



## Good Practice Guidelines

### You should:

- treat all children and young people as individuals, with the respect and dignity that befits their age.
- be thoughtful about your language and tone of voice.
- be especially careful of all these when children are showering, toileting or changing.
- learn to control and discipline children without using any physical means (other than – in extreme cases – restraint by holding to prevent injury).
- try to find a place that is open and visible for any counselling situation where privacy and confidentiality are important.

### You should not:

- ever engage in any of the following:
  - invading the privacy of children or young people,
  - rough, physical or sexually provocative games,
  - inappropriate or intrusive touching of any form,
  - any scapegoating, ridiculing or rejecting of a child.
- allow youngsters to involve you in excessive attention-seeking behaviour, especially any that is overtly sexual or physical in nature.
- allow yourself to be alone with a child where you cannot be seen by others.

### Ongoing contact

Remember that you are in a position of trust which continues outside the period of the event. Any communication or direct contact with a young person therefore needs to be characterised by transparency and integrity and must operate within Scripture Union's policy on safeguarding children.

## Safeguarding children

### ► A guide for Scripture Union staff and volunteers

At Scripture Union, keeping children safe is of paramount importance and the need to provide adequate care for children and young people must be at the forefront of any event planning.

Scripture Union has policy documentation on safeguarding children\* which gives detailed guidance on how to provide this care and how to respond in the event of matters of abuse arising. A full copy is available but this leaflet is intended as a handy reference for all those involved in Scripture Union events.

*\* In child protection terms, a child is defined as anyone under 18 years of age.*

### What is abuse?

There are several categories of abuse officially defined in Government documents. The following are the most common:

**Physical** – where children suffer physical harm or injury or where there is a failure to prevent such injury.

**Emotional** – where children do not receive love and affection; they may be frightened by threats and taunts or be given responsibilities inappropriate for their years.

**Sexual** – where children or young people are involved in sexual activity they do not fully comprehend or to which they are unable to give informed consent.

**Neglect** – where adults persistently and severely fail to care for children or protect them from danger, resulting in serious impairment of the child's health or development.



# Children and young people in God's world

It was Jesus who said *"Let the children come to me"* (Mark 10:14), emphasising his care and concern for children. The Bible also teaches us of the concern that God has for families and for the well-being of individuals within the family context.

Therefore each event should aim to model a community where:

- children are respected, nurtured and kept safe
- team members are supported and encouraged
- where possible, parents are supported and encouraged.

Moreover, through our events we have a unique opportunity to stand with children and young people in the face of a culture where abuse is an all too common factor of children's lives.

## Scripture Union's Commitment

Scripture Union is a movement made up of volunteers and paid staff. We believe that all human beings are of equal worth in the sight of God and aim to follow biblical principles in all that we do. Therefore:

- We commit ourselves to the nurture, protection and safekeeping of all, especially children and young people.
- It is the responsibility of each one of us to protect children and young people from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and to report any abuse suspected or discovered.
- In order to achieve this, we are committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with children and young people. We will provide adequate supervision and recognise mutual accountability.

## Procedures

All SU staff and volunteers are committed to the protection of children from physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

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

**Physical** – unexplained or hidden injuries; lack of medical attention.

**Emotional** – reverting to younger behaviour; nervousness; sudden underachievement; attention-seeking; running away; stealing; lying.

**Sexual** – preoccupation with sexual matters (evident in words, play, drawings); being sexually provocative; disturbed sleep, nightmares, bedwetting; secretive relationships with adults or children.

**Neglect** – appearing ill-cared-for or unhappy; being withdrawn or aggressive; having injuries or ongoing health problems.

**If abuse is disclosed to you or allegations are made during an event, here are some guidelines:**

1. Do not panic. Try to act in a composed and sympathetic manner.
2. Listen carefully. Only ask questions to clarify what you hear; do not ask questions that seek for information. Do not start to investigate.
3. Reassure the young person that it was right to tell you and that you will take their concerns seriously.
4. Do not promise confidentiality – explain that you will have to tell someone else.
5. Stay with the young person until they are reassured and comforted.
6. Immediately tell your event leader.  
If your leader is implicated in any way – or if you feel that they have not acted correctly in following up your information – then call the Scripture Union office on 01908 856000 or the emergency SU number on 0845 273 3060.
7. Write up and keep detailed notes of exactly what took place.

Disclosures of abuse are, thankfully, quite rare on SU events and so the chances of being faced directly with these matters are not great. It is important, however, that each person is prepared to deal with a situation should one arise.