people.

- Workers should only use electronic means of communication with those children and young people from whom appropriate consent has been given.
- Workers should not put any pressure on children or young people to reveal their email address, mobile phone number etc.
- Direct electronic communication with children of primary school age is inappropriate and should be avoided.
- Only workers who have been appointed under the church's agreed safeguarding procedures should use any electronic means of communication to contact children or young people on behalf of the church and this must be agreed by the leader for that department.
- Contact with children and young people by electronic communication should generally be for information-giving purposes only and not for general chatter.

- Where a young person in need or at a point of crisis uses this as a way of communicating with a worker:
 - significant conversations should be saved as a text file if possible, and
 - a log kept of who and when they communicated and who was involved.
- Workers should not share any personal information with children and young people, and should not request or respond to any personal information from the child or young person other than that which is necessary and appropriate as part of their role.
- Workers should be careful in their communications with children and young people so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives.
- Clear, unambiguous language should be used, avoiding the use of unnecessary abbreviations.
- Electronic communication should only be used between the hours of 8.00 am and 10.00 pm.
- E-mails to young people should include a church header and footer showing this to be an official communication from a youth team member.

4.1 Mobile phones

- Mobile phone usage should be primarily about information-giving.
- 'Text language' should be avoided so that there is no misunderstanding of what is being communicated.
- 'Text conversations' should usually be avoided (that is a series of text messages/emails being sent to and from between mobile phones).
- The use of the phone camera should comply with the church's policy on photos/video.
- Workers should not retain images of children and young people on their mobile phone.

4.2 Instant Messaging Services/Facebook/similar (IMS)

- The use of instant messenger services should be kept to a minimum.
- Where a child or young person in need or at a point of crisis uses this as a way of communicating with a worker:
 - significant conversations should be saved as a text file if possible, and
 - a log kept of when they communicated and who was involved Social Networking sites.
- If youth leaders are going to communicate via social networking sites this should be done via a specific church group name not via personal profiles.
- Lower age limits of social networking sites should be adhered to (this varies for each site).
- Be aware of the content of photos that may be uploaded on to your site.
- Be aware that children and young people could view photos and communications of other people linked to that social networking site.
- All communication with young people should be kept within public domains.
- Workers should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.
- Copies of communications should be retained and where possible other workers should be copied in on communication.
- Parents should be informed of and provide consent for youth workers to message their children.