

Scripture Union Northern Ireland

Child Protection Policy Statement and Guidelines



Introduction

The Aims of Scripture Union are a good place to start when setting out the Policy of the Movement in Child Protection.

“Working with the Churches, Scripture Union aims

- (a) to make God’s Good News known to children, young people and families, and*
- (b) to encourage people of all ages to meet God daily through the Bible and prayer*

so that they may come to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, grow in Christian maturity and become committed church members and servants of a world in need.”

In Northern Ireland, we seek to fulfil these internationally agreed Aims through programmes of camps, missions, schools groups, training and resource provision. In everything, our concern is the full welfare of the children we are privileged to meet, and that is why this document is so important.

It is our intention that every part of Scripture Union’s work in Northern Ireland will be informed by the principles and practice outlined in this document. I commend it to staff and volunteers alike, with the prayer that as we make the Good News known, so God will be where he belongs; at the centre of it all!

Helen Warnock
(General Director, SUNI)
June 2005

Scripture Union Northern Ireland Child Protection Policy Statement

“Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’” Matthew 19: 14 (NIV).

- 1.1 Reflecting our aim to follow biblical principles and recognising the value that Jesus gives to children, we in Scripture Union Northern Ireland seek to ensure the physical, emotional and spiritual well being and development of each child and young person in all our work with them. Within this context Scripture Union is committed to the protection of children and young people from all forms of abuse.
- 1.2 For the purposes of this policy Scripture Union accepts the working definitions of abuse detailed within “*Co-operating to Protect Children*”, volume 6 of the Children (NI) Order Regulations and Guidance.
- 1.3 In line with guidelines given in the Children (NI) Order, Scripture Union Northern Ireland has appointed a member of staff as a *Designated Officer*. The *Designated Officer* will refer all incidents of concern, disclosures or allegations of abuse to the appropriate authorities and take responsibility for co-ordinating adherence to SU procedures should the disclosure of abuse or incidents of such abuse occur.

In order to carry out the above Policy, we in Scripture Union Northern Ireland endeavour to

- 2.1 ensure that in all matters relating to decisions regarding children and young persons who may or may not have been abused, that the child or young person’s welfare will be the paramount consideration. (The Children (NI) Order 1995)
- 2.2 ensure that all SU staff and volunteers are made aware of and have accepted SU’s policy and procedures on child protection prior to undertaking direct work with children or young people.
- 2.3 have fully developed child protection procedures for the prevention of and responding to incidents or disclosures of abuse. (These will be reviewed regularly in the light of legislative and practice developments, and are available for inspection through the SU office.)
- 2.4 follow carefully the procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers.
- 2.5 provide context-appropriate training to enable volunteers and staff to acquire knowledge and understanding of child protection issues, and SU’s child protection policy and procedures. This will be at a level consistent with the responsibility held by each individual.
- 2.6 assist and co-operate fully with any police investigation or enquiries into any allegation of abuse involving staff, volunteers or children or young people involved with SU.
- 2.7 keep all information concerning an investigation or enquiry confidential, sharing information only on a “need to know” basis.
- 2.8 make our activities accessible to children and young people with special needs
- 2.9 support staff and volunteers and any other involved parties during the process of any child protection investigation or inquiry, as appropriate in each circumstance.
- 2.10 make available our Child Protection Policy to children and parents involved in Scripture Union activities.

Definitions of Abuse

The following is taken from "Co-operating to Protect Children" volume 6 of the Children (NI) Order Regulations and Guidance.

Anyone may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or failing to provide proper care. Children may be abused in many settings: in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. Disabled children may be particularly vulnerable to abuse.

There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one type of abuse.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. For children with disabilities it may include confinement to a room or cot, or incorrectly given drugs to control behaviour.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Over-protection can also be a form of abuse. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance abuse may expose children to emotional abuse.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate foods, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include neglect of or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs."

Bullying

Bullying in itself is not a form of abuse, but a child who is bullied may be suffering any of the types of abuse defined above. It may take many forms but the main types are:

- physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft);
- verbal (e.g. sectarian/racist remarks, name calling);
- indirect (e.g. spreading rumours)

The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children to the extent that it affects health and development or, at the extreme, causes significant harm. In these circumstances bullying should be considered as child abuse and treated as such.

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GUIDELINES ON CHILD PROTECTION for school SU leaders



Scripture Union is fully committed to the welfare of the children and young people involved in all our activities. Volunteers are expected to do all they can to protect those in their care from abuse. They are also expected to behave in such a way that no possible allegation of abuse can be made against any of them.

SU coordinators are required to ensure that each of the adults involved in their groups, or in any residential activities organised by their groups, has been approved by the school principal in accordance with the school's policy on Child Protection and has received some basic training in child protection. Such training can be provided by Scripture Union, if necessary.

Each of the adults involved in a school SU group, or in any residential activity organised by the group, is expected to be familiar with and to **comply fully with the school's policy on Child Protection**.

They are also expected to adhere to the following guidelines.

1. You should treat children, and encourage them to treat each other, with dignity and respect at all times. You should never allow inappropriate language or behaviour to go unchallenged.
2. Other than IN AN EMERGENCY, you should never be alone with a child in isolation without the consent of the SU coordinator and / or the school principal.

Meetings with individual children should take place as openly as possible. If privacy is needed, the door should be left open and other adults informed of the meeting.

3. You should never take children alone in a car on journeys, however short. Where this is unavoidable, it should be with the full knowledge and consent of the SU coordinator and of either the school principal or the child's parents / guardians.
4. You should avoid unnecessary physical contact with children. There may be occasions when it is unavoidable, such as when providing comfort and reassurance for a distressed child. In such circumstances care should be taken to ensure that physical contact does not take place in any way that might be considered indecent or that might be misconstrued.

In extreme cases, it may be necessary to restrain a child physically to prevent injury or damage to property. In such circumstances no more than the minimum necessary force should be used. You should be familiar with and adhere rigidly to school guidelines in this respect.

5. You should never arrange to meet with children outside of organised activities without the consent of the SU coordinator and of either the school principal, if you are meeting within the school, or the child's parents / guardians, if you are meeting outside the school. Under no circumstances should you meet with a child or young person on your own.
6. You should respect the children's right to privacy. Do not invade their privacy, for example, when they are using the toilet, changing or showering. Be sensitive to children who may be shy about communal changing or showering and make allowances for them.
7. You should never:
 - engage in rough physical games, including horseplay, other than sports activities which are properly organised and supervised;
 - engage in sexually provocative games or activities;
 - make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child even in fun;
 - do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.

It may sometimes be necessary for you to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very young or if they are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full knowledge and consent of the child's parents / guardians and with another adult present. In an emergency situation which requires this type of help, the school principal and the child's parents / guardians should be fully informed as soon as possible. In such situations it is important to ensure that you are sensitive to the child and undertake personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.

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- You should avoid any situation that may be open to misinterpretation. If there is any situation with which you are uncomfortable, you should consult either the designated teacher responsible for child protection within the school or the member of staff responsible for child protection within Scripture Union about it.

Responding To Abuse

- It is not the role of leaders to seek for and to identify symptoms of abuse. Nevertheless it is vital that no child in need of help is ignored.

If you have any concerns about a child being abused, or if any such disclosures are made to you, you **must** report these immediately to the designated teacher responsible for child protection within the school. If your concerns relate either to incidents suspected or disclosed to have taken place during a Scripture Union activity, or to a volunteer associated with the activity, you must also report them to the member of staff responsible for child protection within Scripture Union.

If neither of these are available and, in your judgement, the matter is urgent you should report your concerns to your school SU coordinator who should in turn seek advice from the school principal or from Social Services in your area.

- If a child discloses to you that he / she has been abused in any way you should adhere to the following guidelines, which are adapted from those in the DHSS publication, 'Our Duty to Care.'

Do	Don't
<p>Stay calm.</p> <p>Listen and hear. Give the child time to say what he/she wants.</p> <p>Reassure the child that he/she has done the right thing in telling.</p> <p>Record in writing what was said as soon as possible.</p> <p>Report the matter as above.</p>	<p>Do not panic.</p> <p>Do not ask leading questions.</p> <p>Do not promise to keep secrets. Explain that you may have to talk to someone else in order to be able to help.</p> <p>Do not inquire into the details of the abuse.</p> <p>Do not make a child repeat the story unnecessarily.</p>

You may wish to involve your school SU coordinator in the conversation at an early stage but you should do so only with the consent of the child.

You should also adhere to the following guidelines.

- Maintain confidentiality at all times. Do not discuss the matter with anyone other than those to whom you have reported it, as above.
- Continue your relationship with the child from then on as normally as possible. Do not pursue the matter any further, or refer to it again unless the child initiates the discussion.
- Do not make any physical examination of the child.

Our full Child Protection Policy can be downloaded from the schools section of our website: www.suni.co.uk as can the Disclosure Report Form you will need if you have to report a disclosure or concern to the member of staff responsible for child protection within Scripture Union.

If you have any further questions or concerns relating to child protection please speak either to the designated teacher responsible for child protection within the school or to the member of staff responsible for child protection within Scripture Union.

*Scripture Union 157 Albertbridge Road BELFAST BT5 4PS
Tel: 028 9045 4806 Email: info@sunl.co.uk*

Resources

Publications

Our Duty To Care (Volunteer Development Agency)
Away from Home and Safe – Getting Residential Right

Web Addresses

<http://www.ccpas.co.uk>
www.childline.org.uk
www.nspcc.org.uk

Telephone Numbers (for use by SUNI Designated Officers Only)

If contacting **Social Services** use the most appropriate phone number below. If calling the board's headquarters ask for the Principal Social Worker for Child Care. Otherwise ask for the Child Care Manager or Assistant Principal Social Worker for Child Care.

Eastern Board:

Area Headquarters	028 9032 1313
South & East Belfast Health & Social Services Trust	028 9056 5555
North & West Belfast Health & Social Services Trust	028 9023 0557
Ulster Community and Hospitals Health & Social Services Trust	028 9181 6666
Down & Lisburn Health & Social Services Trust	028 9266 5181

Northern Board:

Area Headquarters	028 2565 3333
Causeway Health & Social Services Trust	028 7032 0757
Homefirst Health & Social Services Trust	028 2563 3700

Southern Board:

Area Headquarters	028 3741 0041
Craigavon & Banbridge Community Health & Social Services Trust	028 3883 1983
Newry & Mourne Health & Social Services Trust	028 4176 0960
Armagh & Dungannon Health & Social Services Trust	028 3752 2381

Western Board:

Area Headquarters	028 7186 0086
Foyle Health & Social Services Trust	028 7126 6593
Sperrin Lakeland Trust	028 8224 4127

If contacting the **NSPCC** use their free 24-hour Child Protection Helpline. The number is 0800 800 500.