

Destiny Child Protection Policy & Procedure

Introduction

Destiny is committed to the protection of children and considers the safeguarding and promoting of the interests and well being of children as of paramount concern. Destiny considers it the duty of all those employed or involved in the Church activities to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of all children with whom they come in to contact, including reporting any abuse discovered or suspected. It is important that everyone knows how to respond if they become concerned about a child or young person.

This policy should also be brought to the attention of children/young people and their parent(s), carer(s) or person(s) with parental responsibility in order that they have a clear understanding of what to expect if someone in Destiny is concerned about a child or young person.

Who Needs Protection?

Children and young people under the age of 16 and young people between the ages of 16 and 18 who are affected by disability or are vulnerable, need protection.

What is Child Abuse?

The general definition of child abuse adopted in Scottish Office guidance¹ refers to circumstances where “a child or young person’s basic needs are not being met in a manner which is appropriate to his or her individual needs and stages of development and the child is, or will be, at risk through avoidable acts of commission or omission on the part of their parent(s), sibling(s) or other relative(s) or a carer (i.e. the person(s) while not a parent who has actual custody of, charge of, or control over a child).” Additional information can be found in Appendix I

What to do if you think a Child or Young Person is at Risk of Abuse

- Be supportive to the child or young person if appropriate. Listen with care but do not ask any unnecessary questions. Take what the child or young person is saying seriously and advise them you will have to pass the information on.
- Write down the nature of your concern and anything the child or young person may have told you using, so far as possible, the words used by the child or young person. Remember to sign and date the notes taken.
- Immediately report the grounds of your concern to **Desray van der Merwe** who will take steps to pass the information on to the appropriate person or organisation that will investigate the concerns. **Do not delay in reporting your concerns. Where possible, let Desray van der Merwe know on the same day the concern arises.**
- These procedures do not diminish the responsibilities of parents or other concerned adults to contact the Social Work Department or Police directly. Refer to the list of contacts in Appendix II.

¹ Protecting Children – A Shared Responsibility – Guidance on inter-Agency Cooperation, Scottish Office 1998

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Confidentiality

A child or young person being at risk of harm will always override a professional or organisational requirement to keep information confidential.

Those employed or involved with Destiny have a responsibility to act to make sure that a child whose safety or welfare may be at risk is protected from harm. Children, young people and their parents should always be told this.

The appropriate Destiny initiative or ministry will notify parent(s), person(s) with parental responsibility, children or young person that a policy on the protection of children and young people exists. This ensures that everyone is clear there is a process that is followed and that it comes as no surprise to anyone when the concerns are passed on to the relevant organisation.

It needs to be made clear that information will not be kept confidential where it is felt that a child or young person is at risk of abuse or harm. Children and young people need to know this information so they are clear what happens if they tell an employee or someone involved with Destiny that they are worried about something or indicate that they are at risk of abuse or harm.

Action to be taken by Destiny's Named Person

- Destiny has identified people who will act on behalf of the church in respect of incidents where child abuse is suspected or identified.
- All cases of suspected or alleged abuse must be treated seriously and the local Social Work Department should be contacted immediately. The concerns should be clearly stated including the basis for them. When the local office is closed the Emergency Social Work Service should be alerted.²
- If you are unhappy with the response from the Social Work Department you can contact the local Police Office or the Reporter to the Children's Panel outlining your concerns to them.³

What Happens Next?

It is the duty of the Social Work Department to investigate matters of concern in relation to the protection of the child or young person. Where it is alleged a crime has been committed against a child the matter is likely to be investigated jointly with the Police.

The investigating Social Worker/Police Officer may ask to speak to the person with whom the concerns originated. You should co-operate fully with any future enquiries.

What if it is someone within Destiny you are Concerned About?

If you have observed someone associated with Destiny acting in a way that has caused you to be concerned and feel the matter needs to be investigated you should contact **Desray van der Merwe** outlining your concerns and the basis for them. She

² Refer to list of important contacts in this document

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will take your concerns seriously and decide on an appropriate course of action. This may involve the use of Destiny's disciplinary procedures and/or a referral to the Social Work Department or the Police.

When **Desray van der Merwe** is not available due to holidays or sickness **Angela Anderson** will act as the named person.³

In addition, a person independent of Destiny will be available for children and young people, staff and others involved with Destiny to contact if they are concerned about the welfare of a child or young person and feel unable to talk to any of the named persons. This may be as a result of concern they have about someone who works for or is involved with Destiny. The independent person will follow the procedure outlined in this document.

It is crucial that those involved make no judgements as to whether the concern is justified. If there is even the slightest doubt about the welfare of a child or young person the information should be passed on immediately.

Should the person concerned about a child or young person be dissatisfied with the response received the addresses and telephone numbers of the local Social Work office and Police station should be given so that the individual can make contact with them directly.

The Recruitment and Selection of Staff and Volunteers

Careful consideration needs to be given to the recruitment of staff and volunteers for Destiny. The staff and volunteer policies, therefore, include a mandatory disclosure process. No-one should commence an initiative on behalf of Destiny that involves children and young people until the disclosure process is completed and the individual is deemed fit to take responsibility for the participants in the proposed programme.

Supporting the child or young person

The child or young person is likely to continue to be involved with Destiny following the reporting of the concerns. It is important that employees and those involved with the child or young person through an initiative act in a supportive manner. You should:

- Continue to listen with care
- Reassure the child or young person he/she was right to tell, if appropriate.
- Affirm the child or young person's feelings as expressed by them
- Do not question/interrogate the child or young person
- Do not show disbelief
- Avoid being judgmental
- Do not introduce personal or third party experiences of abuse
- Avoid displaying strong emotions

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Important Contacts

Department of Community Child Health

8.30am – 5pm

0131 536 0467

5pm – 8.30am

0131 536 0000

State that it is a child protection matter.

Children and Families Department

See attached list for contact details during the day)

Out of office hours

5pm – 8.30am

0131 554 4301

State that it is a child protection matter.

Family Protection Team in the police

0131 662 5000

Only refer this to one organisation as they will pass details on to the other relevant organisations.

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Appendix I

The lists below are by no means exhaustive but are designed to give employees and people involved with Destiny some guidance on how to recognise child abuse. Any information has to be seen in the context of the child or young person's whole situation and circumstances. Different types of abuse may overlap or co-exist.

It is extremely important to emphasise that the lists below, although designed to be a helpful aid, should **not be used as a checklist**. It may be that a child or young person may tell someone that they are being abused but they show no obvious signs. It is crucial that if a child or young person says that he/she is being abused the matter is taken seriously and passed on as a matter of urgency.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is defined as **"actual or attempted physical injury to a child, under the age of 16 where there is definite knowledge or reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented"**.⁴

Possible signs of physical abuse:

- Unexplained injuries or burns, particularly if they are recurrent
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Untreated injuries or delay in reporting them
- Excessive physical punishment
- Arms and legs kept covered even in hot weather
- Fear of returning home
- Aggression towards others
- Running away

Physical Neglect

Physical neglect is defined as occurring **"when a child's essential needs are not met and this is likely to cause impairment to physical health and development. Such needs include food, clothes, cleanliness, shelter and warmth. A lack of appropriate care results in persistent or severe exposure, through negligence, to circumstances which endanger the child."**⁵

Signs of possible physical neglect:

- Constant hunger or inappropriate/erratic eating patterns
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Lack of adequate clothing
- Failure to seek appropriate/necessary medical attention
- Unhygienic home conditions

⁴ Protecting Children – A Shared Responsibility – Guidance on inter-Agency Cooperation, Scottish Office 1998

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Non-Organic Failure to Thrive

Non-organic Failure to Thrive is defined as **"children who significantly fail to reach normal growth and developmental milestones (i.e. physical growth, weight, motor skills, organic reasons must have been medically eliminated and a diagnosis of non-organic failure to thrive has been established."**⁵

Signs of possible non-organic failure to thrive:

- Significant lack of growth
- Weight loss
- Hair loss
- Poor skin or muscle tone
- Circulatory disorders
- Lethargy

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is defined as **"failure to provide for the child's basic emotional needs such as to have a severe effect on the behaviour and development of the child".**⁵

Possible signs of emotional abuse:

- Low self esteem
- Continual self deprecation
- Sudden speech disorder/ refusal to speak
- Fear of carers
- Severe hostility/ aggression towards other children
- Significant decline in concentration span
- Self harm

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is defined as **"any child below the age of 16 may be deemed to have been sexually abused when any person(s), by design or neglect exploits the child, directly or indirectly, with any activity intended to lead to the sexual arousal or other forms of gratification of that person or any other person(s) including organised networks."**⁵

Possible signs of sexual abuse:

- Sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Complaints of genital itching or pain
- Self harm
- Eating disorders
- Unexplained pregnancy
- Acting in sexually explicit manner
- Anxiety/ depression/ withdrawn

⁵ Protecting Children – A Shared Responsibility – Guidance on inter-Agency Cooperation, Scottish Office 1998

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- Fear of undressing e.g. for physical exercise
- Low self esteem
- Inappropriate sexual awareness
- Running away
- Developmental regression
- Lack of trust in adults or over familiarity with adults

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Appendix II

Social Work Services- Area Teams

North Edinburgh

Social work centres

Muirhouse Crescent 0131 343 1991
West Pilton Gardens 0131 529 400
Leith 0131 553 2121
Craigentenny 0131 661 8291

West Edinburgh

Social work centres

Springwell House 0131 313 3366
Westfield House 0131 334 9933

South West Edinburgh

Social work centres

Oxgangs Path 0131 445 4451
Murrayburn Gate 0131 442 4131

South and East Edinburgh

Social work centres

Captain's Road 0131 529 5300
Craigmillar 0131 657 8500
Victoria Street 0131 226 6731

Social Work Hospital Teams

Royal Infirmary 0131 536 3286
Simpson's Memorial 0131 536 3288
Western General 0131 537 1000
City Hospital 0131 536 6272
Sick Kids 0131 536 0501
Royal Edinburgh Hospital 0131 537 6000
Royal Victoria Hospital 0131 537 5000
St John Hospital 01506 419666

Emergency social work service

0800 731 6969