



**Father's House**  
S H A F T E S B U R Y

# Children & Youth Team Handbook

Updated June 2023

## **Welcome to the children's and young peoples' ministry of Father's House**

### **Introduction**

We want to encourage you as a member of staff or as a volunteer to really feel a part of the team at Father's House and to get as fully involved as you can in the children's ministry. You are part of a large team working with children from nought to eighteen, which is enthusiastic about helping the children and young people to get to know Jesus and develop a strong personal relationship with Him.

Remember that most of what you pass on to the children and young people will not be by what you say but by who you are. The way we live our lives for the Lord and how this is outworked in our actions speaks volumes to the children and young people in our care.

There is an increasing move of the Holy Spirit across this nation and indeed the whole world. This is against a backdrop of increased opposition to all things Christian and a rise in the profile of other faiths and ideologies. We want to prepare our children and young people to be involved and equipped to face the challenges that lie ahead. Our role is to build solid foundations in their lives, based in the Word of God.

Our chief aim, within Father's House, is to provide a safe, secure environment where our children and young people can pray and worship, play and learn together with leaders who value and encourage them.

## Aim of this handbook

Our aim is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of those on the team working with children's and young people at Father's House. We want to give clear guidelines and principles so that each person has safe boundaries. Important procedures, especially for dealing with any form of abuse, and safeguarding are outlined. More detailed guidelines and information can be found in the full Safeguarding Policy which is printed in full at the end of this Handbook.

## Safeguarding statement

In all matters of safeguarding, our primary focus will always be on the child, but we recognise the needs of the whole family, parents, siblings and the needs of any team member involved.

We aim to provide a secure and happy environment with everyone working as a team to provide the best possible care for each individual child. We are aware that a child, or adult, may exhibit or disclose something that causes us concern at any time and we recognise that **correct procedures for reporting concerns or suspicions must be followed by all children's workers.**

We have a pastoral responsibility towards the children in our care and recognise that they have a fundamental right to be protected from harm. The Safeguarding Policy of Father's House has been developed to reflect our statutory duties and pastoral responsibilities. It outlines the procedures to be followed.

There is within the church a designated person, known as the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL is currently **Caroline Watkins** and the deputy is **Andrew Baddeley** (Clare Williams is the DSL for Little Acorns Pre-School). It is

important that the DSL is informed of any concerns or suspicions as soon as possible. If she is not available, then a deputy should be informed.

Paul Beveridge is Father's House **Independent Safeguarding Support**. His role is to provide everyone at Father's House, children, families, volunteers and leaders, with access to an independent person who is able to listen, advise and act on safeguarding issues.

As a Head teacher of Sandford St Martin's Primary School Paul is qualified and experienced in dealing with issues of safeguarding. He is not involved in children's work at Father's House.

1. Paul will meet regularly with Caroline Watkins, the Safeguarding lead, to monitor the implementation of the Safeguarding policy within the church. The objective is to provide accountability, advice and support for her role.
2. The leadership team will promote Paul's role as an independent person who can be approached by anyone who has safeguarding concerns at Father's House. The aim is to give children, young people and the adults working with them, access to an independent person who is available to listen to whatever they want to share. Within the confidence of this relationship someone would be able to disclose abuse. The objective is to reduce the potential for undisclosed abuse.
3. The leadership will give Paul permission to challenge weak safeguarding practice and to make recommendations for measures which he judges would strengthen the safeguarding culture at Father's House. This will include the freedom to check records and working practices in all aspects of children's work at Father's House, but particularly Kingdom Kids & Youth.

Any safeguarding records are strictly confidential and will always be kept locked in the office safe. No one has right of access other than the DSL and the Father's House leadership team, who represents the Trustees. All safeguarding issues must be dealt with sensitively and in confidence. Any reports and notes made must always be written as soon as possible, signed, dated and kept in the safeguarding file in the office safe in case they are required at a future date.

Any work carried out to foster safeguarding will be implicit and aimed at equipping children and young people with the skills they need to keep them safe.

## Good Practice

We are committed not only to spiritual growth but also to the safety and welfare of all the children in our care. We recognise that we have much to give as well as to receive. We will listen to them and respect their wishes and feelings as we nurture them in worship, learning and community life.

We each have the responsibility to prevent harm of any kind coming to the children and young people and to report anything of concern via the channels outlined in this handbook. We seek to actively support, resource and train everyone involved with children and have set out agreed procedures and guidelines in this handbook, and in more detail in the full Safeguarding Policy.

All children's and youth team members will be expected to be familiar with the Good Practice Guidelines and Safeguarding Procedures contained in this handbook and to agree to their implementation. All children's and youth team members will also be expected to be familiar with the full Safeguarding Policy of the church and to be aware of general Health and Safety responsibilities.

## General Responsibilities

You will be a great blessing to the children, young people and those you work with if you can:

- Pray for the children, young people and others in your team.
- Give those in your team your support and encouragement.
- Get to know and appreciate each child or young person as an individual.
- Prepare yourself well before each session so that you can give your best.
- Arrive in good time to help set up and pray with your team.
- Help clear up and ensure that all young children are returned safely to parents/carers.

- Willingly take responsibility in your team so that duties are shared.
- Share any concerns quickly with your leader, not indulging in gossip.

### Good Practice Guidelines

- All pre-school age children should only be handed back, following a meeting, to a parent or previously identified adult.
- All activities should take place with groups of children rather than individuals. More than one adult should be present whenever possible.
- A full register must be kept for each session, including children and all adults present.
- No member of the team should be left alone with a child for any length of time. The door should be open and access to others freely available.
- Should a one-to-one situation arise, make sure someone else in the team is fully aware and that other adults are nearby. Do not go into a private room and shut the door.
- Always ensure that your behaviour with children and young people is appropriate and will in no way give rise to infringements of a child's privacy or space.
- Anyone who has not received clearance by the Disclosure and Barring Service should not be left alone with children or young people at any time.
- Children must be adequately supervised at all times with an appropriate ratio of adults to children.
  - Age 0 to under 2 years = 1 adult to 3 children
  - 2 to under 3 years = 1 adult to 5 children
  - 3 to under 8 years = 1 adult to 8 children
  - Over 8 years = 1 adult to 10 children
- Written permission must be obtained from parents/carers before children or young people are permitted on outings, visits or activities away from Father's House (or in the case of the Youth group from Lox Lane). All cars used must have valid insurance and a seat belt for each child.

- Risk assessment should be carried out and full permission forms completed, including emergency treatment section, for overnight trips and camps. Swimming or extreme sports must be signed for.
- The team needs to be informed of any specific health needs, e.g. asthma, allergies, etc. Children with behaviour issues should be carefully monitored.
- No physical punishment or restraint should be used. If ongoing problems arise, talk to your team leader so that parents can be involved.
- At no time should a personal mobile phone be used while working with the children. Use of personal laptops, tablets and other electronic devices is only by permission of the DSL.
- Should another adults actions or words give you cause for concern, you should speak to the DSL, or deputy straight away. Take no action yourself unless intervention is required to prevent serious immediate harm.
- At any time please feel you can discuss any issue with the Independent Safeguarding Support, Paul Beveridge or the DSL Caroline Watkins. Their role is to support everyone – children, parents, carers and workers.

**Designated Safeguarding Lead**

The role of the DSL is to establish and monitor the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy. Along with the Trustees, she is responsible for any referrals made to Children’s Services and/or the Police. Whilst this may sound very formal, she is also a listening ear ready to discuss and advise in any area where children or young people may be at risk from harm.

**DSL: Caroline Watkins**

**Home no: 01747 228093**

**Mobile: 07870 494062**

**Deputy DSL and E-safety: Andrew Baddeley**

**Home: 01747 229307**

**Mobile: 07947 538334**

**Youth:** Steve & Rachel Scott

**Children's ministry:** Helen Baddeley

**Little Monkeys:** Carolyn Powell

**Little Acorns Pre-School:** Clare Williams

## Recognising Possible Signs of Abuse

### **Physical signs of abuse**

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries that occur to the body in places not normally exposed to falls or rough games
- Injuries that have not received medical attention
- Neglect – under-nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, inadequate care, etc
- Reluctance to change for games, swimming, or to remove sweater, etc
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures, etc. with no accidental explanation
- Cuts, scratches, substance abuse (*may indicate self-harming*)

### **Indicators of possible sexual abuse**

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sex and inappropriate knowledge
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults or other children
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbance – phobias, nightmares, irrational fears
- Eating disorders – anorexia, bulimia



## Emotional signs of abuse

- Changes in mood or behaviour, especially withdrawal or unusually clingy
- Depression, aggression or extreme anxiety
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away, stealing or lying

## Responding to Children and Young People

### General Points

- Above everything else listen, listen, listen
- Show acceptance of what the child says (however unlikely the story may sound)
- Keep calm
- Look at the child directly, but guard your expression
- Be honest
- Tell the child you may need to let someone know – **do not promise confidentiality**
- Tell child they are not to blame, it is not their fault
- Be aware they may have been threatened or bribed not to tell
- Never push for information. Always reflect back and don't put words in their mouth
- As soon as possible write down conversation following Policy guidelines

### Helpful Responses

- You have done the right thing in telling me
- That must have been really hard / difficult to do
- I am glad you have told me

- It's not your fault
- I will help you

### **Don't Say**

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it!
- Are you sure this is true?
- Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- Never make false promises
- Never make statements such as "I am shocked." "Don't tell anyone else"

### **Important**

You must report any conversation to the DSL as soon as possible.

## Procedure for Handling Suspected or Disclosed Abuse

### **If a child discloses abuse to you:**

- Do not put them under any pressure to disclose more.
- Do not take on the task of investigating the matter yourself.
- Make full notes as soon as possible after the disclosure giving dates, times and a full report of the conversation. Sign and date the notes and hand to a DSL or keep safely until they can be placed in the church safe.
- Refer immediately to the DSL, a deputy or Children's Support Workers and let the child know you are doing this. It is **not** your role to refer the matter to any outside agency.
- Do **not** promise confidentiality to the child. Explain that someone may have to know.
- Do not discuss the matter with anyone other than the DSL, deputies, Children's Support Workers or the Pastor. Information must be on a strictly need-to-know basis.

From here on the matter will be pursued following the strict guidelines set out in the Safeguarding Policy and you will be kept informed of any action taken. It is not the task of any individual or church to investigate child abuse, but for the protection of both children and workers, sensible steps need to be taken on the road to referral. It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make direct referrals. However it is hoped that members of Father's House will use the procedure laid down in the Safeguarding Policy.

If abuse or neglect is **suspected**, obviously more detailed discussion and discreet observation may need to take place before any referral: but if concerns develop, then the above procedure would apply.

See the Father's House full Safeguarding Policy for detailed guidelines and procedures with respect to any allegations or suspicions.

### Guidelines for Discipline

- Ask God for wisdom, discernment and understanding as you pray for and with the children and young people.
- Work on each individual child's positives; do not compare them with each other, but encourage and build them up, giving them responsibility whenever possible.
- Build healthy relationships with the children and be a good role model, setting a good example. You cannot expect children to obey ground rules that they see you breaking.
- Take care to give quieter and better-behaved children attention and do not allow some children to take up all your time and energy.
- Be consistent in what you say and ensure that other team members know what you have said – this avoids manipulation. Be insistent and persistent.
- Make sure that the whole team is on-board with any strategies used.

- Look honestly at your programme and delivery style – if children are bored, they misbehave.
- **Never** smack or hit a child and do not shout – change voice tone if necessary.
- Discipline out of love, **never** anger. Call on support from other adults in the team if you feel you may deal with a situation unwisely in your anger.
- Lay down ground rules clearly. E.g. no swearing, racism, homophobia, name-calling or abuse of property. Keep rules simple and straightforward and make sure the children/young people understand what action will be taken if disobeyed.
- Each child is unique, special and individual and each needs a different method of being dealt with. We need to ask why a child is behaving in a certain way. Never reject a child, just their behaviour. Give them the honour they are due.
- Separate children who have a tendency to be disruptive together. Give them a chance, warn them and then separate if necessary.
- Sit a disruptive child right in front of you or next to someone else in the team
- Be proactive and encourage helpers to be too, so that any incident is dealt with quickly and quietly before it becomes too big to handle
- Take a disruptive child aside and talk with them, challenging them to change whilst encouraging their strengths. Always leave them on a positive note.
- Warn a child that you will speak to their parents and do so if necessary. If immediate action is needed take them to their parents to sit with them in the meeting.
- Pray before each session, which means arriving in good time! At the end, talk over what went well and what did not to inform your future planning

## Use of Technology

### Mobile Phones

- Do not use your mobile phone to make or answer calls during a session with children or young people. It should be turned off and unavailable. If your job means you are on call, use the silent mode.

- **Never** use your phone for personal access to the internet while working with the children.
- On trips out, one team member should be nominated as emergency contact and carry a fully charged phone.

**Cameras** (on a mobile phone or a separate item, still or movie)

- No casual photos of the children are to be taken at any time.
- Any photos taken at Father's House will be as an agreed arrangement and carefully vetted so as not to include any child(ren) whose parent(s) have expressed a wish for them not to be in photos.
- Any photos used for publicity, on the church websites or in leaflets will have parental permission and will not include the child's full name. As much as possible, group photos will be used, rather than singling out any individual.

**E – Safety**

- Any use of the internet in sessions will be carefully monitored by team leaders.
- Any laptop computer or tablet brought in from home may only be used with permission from the DSL after hearing a full account of what is to be shown and why.
- Any computers used for children in Little Acorns Pre-School at Father's House must be carefully password-ed with full parental control settings in place.
- Any movies watched must be age appropriate using the designated age on the case.

If you have any concerns regarding e-safety, please speak to

**Andrew Baddeley, our E-Safety Officer.**

**Social Networking**

- No children's or youth worker at Father's House should be a friend with any child or young person in the church under 18 years of age on a social networking site (the only exception is for family members).
- The leaders and members of Youth **may** all be members of a Youth private Facebook group but only those agreed by the youth leaders may join,

remembering that it is illegal for anyone under 13 to join Facebook. Parents of under-13s may have entry to the site on behalf of their child.

- Father's House Facebook members group is also a closed group and only the church leaders can allow someone to join.

Any incidents of cyber bullying, sexting, or similar among the young people must be reported to the team leader who will then speak to the DSL or to Andrew Baddeley.

Whilst we appreciate the positive aspects of modern technology, we must stay vigilant as there are also very negative uses for it.

**This Handbook should be read in conjunction with:**

The Father's House Safeguarding policy

The Father's House Whistleblowing (expressing concerns) policy