

Child Protection Policy for Westlake Church Association

1.1. POLICY STATEMENT

It is the responsibility of the leadership and every member within the Westlake Church Associations (Westlake) to provide a safe, healthy and encouraging environment for all the children and youth - and specifically to prevent physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

1.2. OBJECTIVES FOR A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The care of children and young people is at the forefront of the teachings of Christ and is, therefore, one of the primary responsibilities of the leadership and members of Westlake. We will promote a culture of awareness and accountability, we will be vigilant to protect children and young people from those who would do them harm. Anyone placed in a position of trust and responsibility as a teacher within Westlake, whether paid or unpaid, who has direct access to children, must be selected with the outmost care. As Christians, we trust one another and it makes us uneasy if we suggest that we don't. Many church leaders feel they know their people so well that it is quite unnecessary to put them through these procedures. Others may be short of adult help in children's work that they gratefully accept any offers that are made. It should be recognized that to 'screen' volunteers places an extra burden on an over-stretched leadership, however, we have to weigh all this against our solemn duty to prevent unsuitable people working with children, which sadly can and does happen in churches, even with people that have been trusted.

1.3. CHILD PROTECTION AT WESTLAKE

Child Protection at Westlake is about providing:

- Safe and healthy environment to learn about Christianity - safe facilities (Statement of Faith - Article 1.6)
- Effective screening and selection of teachers (Application Form - Appendix 1)
- Prevention of abuse – physical, neglect, sexual, verbal, etc. (Good Practice - Article 1.4)
- Referrals to responsible leaders when there are any concerns (reporting disclosure procedures)
- Training and learning from each other
- Good administration with appropriate records
- Confidentiality but not keeping secrets

1.4. GOOD PRACTICE WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Below you will find our stated guidelines of **Good Practice** in working with children and young people.

As far as possible a worker is not alone with a child or young person where their activity cannot be seen. On church premises, this may mean leaving doors open, or two groups working in the same room.

In counselling situations with a young person, where privacy and confidentiality are important, try to make sure that another adult knows the interview is taking place and with whom. Another adult should be in the building, and the young person should know they are there.

Ensure that access to the building and activity areas are safe and well lit.

1.4.1 You the worker, should:

Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity befitting their age; watch language, tone of voice, and where you put your body.

As far as possible, do not be alone with a child or young person. If they require one to one attention and privacy this should be done out of earshot but within sight of other adult workers.

- Do treat all children and young people with the respect and dignity befitting their age
- Don't show favouritism to any one child.
- Do watch your speech, tone of voice and body language
- If you need to see a child on his or her own, make sure another adult is present nearby and that the child knows this.
- Do make sure that the children know they can speak to any teacher or member of the clergy if they need to talk.
- Learn to control and discipline without using physical punishment.
- Make sure another worker is present if, for example they need help to toilet, have soiled their underclothes and need to be washed or if you need to give First Aid.
- Do not let youngsters involve you in excessive attention seeking that are overly sexual or physical in nature.
- Try to avoid giving lifts to children or young people on their own
- Don't invite a young person to your home alone. Invite a group, make sure that another adult is around and that the parents are aware where the young people are,
- Don't permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing, bullying.
- Don't allow unauthorised adults access to children. Visitors should be accompanied by a known person.
- Don't give lifts to children or young people on their own, if there is no alternative travel with the child in the rear seat, make others aware of the exact timing of your journey- when you leave, when you drop and when you return.
- Don't share sleeping accommodation alone with a young person.

1.4.2. Not engage in any of the following:

- Invading their privacy when they are showering or toileting;
- Rough, physical or sexually provocative games;
- Making sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person, even in "fun"
- Inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form;
- Any scapegoatism, ridiculing, or rejecting a child, young person or vulnerable adult

1.4.3. Good practice with Colleagues

If you see another teacher or helper acting in ways, which might be misconstrued, be prepared to speak to them or to talk to your leader about your concerns. Leaders should encourage an atmosphere of mutual support and care which allows all workers to be comfortable enough to discuss inappropriate attitudes or behavior. These measures will also protect workers from any potential false accusations.

1.5. CONFIDENTIALITY

The highest level of confidentiality should be maintained at all times in relationships with both adults and children. There are certain circumstances, for instance, if a child is suffering or is likely to suffer harm, when other people will need to be told so that the child can be protected.

If an allegation has been made against someone, it is very important that as few people as possible know whilst the allegation is being investigated. This protects both accuser and accused.

1.6. STATEMENT OF FAITH

It is important that all workers and helpers also realize that the principal objective for Westlake is "Helping People Become Lifelong Followers of Jesus Christ". As well as other biblical teaching, Westlake professes the following basic doctrines and principles:

- The divine inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures as originally given, and their supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
- The unity of God in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- The creation of all things, both visible and invisible, by the Word of God; all creation being in, through and for Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.
- The universal sinfulness and guilt of mankind since the Fall, rendering him subject to God's wrath and condemnation and necessitating the regeneration of his whole being.
- The believer's redemption from the guilt, penalty and power of sin solely through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, the only Representative and Substitute for mankind; This redemption is received through personal faith in Jesus Christ.
- The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
- The second coming of Jesus Christ.
- The resurrection of mankind, and the eternal blessedness of the redeemed and the eternal punishment of the impenitent.
- The work of the Holy Spirit, convicting mankind of sin, bringing the sinner to repentance toward God and Faith in Jesus Christ.
- The indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit, granting new life and power to the believer and granting gifts to the Church.
- The unity and common priesthood of all believers, who together form the one Universal Church, the body of which Christ is the head.
- The believers' common objective to live Christ-centred lives (Ephesians 4:1-3) under the Lord's authority and to make disciples of Jesus Christ according to His commandment (Matthew 28:19- 20).