

I.M.P. has an established children's ministry and takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and to ensure its workers are protected from malicious accusation. Before completing the I.M.P. application form, all I.M.P. applicants are requested to read the policy and all appendices and to make sure they understand both the policy and its relevance to their activities. As part of the application to join I.M.P., all applicants are required to submit themselves to a police check, unless this has been done within the previous year and a disclosure form is in their possession: the application of anyone who has a police record for abuse will automatically be refused. All those *currently* working in association with I.M.P. are equally required to read and abide by the policy.

General Statement

I.M.P. will undertake to:

- Help victims of abuse
- Take all reasonable precautions to ensure the protection of children within I.M.P. activities
- Support parents or guardians who have the primary care of children
- Ensure that children's workers are supported and supervised
- Inform the statutory child care authorities of any concerns about abuse where appropriate
- Ensure that child protection issues are addressed in the I.M.P. application form
- Inform all workers to whom any concerns about abuse should be reported
- Require that all applicants and current workers read the child protection policy and agree to abide by it

Who is responsible for implementing the policy?

Responsibility for implementing the policy lies with I.M.P.'s board of trustees, and they will respond immediately in the event of any allegation or concerns about abuse.

What the board promise to do

- They will immediately call an emergency meeting in the event of any allegation or concerns about abuse. No one who is implicated in the allegation will be consulted or allowed to attend this meeting.
- They will first discuss the situation amongst themselves and will reserve the right to discuss it with local church leadership, on the condition that confidences are kept and that no efforts are made by the leaders to investigate the allegation themselves.
- They will appoint two members of the board to represent them and carry through the decision of the emergency meeting, with the agreement that the other trustees are kept fully informed of the situation.
- If the persons implicated in the allegation are overseas, two trustees, or one trustee and one home church leader, will fly out to the country in question and proceed as if they were in the UK.

What the board will *not* do

- They will not permit abusive youth peer activities (e.g. bullying or name-calling).
- They will not exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
- They will not show favouritism to any individual.
- They will not take a child out of the sight of others.

APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE AND HOW TO RECOGNISE IT

Definitions

Physical abuse

Actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) to a child, including deliberate poisoning, suffocation and Munchausen syndrome by proxy.

Sexual abuse

Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent; the child may be dependent and/or developmentally immature. Sexual exploitation represents the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate social taboos of family roles.

Neglect

The persistent or severe neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

Emotional abuse

Actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment: this category is used where it is the main or sole form of abuse.

Organised abuse

Organised abuse is sexual abuse where there is more than a single abuser and the adults concerned appear to act in concert to abuse children, and/or where an adult uses an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for sexual abuse.

See also below: **Recognising abuse**

See also **APPENDIX 2: RESPONDING TO ABUSE**

Recognising abuse

The following signs may or may not be indicators that abuse has taken place, but the possibility should be considered.

Physical signs of abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them; injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.; injuries which have not received medical attention
- Neglect: under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care etc.
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc. which do not have an accidental explanation
- Cuts, scratches, or substance abuse

Indicators of possible sexual abuse

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing; child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults; inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders: anorexia, bulimia

Emotional signs of abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging; also depression, aggression or anxiety
- Nervousness or frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away, stealing or lying

APPENDIX 2: RESPONDING TO ABUSE

What to do if a child reports abuse to you

- Make notes as soon as possible (preferably within one hour of the child's talking to you), writing down exactly what the child said and when he/she said it, what you said in reply and what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. a description of the activity). Record the dates and times of these events and when you made the record. Keep all hand-written notes, even if subsequently typed: such records should be kept safely for an indefinite period.
- Report the matter to a board member.
- Be discreet; do not confer with anybody else.
- Fill out the report form (see Appendix 5).

How to respond to a child wanting to talk about abuse

General Points

- Show acceptance of what the child says (however unlikely the story may sound).
- Keep calm.
- Look at the child directly.
- Be honest.
- Tell the child you will need to let someone else know; do not promise confidentiality.
- Even when a child has broken a rule, do not blame the child for the abuse.
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened or bribed not to tell.
- Never push for information; if the child decides not to tell you after all, then accept that, and let them know that you are always ready to listen.

Helpful things you may say or show

- I believe you (or show acceptance of what the child says).
- Thank you for telling me.
- It's not your fault.
- I will help you.

Things *not* to say

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it!
- Are you sure this is true?
- Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- 'I promise', if you can't fulfil the promise.
- I am shocked; don't tell anyone else!

Concluding

- Again reassure the child that they were right to tell you and show acceptance.
- Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.

APPENDIX 3: GUIDELINES ABOUT TOUCHING CHILDREN

I.M.P. are aware that physical touch often occurs in a completely pure and innocent way. However, the following guidelines should be understood and followed to protect both children and workers.

- Everything should be kept public; a hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be related to the needs of the child, not of the worker.
- Touch should be age and gender appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the worker.
- Any physical activity that is, or may be thought to be, sexually stimulating to the adult or the child should be avoided.
- Any physical form of discipline is unacceptable: workers must never smack a child.
- Children have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in exceptional circumstances when they need medical attention.

Team members should monitor one another in the matter of physical contact and should be free to help each other by pointing out anything that could be misconstrued. Concerns about abuse should always be reported.

APPENDIX 4: GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR WORKERS

- Work together to create a safe environment for all who take part.
- Treat everyone with respect.
- Provide an example that you wish others to follow.
- Ensure all activities are well thought through and safely conducted.
- Plan activities that involve a team, not an individual, whether working with children or adults.
- Provide firm, but kind, discipline so that activities are always safe.

APPENDIX 5: REPORT OF AN ALLEGATION OF ABUSE

INTERNATIONAL MISSION PROJECT

CONFIDENTIAL

Name of child /young person

Address

Date of birth

Name of person reporting event

Date of event Time

Sequence of events / actual words used /observations

Action taken

Name of person contacted

Date of contact Time

Notes