

SUTHERLAND (NSW) CHRISTADELPHIAN ECCLESIA

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Adoption at our Annual Business Meeting, 19th November 2004 - plus subsequent addendum

1. PREAMBLE

The Sutherland (NSW) Christadelphian Ecclesia (SCE) conducts a range of activities that include children and young people. This means that, from time to time, individuals, other than the parents of the children and young people engaged in an activity, will have the responsibility for their supervision and welfare. During these activities, the SCE has a duty to protect children and young people against possible abuse and improper or inappropriate behaviour.

This document provides guidance for those engaged in any activity conducted by the SCE where children and young people are involved. It also provides guidance for victims of abuse, those related to victims of abuse, and guidance for perpetrators of abuse.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 "Child " is an individual under the age of 16 years. However, in this policy it also includes a "young person", between the ages of 16 and 18.
- 2.2 "Adult " is an individual at or over the age of 18 years.
- 2.3 "Harm" is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child's physical, psychological or emotional well-being. It is immaterial how harm is caused. For example, harm can be caused by physical abuse, psychological abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation.
- 2.1 "Child Sexual Abuse" is any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child including intercourse, assault, penetration, acts of indecency such as touch (including use of objects), exposure, harassment, and suggestive behaviour, in any form, and exposure of children to pornographic material. Coercion, which may be physical or psychological, is intrinsic to sexual abuse and differentiates such abuse from consensual peer sexual activity.
- 2.2 "Physical Abuse" is non-accidental injury to a child by a parent, caregiver or other person. It includes injuries caused by excessive discipline, severe beatings or shakings, bruising, lacerations, welts, burns, fractures and dislocation. Physical abuse may result in permanent physical damage or death.
- 2.3 "Emotional Abuse " is behaviour by a parent or caregiver or other person that can destroy the confidence of the child resulting in significant emotional deprivation and trauma. It encompasses a range of behaviours that harm a child and involves impairment of a child's spiritual, social, emotional, cognitive and intellectual development, and negative disturbance of a child's behavior.
- 2.4 "Neglect" occurs where a child is harmed by failure to provide the basic physical and emotional necessities of life such as adequate and proper food, clothing, medical aid, lodging and care.
- 2.5 "Parent" is the child's mother, father or someone else having or exercising parental responsibility for the child. Despite this, a person standing in the place of a parent of a child on a temporary basis is not a parent of the child. A parent of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child includes a person who under Aboriginal or Islander custom, respectively, is regarded as a parent of the child.
- 2.6 "Youth Group" includes the Sutherland Youth Group or any other activity involving children or young people.
- 2.7 "SCE" is members for the time being of the Sutherland (NSW) Christadelphian Ecclesia which superintends ecclesial activities in New South Wales.

3. PRINCIPLES

The SCE has adopted the following principles, which will underpin its child protection policies and procedures:

- 3.1 Child Abuse is ungodly and violates the principles of our God and our faith.
- 3.2 Christadelphians do not support or condone criminal behaviour. We recognise that child abuse is criminal behaviour.
- 3.3 Child abuse, in all its forms, is harmful to children's physical, social, emotional and spiritual development and well being.
- 3.4 The safety, welfare and well-being of the child are paramount. The SCE has a duty of care for children and young people. They are God's gift to us.
- 3.5 The SCE will, as far as it is in its power and expertise, assist and support ecclesial individuals who are victims of abuse.
- 3.6 The SCE will also, to the best of its ability, organise its affairs and activities to protect children and young people against child abuse and improper or inappropriate behaviour.

4. POLICY

- 4.1 Any person bringing allegations of improper conduct involving children to the SCE will be advised to contact the appropriate State authorities regardless of what other action the SCE may determine is required.
- 4.2 In the case of a child disclosing that he/she is the victim of child abuse, the appropriate State authorities must be contacted.
- 4.3 Persons of age who disclose abuse will be encouraged to seek professional support and report their allegations to the appropriate authorities so that the perpetrator may be prevented from further abuse.
- 4.4 Families must be part of the discussion about the welfare of the child. Families have the primary responsibility for the upbringing, protection and development of their children. The preferred way of ensuring a child's well being is through the support of the child's family. Subject to the best interests of the child, the action taken must ensure that family relationships are maintained.
- 4.5 Action should aim to secure the safety of the child, within its own family. In all cases, appropriate links between the child and the family must be maintained.
- 4.6 Intervention requires sensitivity to issues of age and gender.
- 4.7 Child abuse matters must remain confidential and others should be informed only when they need to know. Those involved in discussion must honour their agreement to keep all matters confidential.
- 4.8 Investigation of concerns about abuse and neglect must be left to those with the statutory responsibility for investigation and to people with specific expertise.
- 4.9 Perpetrators require professional assistance. Perpetrators need to recognise their behaviour is abhorrent and unacceptable to the Lord and be willing to face the consequences of their behaviour.
- 4.10 Information needs to be made available to SCE appointees regarding child protection, and procedures for dealing with allegations of child abuse.
- 4.11 The SCE will comply with the provisions of the Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1988 in the appointment of officials and assignment of tasks to volunteers.

5. PROCEDURES

The SCE has adopted the following procedures that will guide all SCE activities involving children and young people:

- 5.1 All persons having responsibility for the care and welfare of children and young people at camps and weeks/weekends away organised by the SCE or its subcommittees must either belong to a profession that require regular police checks, or must have signed a "Prohibited Persons Declaration" form before being included in the conduct of any activity.
- 5.2 Any SCE appointed person conducting an activity involving children and young people are responsible to the SCE for the implementation of SCE policy relating to child protection. This will include the implementation of approved guidelines for the conduct of all activities. They will also be responsible for any required training of people involved in the care and supervision of children and young people engaged in activities organised by them.
- 5.3 The responsible person, referred to in 5.2, when informed of an incident, makes preliminary enquiries and begins a written record. He or she will need to
 - Inform the victim and his/her family that the allegation will be taken seriously and investigated
 - Define the allegation concisely (who, what, where, when)
 - Assess any immediate risk to children or young people and take necessary interim action to ensure their safety and well-being. A person against whom an allegation of child abuse has been made may be restricted from activities conducted by SCE where he or she may come into contact with children or young people until a satisfactory resolution is attained. If he/she is in a leadership position, he/she will automatically be relieved of that position until the conclusion of investigations.
- 5.4 The responsible person will inform Department of Community Services (DOCS) and the SCE Recorder of the allegation and details of the preliminary enquiries. DOCS may choose to carry out their own investigation so an internal investigation at the same time must not prejudice it in any way. These procedures may be followed for people over eighteen.
- 5.5 If DOCS decides to follow through with an investigation, the SCE may not become involved, except to determine future action following the completion of the DOCS investigation.
- 5.6 Pastoral care will be provided by a different person for the alleged abuser and the child or young person allegedly abused. This is especially critical during the period that DOCS or the Police investigate the allegation and the case is proceeding to court. Pastoral care provided by the same person to both parties can be construed as impeding the accurate maintenance and presentation of evidence and can affect the case if it proceeds to court.
- 5.7 If the SCE elects to conduct its own investigation, particularly if the abused is over eighteen, then agreement to conduct an investigation shall be obtained by consultation of the SCE Recorder and two other SCE arranging brethren.
 - 5.7.1 Objectives should be determined in consultation with the SCE Recorder and one of the arranging brethren in 5.7. These should include outcomes for both the victim and the alleged offender.
 - 5.7.2 The investigation process must
 - Avoid subjective language where possible since the objective of the investigation is to gain factual evidence
 - Maintain procedural fairness and confidentiality of the victim and the alleged perpetrator

- 5.7.3 The investigation will gather
- Statements (written or transcript) from witnesses and parents/caregivers, signed and dated.
 - Statements (written or transcript) from the victim. Professional counsellors may be needed, depending upon sensitivity and trauma.
 - Evidence such as photographs, transcripts of conversations, email printouts, supervision rosters and instructions.
- 5.7.4 During the investigation process, the allegation should be put to the alleged offender at an interview. He /she will be given an opportunity to respond in writing (signed and dated) and verbally (documented transcript summary).
- 5.7.5 During the investigation process, the Recorder should be informed in confidence. The Recorder does not have to take part in the investigation.

- 5.8 When all the evidence has been gathered a final report should be written. The report should include
- Allegation
 - Objectives
 - Investigation process, including names and positions of investigators
 - Detailed account
 - Statements
 - Other evidence
 - Decision (see 5.9)

The report and all documentation including rough notes should be forwarded to the SCE Recorder for safekeeping for the required period.

- 5.9 A decision for action will be made by the SCE (in committee or by a minimum of the SCE Recorder together with two other SCE arranging brethren) in consultation with the responsible person in 5.2, and other people as determined. The decision will need to be
- Documented with a rationale and included in the final report
 - Given to victim and his/her family, to indicate the conclusion of the process
 - Given to the alleged offender, to indicate the conclusion of the process, indicating future action if the allegation has been substantiated, or other resolution if the allegation has not been substantiated.

6. IDENTIFICATION OF ABUSE

- 6.1 Recognising indicators of child abuse and neglect is a process of forming a responsible concern or well-founded suspicion that abuse or neglect has occurred or may occur in the future.
- 6.2 Child sexual abuse is any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child. Adults or adolescents who perpetrate child sexual abuse exploit the dependency and immaturity of children. Coercion, which may be physical or psychological, is intrinsic to sexual abuse and differentiates such abuse from consensual peer sexual activity.
- 6.3 Indicators of abuse are listed in Attachment 1.

7. NOTIFICATION OF ABUSE

- 7.1 Notification of suspected child abuse is mandatory for teachers, counsellors, social workers, early childhood teachers and some other professions. Although an individual may not fall into one of these employment categories, this does not remove from them the responsibility of informing, either verbally or in writing, any concerns they may have regarding sexual abuse of children in relation to SCE activities to the SCE.
- 7.2 A notification must be made on "reasonable grounds". Reasonable grounds relate to the facts of the concern and the nature and seriousness of the allegations, being mindful of the child's age and circumstances.
- 7.3 Any person who suspects that a child or young person is at risk of harm from abuse or neglect may report the matter to the Department of Community Services (DOCS). In some cases it is mandatory in N.S.W. for a person to notify DOCS. Under the Children and Young People (Care and Protection) Act 1988 it is mandatory for "a person who holds a management position in an organisation the duties of which include the direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of . . . welfare, education, children's services . . ." to notify DOCS.
- 7.4 Reporting requirements are as follows:

Child under 16 years

Where there is reasonable suspicion of abuse it must be reported to DOCS.

Child (young person) between 16 years and 18 years

Where there is reasonable suspicion of abuse it may be reported to DOCS.

Over 18 years

Where there is reasonable suspicion of abuse the victim should be encouraged to report to the Police, but there are no mandatory reporting requirements.

Hence, it is a legal requirement for the SCE Recorder, or any other SCE appointed person conducting an SCE activity involving children and young people to notify DOCS if an allegation of abuse is brought to their attention sufficient to arouse "reasonable suspicion".

8. INVESTIGATION OF ABUSE

- 8.1 It is not the responsibility of the SCE to investigate and collect evidence in suspected cases of child abuse. These are the responsibilities of officers of the appropriate State authorities.
- 8.2 All matters regarding allegations of harm to a child or young person are confidential. This includes the identity of the notifier to the authorities and the identity of the child or young person under investigation.

9. GUIDELINES FOR THE CONDUCT OF YOUTH ACTIVITIES

- 9.1 The general principles and objectives, as outlined in sections 3 and 4 of this document, are to form the basis of expected behaviour by all members who are involved in providing these types of activities.
- 9.2 Those responsible for supervising and caring for children and young people will be required to declare that they are not a 'prohibited person', and that they sign a 'Prohibited Employment Declaration' form, which will be kept on file by the Recorder or nominated person.
- 9.3 The SCE will endeavour to ensure to the best of its ability, that all SCE appointed persons directly involved with the care and supervision of children and young people:-
- Are aware of and agree with this policy statement safeguarding the welfare of children and young people.
 - Endeavour to assess the potential risk to children of all positions within the SCE environment
 - Are aware of responsibilities of disclosure or discovery of abuse or neglect including procedures to ensure the fair investigation of complaints and allegations.
- 9.4 To assist to that end, the SCE will endeavour to:-
- Plan the working of SCE activities in such a way as to minimise the opportunity for unsupervised adult contact with children.
 - Provide SCE appointed people involved in care and supervision of children appropriate training to enable them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.
 - Provide effective supervision, where appropriate, of all carers so as to reduce the risk of child abuse or neglect occurring within the SCE environment.

10. POLICY REVIEW

The SCE Child Protection Policy will be reviewed and updated in line with any legislative changes that have significant impact on the manner in which child protection and intervention issues are to be dealt with.

ATTACHMENT 1: INDICATORS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

(Reproduced with the permission of the NSW Department of Education and Training incorporating Appendix 3 in their Publication – 'Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People': Revised Procedures, December 2000)

Risk of harm within the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 relates to the impact of abuse and neglect on a child or young person. The following indicators have been developed from research and clinical experience over recent decades. One indicator in isolation may not imply abuse or neglect. Each indicator needs to be considered in the context of other indicators and the child's or young person's circumstances. The lists are not in hierarchical order.

Setting the context

The following factors in the life circumstances of the child or young person are relevant when considering indicators of abuse and neglect:

- History of previous harm to the child or young person
- Social or geographic isolation of the child, young person or family, including lack of access to extended family or supports
- Abuse or neglect of a sibling
- Family history of violence including injury to children and young people
- Domestic or dating violence.

Physical or mental health issues for the parent or caregiver affecting their ability to care for the child or young person:

- The parent or carer's abuse of alcohol or other drugs affecting their ability to care for the child or young person
- A deficiency in functional parenting skills required to provide for the safety, welfare and well-being of children and young people
- The parent or caregiver is experiencing significant problems in managing the child's behaviour
- The parent or caregiver has unrealistic expectations of age appropriate behaviour in the child or young person
- The parent is experiencing significant problems in relating to the young person.

General indicators of abuse or neglect in children and young people:

- Where the child or young person gives some indication that the injury or event did not occur as stated
- Where the child or young person tells you that she/he has been abused
- Where the child or young person tells you she/he knows someone who has been abused, may be referring to herself/himself
- Someone else tells you, such as a relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the child or young person that the child or young person may have been abused
- Poor concentration
- Sleeping problems e.g. nightmares, bed wetting
- Marked changes in behaviour or mood, escalation in risk-taking behaviours, tantrums, aggressiveness, withdrawal
- Child or young person complains of stomach aches and headaches with no physical findings
- Unrealistic expectations of a young person including failure to allow the young person to participate in decisions that affect them or expecting adult behaviours.

General indicators of abuse or neglect in young people:

- Self harming behaviour such as cutting or burning self
- High level of risk taking behaviour such as climbing up cliff faces while intoxicated
- Substance abuse
- Involvement in criminal activities such as stealing and fighting
- Social isolation
- Difficulty in maintaining long term peer relationships
- Persistently negative themes in art work and creative writing
- Homelessness.

Indicators of neglect

Indicators in children and young people:

- Poor standards of hygiene leading to social isolation
- Scavenging or stealing food
- Extended stays at school, public places, other homes
- Being focussed on basic survival
- Extreme longing for adult affection
- Flat and superficial way of relating, lacking a sense of genuine interaction
- Anxiety about being dropped or abandoned
- Self comforting behaviour, e.g. rocking, sucking
- Non-organic failure to thrive
- Delay in developmental milestones
- Loss of 'skin bloom'
- Poor hair texture
- Untreated physical problems.

Indicators in young people:

- Staying at the homes of friends and acquaintances for prolonged periods, rather than at home
- Resources are not provided which would allow the young person to care adequately for himself or herself e.g. access to washing or food.

Indicators in parents or carers:

- Failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical attention, hygienic home conditions or leaving the child or young person inappropriately without supervision
- Inability to respond emotionally to a child or young person
- Child or young person left alone for long periods
- Depriving of or withholding physical contact or stimulation for prolonged periods
- Failure to provide psychological nurturing
- One child or young person treated differently, for example scape-goated
- Absence of social support from relatives, other adults or social networks.

Indicators of physical abuse or ill treatment:

Indicators in children and young people:

- Facial head and neck bruising
- Lacerations and welts from excessive discipline or physical restraint
- Explanation offered by the child or young person is not consistent with the injury
- Other bruising and marks which may show the shape of the object that caused it e.g. a hand print, buckle
- Bite marks and scratches where the bruise may show a print of teeth and experts can determine whether or not it is an adult bite
- Multiple injuries or bruises
- Ingestion of poisonous substances, alcohol, drugs or major trauma
- Dislocations, sprains, twisting
- Fractures of bones, especially in children under three years of age
- Burns and scalds
- Head injuries where the child or young person may have indicators of drowsiness, vomiting, fits or retinal haemorrhages, suggesting the possibility of the child having been shaken.

General indicators of female genital mutilation (FGM) that could include:

- Having a special operation associated with celebrations
- Reluctance to be involved in sport or other physical activities when previously interested
- Difficulties in toileting or menstruation
- Anxiety about forthcoming school holidays or a trip to the country which practises FGM
- Older siblings worried about their sisters visiting their country of origin
- Long periods of sickness

Indicators in young people:

- Aggressive or violent behaviour towards others, particularly younger children
- Explosive temper that is out of all proportion to the precipitating event
- Being constantly on guard around adults and cowering at sudden movements.

Indicators in parents or caregiver:

- Direct admission by parents or carers that they fear they may injure the child or young person
- Family history of violence, including previous harm to children and young people
- History of their own maltreatment as a child or young person
- Repeated presentations of the child or young person to health or other services with injuries, ingestions or with minor complaints
- Marked delay between injury and presentation for medical assistance
- History of injury which is inconsistent with the physical findings
- History of injury, which is vague, bizarre or variable.

Indicators of psychological harm

Indicators in children and young people:

- Feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves
- Inability to value others
- Lack of trust in people and expectations.
- Lack of interpersonal skills necessary for adequate functioning
- Extreme attention seeking or risk taking behaviour
- Other behavioural disorders, e.g. disruptiveness, aggressiveness, bullying.

Indicators in young people:

- Avoiding all adults
- Being obsessively obsequious to adults
- Difficulty in maintaining long term significant relationships
- Being highly self critical

Children and young people sustain psychological harm from all types of abuse.

Indicators in parents or carers:

- Constant criticism, belittling, teasing of a child or young person or ignoring or withholding praise and affection
- Excessive or unreasonable demands
- Persistent hostility and severe verbal abuse, rejection and scape-goating
- Belief that a particular child or young person is bad or evil
- Using inappropriate physical or social isolation as punishment
- Situations where an adult's behaviour harms a child's or young person's safety, welfare and well-being
- Exposure to domestic violence.

Indicators of sexual abuse or ill treatment

Indicators in children and young people:

- Describe sexual acts e.g. daddy hurts my wee-wee
- Direct or indirect disclosures
- Age inappropriate behaviour and/or persistent sexual behaviour
- Self-destructive behaviour, drug dependence, suicide attempts, self-mutilation
- Persistent running away from home
- Eating disorders
- Going to bed fully clothed
- Regression in developmental achievements in younger children
- Child or young person being in contact with a known or suspected perpetrator of sexual assault
- Unexplained accumulation of money and gifts
- Bleeding from the vagina or external genitalia or anus
- Injuries such as tears or bruising to the genitalia or perineal region
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Adolescent pregnancy
- Trauma to the breast, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs.

Indicators in young people:

- Particularly negative reactions to adults of only one sex
- Sexually provocative
- Desexualisation, e.g. wearing baggy clothes in order to disguise gender. Eating disorders may be a possible indicator in this category
- Art work or creative writing with obsessively sexual themes
- Preoccupation with causing harm to men they suspect are homosexual
- Engaging in violent sexual acts which they talk about
- Knowledge about practices and locations, which are usually associated with prostitution.

General indicators of child or young person's stress should be considered such as:

- Poor concentration at school
- Sleeping/bed time problems e.g. nightmares, bed-wetting
- Marked changes in behaviour or moods, tantrums, aggressiveness, withdrawal
- Child complains of stomach aches and headaches with no physical findings

Indicators in parents, carers, siblings, relatives, acquaintances or strangers:

- Exposing a child or young person to prostitution or child pornography or using a child or young person for pornographic purposes
- Intentional exposure of child or young person to sexual behaviour in others
- Ever committed/been suspected of child sexual abuse
- Inappropriate curtailing, or jealousy regarding age-appropriate development of independence from the family
- Coercing child or young person to engage in sexual behaviour with other children and young people
- Verbal threats of sexual abuse
- Denial of adolescent's pregnancy by family
- Perpetration of spouse abuse or physical child abuse.

Offenders use a range of tactics including force, threats and tricks to engage children or young people in sexual contact and to try to silence the child or young person. They may also try to gain the trust and friendship of parents in order to obtain access to children and young people.

Addendum to

SUTHERLAND (NSW) CHRISTADELPHIAN ECCLESIA

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The following clauses are incorporated into, and to be read in conjunction with, the Child Protection Policy:

- (i) A responsible person will be a member of the SCE for 6 months before working with children.
- (ii) A formal interview with potential responsible persons will be undertaken before being appointed to working with children.
- (iii) At least two (2) referees will be requested of the applicants and contacted.
- (iv) No member will be permitted to work with children who have any prior convictions relating to violent or sexually related offences.
- (v) Training on the purpose and implementation of these policies and procedures will be given to all new applicants who will be working with children.
- (vi) Wherever possible two (2) responsible persons will be present whenever children are being supervised.