NAIRN BAPTIST CHURCH

Policy Statement of Nairn Baptist Church on promoting and protecting the welfare of children as well as ensuring the protection, care and support of vulnerable adults.

This code of practice also covers recruitment issues and a statement on the safe handling, use, storage and retention of confidential information.

**Policy Revision – November 2024**

**Introduction**

Nairn Baptist Church is affiliated to the Baptist Union of Scotland. Within the BU, each church is seen as autonomous but is guided by the principles of the Union and would always wish to be seen as accountable to fellow Christian believers.

The Church has a love for children and would wish to value vulnerable people of all ages and include them in the life of the church.

The Church takes seriously its responsibility to care for vulnerable people with their different needs and to promote and protect their welfare in so far as this is possible within the church.

The Church is committed to :-

**Encouraging and supporting parents, carers and relatives as well as listening to, relating effectively to and valuing children, young people and vulnerable adults.**

The Church endeavours to support those involved with and helping children and young people in its organisation and has implemented relevant policies, attempting to ensure the safe appointing of leaders and to have a consistent and clear response to concerns and/or allegations of abuse or neglect, including those made against leaders, members of the congregation and the Minister at the time.

The Church aims to follow the ministry of Christ in welcoming children and vulnerable people, seeking to eliminate social isolation, exclusion and discrimination.

In this draft of the policy, we have retained reference to the Children’s Charter (Scottish Executive, 2004) which serves as a guide for leaders in their work with children and young people. The statements from the Charter are set out below. In their words, children have asked that adults:-

* Get to know us
* Speak with us
* Listen to us
* Take us seriously
* Involve us
* Respect our privacy
* Be responsible to us
* Think about our lives as a whole
* Think carefully about how you use information about us
* Put us in touch with the right people
* Use your power to help
* Make things happen when they should
* Help us to be safe

Recent concerns  
In addition to the need to be more aware of the impact of coercive or bullying behaviour going on in schools and on-line in recent years, all services are having to grapple with the increased use of social media. There has therefore been a need to understand that use of technology is very much part of all of our lives, and reference has been made to the (Scottish) National Action Plan on Internet Safety produced in April 2017 which provides a helpful and significant overview of the relevant policies and issues in place at this time.

***In keeping with the spirit of safe use of information and the GDPR requirements from 2018, the church will be clear in any function about use of cameras and will provide opt-out information in addition to clarifying matters on the purpose and storage of any personal data.***

Finally, should any person be unhappy about any practice towards a child or vulnerable person within the care of the Church, they will be encouraged to talk with the Section leader or Child Protection Coordinator in the first instance, then recourse can be made to speak to the Minister and/or details will be given of the Baptist Union of Scotland for further discussion with them, bearing in mind the Church’s autonomy.

Nairn Baptist Church also supports the policy of Highland Council and the Scottish Government in affirming the wish for children to be: -

SAFE, HEALTHY, ACHIEVING, NURTURED, ACTIVE,

RESPECTED AND RESPONSIBLE AND INCLUDED (SHANARRI)

and will endeavour to ensure that these values are explored and become implicit in the life of the church.

**Minister**: Jonathan Turner Date: 04-11-24

**Policy Coordinator**: Ceri Turner Date: 04-11-24

**Section 1**

**Nairn Baptist Church Children and Youth Ministry**

**Policy for responding to disclosures**

**Or observations of abuse**

**Guidance in dealing with**

**Situations which may involve abuse**

**Physical injury, sexual abuse, incidences of neglect**

**If a child has a physical injury or some sign that may indicate neglect, the helper will:-**

1. Seek a reasonable explanation or comment from the child and their parent/carer. Appropriate advice can be given to encourage medical help/attention.
2. Advise the child protection coordinator of instances where a parent/carer seems not to be taking action to deal with any injury or statement from the child. The child protection coordinator will consider whether information should be passed on to the local authorities.
3. Seek any emergency medical attention in situations of necessity and the child protection coordinator will advise medical staff of any child protection concerns.
4. Respond to any suspicious injury or statement from a child by advising the child protection coordinator who will pass on the information to the police and/or the emergency social work service.

**In the event of allegations or suspicion of sexual abuse**

1. In the event that a child is encountered after an alleged incident of rape or sexual intercourse, then an immediate referral to Social Workor the Police should be made. Remember that the police may want to obtain forensic evidence so that it would **not** be helpful for the child to change clothes or have a bath
2. In other cases of serious concern, information will be passed to the child protection coordinator to pass on to the police and/or Social Work for advice. There will be no discussion with the parent/carer.
3. If, for any reason, the child protection coordinator is unsure whether or not to pass on information, then it is best to seek advice from the Emergency social work service.
4. **Under no circumstances shall helpers or the child protection coordinator attempt to question the child regarding what they have said.**

The role of the child protection coordinator is to collate the available information clearly and act as a reference point for statutory services. The task of the police and social work service is to carry out child protection investigations under the Highland Inter-agency Guidelines and Procedures.

1. Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the child protection coordinator for the church, in their absence, there should be no delay in information being passed on and the Minister or a Deacon should make the referral to the Social Work Service.
2. Exceptionally, should there be any disagreement between the person in receipt of information and the child protection coordinator as to the appropriateness of passing on information, any person retains the right to express their concern to the authorities and should do so without hesitation.
3. It should be noted that any individual can refer to the Authority Reporter (47-49 Academy Street, Inverness), if they have concern about the welfare of any child. This does not lead to immediate action to protect the child but may result in further investigations to safeguard the child. (Children (Scotland)Act 1995)
4. The Leadership group of the church shall support the child protection coordinator and accept that any information they have in their possession may be shared with Police and Social Work if this is in the interests of a child.

**In the event of allegations from third parties/anonymous referrals or families not known to the church (occasionally, information can be given to church workers as people of trust)**

1. As much information will be obtained from the referrer as possible. Unless the person wishes to remain anonymous, this should include the referrer’s name, address and telephone number and as much information about the child and family of concern. (Name of children, ages, address) Information as to the nature of the concern/nature of harm or observation should be included.
2. The child protection coordinator should inform the referrer that information will be passed on to the appropriate authority and that the police and/or the Social Work service may wish to interview the referrer.
3. In any case where the child protection coordinator is uncertain whether to refer on, advice can be sought from the Emergency Social Work service or from the local social work office during weekly working hours or from the Police.

**In the event of allegations or suspicions re a child of a church family or regarding a leader**

1. Information should be taken, and the actions set out above should be taken.
2. If there are allegations of abuse, the parents **will not** be spoken to or informed. This is the role of the authorities to decide. Where a parent/carer alleges abuse by another parent/carer, the first party will be advised not to speak to the alleged perpetrator re the matter.
3. The leaders of the church will agree to cooperate with the statutory agencies and shall agree to expose all forms of abuse in order that harm stops, and perpetrators are dealt with appropriately including receiving support and help, alongside measures taken via the Justice System.
4. Where it comes to light that there are concerns about a person who has contact with children, this person shall not continue to operate in that role until the completion of all necessary investigations. The leaders are committed to work with the advice and guidance of Statutory Agencies in this respect.
5. Where it is considered that a Church worker or volunteer has harmed a child or put a child at risk of harm AND this leads to dismissal or that the worker would have been dismissed but has moved away or has resigned or retired or has left at the end of a temporary contract, a referral must be made to the Scottish Ministers for possible inclusion on the DWC List.
6. Where it comes to light, via a PVG check, that an individual helping with children is noted on the Disqualified from Working with Children list, it is illegal for the organisation to allow them to continue in their position and they shall be immediately removed, following the guidance of the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003.
7. It is illegal for a person to apply for a child-care position knowing that they are listed on the DWC list.

**SECTION 2**

**Some further clarifications re vulnerable adults and engagement with the public regarding mental health**

Definition – When we begin to think about vulnerable adults, the group most in need are those who cannot protect themselves and so measures need to be in place for their protection.

The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 defines “Adults at Risk”, through a three-point test. They are adults, aged 16 years or over, who:

a. Are unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests

b. Are at risk of harm; and

c. Because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, are more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so

So, the above Act is designed to protect those adults who are unable to safeguard their own interests and are at risk of harm because they are affected by:

* disability
* mental disorder
* illness
* physical or mental infirmity

Harm means all harm including self-harm and neglect.

As a church, we are committed to combatting prejudice and words or actions which dis-empower any person or group who may struggle to be heard because of their vulnerability. We are willing, therefore, to work with and partner any statutory agency or group who have powers to intervene and provide support.

Although not operating in Scotland, we have found the principles of the UK Government Care Act 2014 to be helpful. These 6 safeguarding principles are: -

* **Empowerment:**people being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and give informed consent
* **Prevention:**it is better to take action before harm occurs
* **Proportionality:**the least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented
* **Protection:**support and representation for those in greatest need
* **Partnership:**local solutions through services working with their communities – communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse
* **Accountability**and transparency in safeguarding practice

**APPLICATION TO RENEW WELLBEING**

Whilst it may be the case that most who might attend the Wellbeing space are not vulnerable by the definition given at the start of this section, we are still committed to offering welcome, acceptance, respect and dignity to all who come into contact with our organisation. The fundamental biblical principle of love which has justice and compassion at its heart is a high standard which matches any current guidance.

**Renew Values** – 2 of the 3 values at the heart of Renew speak to the matter of care and concern for any who come into the space – being present and being in partnership.

**Being Present –** We agree to maintain a well hosted, welcoming, inclusive shared space with a cafe feel that is open to all and overtly inclusive of anyone with mental health issues.

We agree to co-produce all activities, welcoming others to share hobbies.

We agree to be present consistently at the times we have agreed to be open, with at least two hosts present at each session.

**Being in Partnership –** In addition to our aim to co-produce with those who attend sessions, we also aim for the sake of those who attend to**: -**

to find, befriend and work with a member of the local mental health team.

We agree to learn from and listen to those with professional skills and/or lived experience of mental ill health.

**The third key value of Renew Wellbeing** is about being prayerful and we recognise that this could be an area of pressure and even abuse. It is therefore absolutely clear to us, that the heart of this work is non-coercive, and that Wellbeing time is open to people of all and no faith and where prayer is offered and is separate from the social space. Equally, the pattern offered for those who wish to take part is simple and accessible for all.

**SECTION 3**

**Nairn Baptist Church Policy on the selection and**

**support of helpers for children and Vulnerable people**

**In contact with the church**

**Protecting Vulnerable People in Contact With The Church**

Nairn Baptist Church aims to ensure that any vulnerable people, whether children, young people or vulnerable adults are protected and kept safe from harm while they are with either paid or voluntary church workers of this organisation. In order to achieve this, we will ensure that workers are carefully selected and supported where required.

**Selection**

* Any applicant for a care position will normally be a member of the Church but the Leadership will consider an application from someone who is a committed Christian and is well known to the Church.
* Any person over 16 who is not a Christian and not a member, but who is clearly interested in helping with our children’s work can be considered as a **helper** assuming they go through the same process as all others, and **they will be regarded as additional** to the running of any group.
* All applicants will go through an application process at a suitable level (those with the church over 2 years will complete a declaration form and a further PVG with others with the church less than 2 years applying via the relevant full application form)
* There will be a discussion following the completion of the relevant forms which will normally include the Leader of the relevant area of service or the Minister of the church.
* Those who are new to the church (less than 2 years) will be asked to provide references and these will be taken up prior to confirmation of appointment

**Screening**

All applicants will be asked to complete the appropriate PVG form. This is supplied and signed off by the Child Protection Coordinator but is completed by the applicant.

**Support/Training**

* The applicant will receive relevant support which will give an over-view of the organisation to ensure the applicant knows the purpose, values, services and structure of the Church’s work. This will be done by the CP coordinator/Minister at the point that the candidate starts in their role.
* Support will be encouraged on an ongoing basis and will cover information relevant to their role.
* Guidance and support will be provided through the Children and Young people’s work meetings or meetings of a care section (for vulnerable adults). In addition, if relevant training arises, Leaders and helpers may attend as they choose or approach the Leadership for support to attend such training.
* Some other specific issues around Health and Safety are dealt with in other documentation for the Church. Training on this where it affects protection of vulnerable people and such areas as responding to and reporting abuse and confidentiality will be given and will be regularly reviewed.

**Support**

* There is no formal structure for supervision (in the current arrangements) but there is a model of peer support and workers will have the opportunity of guidance and support through Children’s work meetings or individually with their co-leaders. It is hoped that workers continue to evaluate their roles and interests in their discussions with other leaders.

**Nairn Baptist Church** will ensure that all those involved in the recruitment and support of workers are aware of this policy and have access to the training and support required to ensure its full implementation.

SECTION 4

**Nairn Baptist Church Policy on the recruitment**

**Of ex-offenders**

Nairn Baptist Church undertakes to treat all applicants for positions within the church fairly and not to discriminate unfairly against the subject of a disclosure on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.

The Church will request that applicants for children’s work join the PVG scheme to the position applied for.

The Church will make the process of application and the need to join the PVG scheme clear via information about the position.

Through the process of application, if relevant, those acting on behalf of the Church will ensure that open and measured discussions can take place on the subject of offences. Failure to reveal information through the process of application and interview may result in any offer to be part of the work of the Church being withdrawn.

In discussion or when receiving a disclosure which shows a conviction, the following will be taken into consideration:-

* Whether the conviction is relevant to the position being offered
* The seriousness of the offence revealed
* The length of time since the offence
* Whether there is a pattern of offending behaviour
* Whether there has been a change of circumstance for the applicant since offending took place

The Church will ensure that all those working within its organisations are aware of this policy and receive training and support relevant to it.

We undertake to make a copy of this policy available to any applicant for a position working with vulnerable groups within Nairn Baptist Church.

**SECTION 5**

**Nairn Baptist Church Policy on the safe handling**

**Use, storage and retention of confidential information**

In accordance with the Scottish Executive Code of Practice for registered persons and other recipients of Disclosure information, **Nairn Baptist Church** will ensure the following practice:-

* All applicants for child-care positions or those with vulnerable adults shall be part of the PVG scheme. The information provided on the Scheme Record will only be used for recruitment purposes.
* **Nairn Baptist Church** will ensure that the applicant understands that an application to the PVG scheme is necessary and will support them as they complete this and will seek consent before using disclosure information for any purpose other than recruitment.
* Disclosure information will only be shared with those authorised to see it in the course of their duties.
* Where additional disclosure information is provided to **Nairn Baptist Church** and not to the disclosure applicant, **NBC** will not disclose this information to the applicant but will inform them of the fact that additional information has been provided, should this information affect the recruitment decision.
* Disclosure information will be stored in a locked non-portable container, for a maximum of 90 days according to the Code of Practice (Section 122(1) of the Police Act 1997 - as amended 2008).
* Only those with authority to see this information will have access to this container.
* Disclosure information will be destroyed by shredding.
* No image or photocopy of the disclosure information will be made, however the following details will be retained:-
  1. Date of issue of disclosure
  2. Name of subject
  3. Disclosure type
  4. Position for which disclosure was requested
  5. unique reference number for disclosure
  6. recruitment decision taken
* **Nairn Baptist Church** will ensure that all those with access to disclosure information are aware of this policy and have received relevant training and support.
* **Nairn Baptist Church** will undertake to make a copy of this policy available to any applicant for a position that requires such a disclosure

In addition, in common with all other organisations who hold personal data, NBC will be compliant with the requirements of GDPR.

**SECTION 6**

**A further guide to good conduct in working with children and in   
Recognising and responding to Disclosures and observations**

**You should: -**

* Play your part in helping to develop an ethos where all people matter and are treated equally, with respect and dignity
* Always put the care, welfare and safety needs of a child first
* Respect a child’s right to be involved in making choices and decisions which directly affect them
* Listen attentively to any ideas and views a child wants to share with you
* Respect a child’s cultural background and diversity
* Respond sensitively to children who seem to be anxious about participating in certain activities
* Be aware of the particular vulnerability of some groups of children (eg, disabled children, gypsy and traveller communities and black and ethnic minority children)
* Ensure that when you are with children, you are at least within sight or hearing of other adults
* Listen carefully, pay attention to drawings that may not be age-appropriate, report suspicions, never dismiss what children say as ‘Lies’
* Only restrain a child who is at imminent risk of harming themselves or others
* Never underestimate the contribution you can make to the development of safe communities for children.

**Children in difficulty**

The ideal situation for children during child-hood is for boys and girls to receive loving care and correct discipline (against which they sometimes rebel) in a safe environment. In such circumstances, children have every chance to grow and develop normally into a stable adulthood.

Intrusion into this ‘normal’ development prevents children from growing into stable adult lives and such damage is called “abuse”. Children who suffer abuse will behave in a variety of ways – not always obviously abnormal as they struggle to come to terms with has or is happening to them.

The experience of abused children has been compared with that of hostage victims. A few days as a hostage can change the whole psyche of an individual – including intermittent violence, emotional outbursts. Other responses may include guilt, low self-esteem and a sense of inadequacy.

The abused child is asked to love and obey their parent/guardian/carer, but they may, at the same time, be being physically or psychologically degraded – perhaps receiving violence for no apparent reason. As a result, the child internalises powerful feelings and can be overwhelmed by them.

Workers with children and young people need to be able to detect the most common signs of abuse because they are a cry for help which, in many cases, cannot or dare not be articulated. There may be other reasons, however, for what a child is doing, and a worker must never be required to make a decision on their own as to whether abuse is taking place.

**Abuse – Types and causes**

**CHILD ABUSE** is a term which covers a wide range of things and tends to be divided into four main areas: -

physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect.

**Physical Abuse**

Where children are physically hurt or injured

**Emotional Abuse** Where children don’t receive love and affection, may be frightened by threats or given responsibilities beyond their years

**Sexual abuse**

Where adults will use children and young people to satisfy sexual desires. Young people can also abuse each other.

**Neglect**

Where adults persistently and severely fail to care for children and fail to protect them from danger, leading to serious impairment to the child’s health and development.

There is usually an overlap in the areas of abuse and neglect of children and young people.

A variety of personal circumstances can cause adults to abuse children physically or neglect them. These kinds of abuse may be easier to detect.

Signs of emotional or sexual abuse are usually very difficult to detect. With sexual abuse in particular, secrecy and fear imposed by the offending adult or abusing child is part of the abuse pattern, so the child will not readily disclose what is happening.

Whatever form the abuse takes and whoever the abuser, the parent or carer very often have some degree of control or responsibility for what happens. Parents and carers can harm children by failing to provide proper care.

For all the above categories, such abuse may also be experienced by a vulnerable adult and their capacity and/or confidence to report harm may be impaired so there is a need to be alert to similar signs or changes in behaviour that we might see in children.

**Being Bulling or being a victim of coercive behaviour**It has become necessary to consider these matters in addition to what is stated above as Society has become more aware of the impact of bullying. As a church, we are not experts in this complex area, but we should accept that there is evidence of this problem existing and so accept the power of the negative impact on any child or vulnerable person. As in other contexts where an individual reports being bullied, it is necessary to listen and accept what is happening and then work out together what steps may be helpful. If an individual is disclosing such behaviour, it will be helpful in this instance to get a full picture and it is possible to ask more about the experience but common sense is required about how serious the matter is and whether it will be necessary to seek the advice of others and whether the person should be encouraged to go to the Police.

**Internet Safety**

It is recognised that this is an increasingly complex area where grooming is experienced by many and young people report feeling both confident and also very vulnerable in their use of social media. Aside from giving general advice, this is an area where abuse may have taken place and so the involvement of services and the Police may be necessary. It will be important that the individual knows that you do not keep secrets, if they ask for this, as the matter may be more serous and require follow up. We may not have the technical knowledge but we can say that we will seek to find the right advice and the church wishes to be alert and willing to increase its understanding of this area.

**Who are the abusers?**

An **abuser** is most often someone known to the child. It may be a parent, sibling, other relative, family friend or neighbour. Sometimes, the abuser may be someone who holds a position of responsibility over the child, as in a church. Abusers can be people of any age, either sex and from any social and cultural backgrounds. There is no certain way of identifying a “would-be abuser” – they don’t appear different from the rest of society. Abusers are individuals who, themselves, are in desperate need and require help. Some abusers may have been abused themselves as children.

**Recognising abuse**

**Signs and symptoms of Abuse**

The following behavioural signs may be indications of child abuse but they should not be taken in isolation.

***Indicators of possible physical abuse***

* Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given
* 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
* Instances where children are kept away from the group inappropriately
* Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
* Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc for which there is no accidental explanation

***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

***Indicators of possible emotional abuse***

* Changes or regression in mood and behaviour, especially where a child withdraws or becomes clinging
* Nervousness or watchfulness
* Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
* Inappropriate relationships with peers or adults
* Attention seeking behaviour
* Persistent tiredness
* Running away

**How to react when a child**

**Wants to talk about abuse**

It is not easy to give precise guidance but the following is generally helpful:-

***General Points***

* Accept what the child or young person says(however unlikely the story may sound)
* Listen sympathetically
* Keep calm
* Look at the child directly
* Be honest
* Let the child know that you will tell someone else – **do not promise confidentiality**
* Even when a child has broken a rule, **they are not to blame for the abuse**
* Be aware that the child or young person may have been threatened
* Never push for information – gently repeat back to the child what they have said to ensure that you have heard and understood it correctly. The child will sometimes respond by giving more information

***Helpful things to say***

* “I believe you” (showing acceptance through words)
* “I am glad you told me”
* “It’s not your fault”
* “I will try to help you”

***Avoid saying***

* “why didn’t you tell anyone before”
* “I can’t believe it”
* “ Are you sure this is true”
* “ I’m shocked – don’t tell anyone else”

Avoid questioning the child

Do not begin with WHY?, WHEN?, WHO?, WHERE?

Do not make false promises

***When concluding the discussion, reassure the child that they were right to tell you and that you believe them***

**What to do when a child has**

**Talked to you about abuse**

1. Make notes as soon as possible (preferably within an hour of the discussion) writing **exactly** what the child said and some details of what led up to the discussion
2. You should also make an accurate record of what you have said to the child or young person and any response to that
3. Record dates and times of the events
4. Keep all hand-written notes, even if these have been typed up later
5. Report your discussion as soon as possible to the child protection coordinator or nominated person

**If either of these people is implicated, then report directly to the Minister**

**You should not discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone other than those nominated in the child protection policy.**