

# Hull Unitarian Church Code of Conduct for Protecting Children.

## **1 Introduction**

The Church's Safeguarding Policy defines and outlines the principles regarding our duty of care toward helping to protect all children, to understand the additional legal requirements regarding children engaged in regulated activities and to support all those in the Church who are working with children. This Code of Conduct is supplementary to the Safeguarding Policy and provides additional information, guidelines and procedures to help ensure the protection of children.

When working on behalf of the Church with children, all those working for the Church are considered to be acting in a position of trust. It is therefore important that they act in an appropriate manner at all times and follow the Code of Conduct.

All those working for the Church are expected to report any breaches of this Code to the Safeguarding Coordinator or in her/his absence to the Church Minister or a Church Trustee.

Anyone working for the Church who breaches this Code of Conduct may be subject to the Church's disciplinary procedures or have their engagement terminated. Serious breaches of this Code may also result in a referral being made to the police or a statutory child or adult protection agency.

## **2. Working with Children.**

In so far as possible, staff will avoid situations in which they are alone or in isolated one-to-one situations with children. All working practices should occur in open spaces, in front of others in an 'open door' environment.

### **2.1 You should:**

- (a) Always follow the Church's Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct.
- (b) Ensure that there is more than one adult present.
- (c) Listen to and respect children.
- (d) Treat children fairly and without prejudice.
- (e) Value and take the contributions of children seriously.
- (f) Always ensure equipment is used appropriately and for the purpose it was designed for e.g. computers, cameras etc.
- (g) Avoid physical contact if not necessary (physical contact may be necessary in the case of emergencies but must remain appropriate and be kept to a minimum at all times).
- (h) Always ensure language is appropriate and not offensive or discriminatory.
- (i) Recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues with children.
- (j) Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations or suspicions of abuse.

### **2.2 You should not:**

- (a) Put a child who may be vulnerable, at risk.
- (b) Patronise children.
- (c) Allow allegations to go unreported.
- (d) Develop inappropriate relationships with children.
- (e) Let children have your personal telephone number or email address.

- (f) Make contact via social media that is unrelated to Church business.
- (g) Make personal remarks or discuss themes that encourage children to share personal information.
- (h) Use sarcasm or insensitive comments.
- (i) Act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive.
- (j) Make inappropriate promises to children, particularly in relation to confidentiality.
- (k) Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts.
- (l) Either exaggerate or trivialise safeguarding issues.
- (m) Be complacent about the potential risks to others and yourself.
- (n) Take a chance when common sense, policy or procedures suggest another, more prudent, approach.

### **3. Cause for Concern**

In the course of their work, those working for the Church may come into contact with children where allegations of abuse may be revealed. If a worker is worried that a child is at risk, they are deemed to have 'cause for concern'. 'Cause for concern' means that a Church worker may become aware that a child is suffering or is at risk of suffering harm, abuse or neglect through recognising signs of abuse detailed below.

#### **3.1 An allegation of abuse may come to light through the following situations:**

- (a) A child tells you about a worry or concern they have.
- (b) You see or notice changes in a child behaviours or moods
- (c) You see obvious physical signs of abuse or neglect.
- (d) Someone else tells you about something they have seen or heard.
- (e) An adult or another child tells you that they themselves may have harmed a child or that they are having difficulties with them.
- (f) You see worrying behaviours from an adult or a carer towards a child.
- (g) You know something personal about an individual that causes you to be concerned about a child's behaviour.
- (h) A parent or carer shares information with you that they are having difficulty in meeting their child's needs.
- (i) A Church member raises a concern about another Church member (this could be done informally).

In order that those working for the Church are supported and encouraged to act if they have 'cause for concern' a reporting structure is in place.

### **4 Reporting Structure.**

If anyone involved with the Church comes into contact with a child, and believes that they have cause for concern that the child may be the subject of abuse or neglect, they should:

- (i) speak immediately to the Safeguarding Coordinator or in his/her absence the Minister or a Church Trustee.
- (ii) make a signed and dated record of what was said using the words of the child, as soon as possible after the disclosing conversation.

When receiving an allegation from a child, the following guidelines should be adhered to in order to ensure their future protection:

- (a) Listen carefully, only asking questions for clarification.
- (b) Remain calm and caring and avoid interpreting information.
- (c) Tell the child that you are taking what they are expressing or saying seriously.

- (d) Reassure the child that they are right to talk to someone.
- (e) Do not attempt to interview the child, although it may be necessary to clarify with them what they are saying.
- (f) Tell the child that you need to share this information with others but make it clear to them that you will only tell people who need to know and who can help; you should not promise to keep it a 'secret'.

**5. The role of the Safeguarding Coordinator.**

Where possible safeguarding concerns and referrals should be reported directly to the Safeguarding Coordinator but if that is not possible then safeguarding concerns or referrals should be reported to the Minister or a Trustee.

The Safeguarding Coordinator is responsible for:

- (a) Receiving and recording information from anyone who has concerns.
- (b) Assessing the information promptly and carefully, clarifying or obtaining more information when they need to.
- (c) Consulting initially with a statutory protection agency.
- (d) If necessary making a formal referral to a statutory protection agency.
- (e) Ensuring that procedure is followed on such matters as making a referral, confidentiality and recording.
- (g) Leading in the development of safeguards and reviews of Church policy and procedures.

**The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service 24 Hour helpline for safeguarding advice is:- 0845 1204550.**

**6. Confidentiality**

The right of a child to be protected takes precedence over a parents'/guardians' right to confidentiality.