

GUIDELINES FOR WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

(Under 18's)

October 2024

1. Policy statement on safeguarding welfare of young people

This policy is designed to help The Refuel team provide a safe environment for working with all children and young people under the age of 18. This policy is based on the Home office recommendations and guidelines, "Safe from Harm", which provides a framework for voluntary groups to promote the welfare of children and young people, in particular to prevent abuse taking place. Refuel is committed to supporting, resourcing, and training those who work with young people and to provide supervision. Refuel is committed to adopting guidelines and procedures based on "Safe from Harm". All staff and volunteers shall be given a copy of this statement and Refuels agreed procedures and practice guidelines. A copy of the policy is available for anyone to read.

As a Christian organisation committed to presenting the reality of God to young people, we affirm our belief in the God given value of each young person with whom we work or have contact. In recognition of God's wholehearted commitment to them, we will also treat each individual with value and dignity and aim that none suffers physical, sexual, emotional or spiritual abuse of any kind. If at all possible, it is the responsibility of each one of us to safeguard young people against physical, sexual, spiritual and emotional abuse and to report any abuse discovered or suspected.

All staff and volunteers will be expected to sign a declaration stating whether or not they have ever accepted an official caution from the police, been convicted or are currently the subject of criminal charges. (Disclosing such information may not bar an individual from being appointed.)

This statement will be reviewed on a regular basis and applies at any event or where ministry is undertaken in the name of Refuel.

2. Plan of work for the pastoral care of and work with young people.

All activities should avoid any situation where abuse could result. All young people should be treated with respect and dignity.

2:1 Any form of ministry is to take place in public. Personal conversations are to include someone of the same sex and with a minimum of three people present if at all possible. Both public ministry and personal conversations are to be within the guidelines laid out in (Appendix 1).

2:2 If giving lifts to young people, if only one is left in a four-door car, that young person should normally sit in the rear seats.

2:3 Initiating physical contact with young people is to be avoided. Young people are not to be picked up and swung around "in fun" on any occasion.

2:4 Making sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person, even in "fun", any scapegoating, ridiculing, rejecting or comments about young persons' attributes or attractiveness of a young person should not occur.

2:5 Hugging is to be discouraged among the staff and volunteers when young people are present. Although physical contact should not be initiated by the worker it is important that young people if they initiate and choose to have any contact are responded to appropriately, physical contact should be age appropriate and in a measured manner.

2:6 Parental/guardian consent must be obtained for any activity undertaken where the young person is involved in extended time away from the main tent area. Communication of what is happening should always be made available to parents/guardians.

2:7 An agreed system of recording activities and conversations with young people should be implemented. These should be completed with as agreed with supervisory staff.

2.8 Avoid favouritism and special friendships. Do not develop an exclusive relationship with a group member if you are a leader, however small the age gap. Do not be over eager to befriend particular young people.

2.9 Never smack, hit or physically discipline a young person except by "holding" which may be used if there is an immediate danger of personal injury to the young person or another person. (Any such incident must be reported to line manager).

3. Procedures for protecting children and young people for all staff and volunteers.

3.1 In cases where face-to-face work with children and young people is part of their normal role then Refuel would seek to initiate disclosure or PVG checks on all teams and volunteers. Everyone shall be given and have the policy statement explained to them. All teams and volunteers will receive training according to these guidelines when they join Refuel.

3.2 Refuel recognise that when its teams are visiting churches or running conferences, events, or training events, those attending may reasonably assume that such teams have been subject to checks relating to protection of young people. Therefore, all team visiting groups on behalf of Refuel and all those running or assisting at refuel conferences, events, or training events where they could have unsupervised access to young people must be subject to checks as set out in these guidelines.

3.3 One-off volunteers undertaking tasks for Refuel will be subject to the same procedure as teams. This requirement may be waived if the person is known to Refuel and will not have unsupervised access to young people in the course of the task. 'Known to Refuel' means that at least two people who are team, Board members or people who have significant connections with Refuel could, if asked provide references for the person. One-off applies to volunteers giving not more than one day's time for their volunteering. One-off volunteers will include those who accompany teams on a speaking engagement, help at a Refuel day or evening event. Once someone is volunteering with Refuel on a regular basis, 'regular' meaning more than three times a year, then they will be subject to the Refuel guidelines for volunteers in this document.

3.5 Refuel is not responsible for the selection, approval or appointment of those working with children or young people in any affiliated church or group. These groups and churches are responsible for appointing people to work with children and young people according to their own policies for protecting children and young people.

4. Appointment of staff and volunteers

4.1 All applicants will complete an application form.

4.2 All applicants will be asked to provide a reference, and this will be taken up prior to confirmation of appointment.

4.3 All applicant will be asked to complete a self-declaration form prior to the Disclosure Record being accessed.

4.4 A record of those teams for which police checks have been made will be kept. CRB disclosures/PVG information will be kept securely in a lockable, storage container with access strictly controlled and limited to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties. Where a CRB disclosure/PVG has any information on it a risk assessment should be completed prior to the worker coming into contact with young people through Refuel activities.

5. Management/Supervision

5.1 There shall be a system of line management within Refuel to provide supervision and accountability. This will include monitoring ongoing work with young people and for teams, line management in accordance with Refuel policies and guidelines.

6. Current Policy

6.1 Refuel will provide all teams and volunteers with the current guidelines and assist teams and volunteers in understanding the guidelines spelt out in this document. Refuel will endeavour to keep all teams up to date with any changes made to these guidelines.

7. Identifying Abuse – signs, symptoms and how to respond.

7.1 How might we recognise abuse?

7.2 Warning signs: They are only a guide, they are not necessarily proof of abuse, but may be an indication

- 1) Changes/regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy.
- 2) Nervousness/watchfulness.
- 3) Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration.
- 4) Changed or inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults.
- 5) Attention seeking behaviour.
- 6) Persistent tiredness.
- 7) Running away/stealing/lying.

Other areas where leaders should be vigilant are:-

- a) Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them, or where differing explanations have been received.
- b) Injuries, which occur to the body in places, which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- c) Injuries and illnesses, which have not received medical attention.
- d) Instances where children are kept away from the group or school inappropriately.
- e) Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming.
- f) Any signs of neglect, under nourishment or inadequate care.
- g) Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse.
- h) Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters, and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play.
- i) Sexual activity through words, play or drawing.
- j) Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults.
- k) Inappropriate bed sharing arrangements at home.
- l) Severe sleep disturbance with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotation.

One or more of these warning signs may be evident. Many symptoms of distress in a child can point to abuse, but there are other explanations too. This (together with conflicting medical opinion) has sometimes been the reason for falsely accusing parents of sexual abuse. It is important that the above signs are not taken as indicating that abuse has taken place, but that the possibility should be considered far more than in the past. They should make us stop and think - not jump to conclusions inappropriately!

8. Procedures if abuse is suspected, discovered, or disclosed:

8.1 The most important thing to remember is that when a young person discloses that abuse of any nature is taking (or has taken) place, they are divulging a secret. You **MUST NOT** agree to keep the secret; the young person should be made aware that you may need to tell someone else. Please make sure that the young person knows that YOU believe them. Many situations have arisen where the first person to be told of such events failed to demonstrate that they believed the young person in the first instance, and this led to the abuse being covered up for years.

8.2 If a young person wants to talk to you about some form of abuse pursue the following guidelines as much as is possible and appropriate to your situation. General points are

- accept what the person says
- keep calm
- be honest
- look directly at the young person
- do not appear shocked
- let them know you may need to tell someone else
- assure them that they are not to blame for abuse

- never ask leading questions
- never push for information
- do not fill in words, finish their sentences or make assumptions
- be aware that the young person may have been threatened

8.3 In the work of Refuel it is our duty to work to prevent abuse taking place. There are several forms of abuse:

Physical - when an adult kicks, beats, or punches and children's bodies are hurt or injured.

Emotional - where children don't receive love and affection, may be frightened by threats or taunts, or are given responsibilities beyond their years.

Sexual - where adults (and sometimes other children) use children to satisfy sexual desires; touches a young person's private parts in a way that makes the child feel worried or unhappy; showing the young person rude pictures or videos; sexual abuse can be anywhere in the range from visual contact to sexual penetration.

Neglect - where adults fail to care for children and protect them from danger, seriously impairing health and development; when an adult leaves a young person alone for long periods of time.

Spiritual - when a leader with spiritual authority uses that authority to coerce, control or exploits a follower causing spiritual wounds.

If any young person or child comes to you and talks about past or present abuse situations, keep a hand-written narrative of the conversation immediately after you have spoken with that person. If you suspect that a young person may be the victim of such abuse the following procedure must be followed:

8.4 The disclosure should be reported to the designated person in Refuel (Head of Children's Ministry or Director of Refuel).

It is important to keep reporting channels as short as possible and this should not prevent or delay any reporting to relevant authorities. Do not speak to the parent (or anyone else) if there is a possibility that they could be involved. It is the responsibility of the Refuel leader to pass on the possibility of abuse to the Social Services Department. If the person to whom the abuse was disclosed believes that the designated person has not taken appropriate action they may speak to the authorities themselves.

After you have made the handwritten notes you should fill in the Refuel Report Abuse Form.

The young person must be kept informed at all times of what is being done, what is likely to happen, and should be prepared for such an eventuality before they disclose such information. Where the abuse is current this will need to be reported to the authorities normally by the designated person. However, it is also important that the young person is aware that no action is likely to be taken by the authorities without the young person being listened to and all decisions reached will take account of the wishes and feelings of the young person. (1989 Children Act).

The authorities are likely to be more proactive in situations where other young people could also be at risk. If there is sufficient concern, a child protection conference will be held to decide the best course of action to protect the young person and help the family. There may be criminal prosecution of the abuser. **Note:** Ensure records of action taken are recorded on Refuel Report Abuse Form.

9. Accusations of abuse against Refuel staff or volunteers

9.1 If any member of teams or volunteers is accused of abuse then Refuel will co-operate with other agencies in the enquiry. During the course of the enquiry, it is recommended that the teams or volunteer concerned is not involved in face to face children/youth work and that they take a period of special leave. Refuel teams and volunteers must report any allegation made about themselves or others to their supervisor or his/her delegated representative.

10. APPENDIX 1

Guidelines for talking and praying with young people.

These are not a set of rules just for the sake of it. There is a good reason why they are there, for your own protection and the person you are dealing with.

1. Always talk and pray with someone in a group of more than two if at all possible. One to one contact may take place only in a public place and your supervisor must agree should this become something that needs to continue with that person.
2. Always same sex - i.e. 2 males - male, 2 females - female, when involved in praying with young people. If for any reason this is impossible, then it should happen in a public place and be agreed with your supervisor.
3. Always pray and talk in an open space where others are around, privacy is a factor, but don't go alone.
4. Confidentiality is vital - they will need to know that you will not go to others and talk about their problems. However, do not promise to keep a secret. You may need to tell someone in authority. If that is so, tell them who it will be and what you will say - in order to build trust. In British law the responsibility for any investigation is with the Social Services, Police or the SSPCC and it is not for workers to carry out these preliminary investigations.
5. Keep calm and be honest. Don't feel you have to know all the answers. If you don't know, find someone who does and ask them.
6. Don't be afraid to ask for advice. We are not out to prove anything to anyone; we want the best for them. If you feel out of your depth or unsure, ask someone to help you.
7. Don't keep bringing it round to your own experience, i.e. 'yes, I remember when that happened to me and ...' Testimony is good, but listen.
8. Don't make promises you can't keep.

9. Don't appear shocked or appalled.

10. Be sensitive, don't say things like - 'I can't believe it, why didn't you tell anyone before?' or - 'no, you didn't, did you?'

11. Don't laugh at them.

12. Don't minimise or trivialise the issue, even if it may not seem important to you. If they need to talk about it, it is important.

13. Be aware of your body language, the way you are reacting. Always encourage and affirm, don't judge or condemn.

14. Don't feel you have to wrap it up straight away, some things need talking through more. Talk that through with a leader or prayer co-ordinator. Don't offer to do it on your own, or offer the availability of someone else before checking it out with them.

15. If you are told about anything illegal you must tell your supervisor (or his/her delegated representative) straight away. There is no general legal duty to report an offence to the Police.

16. Don't take on board other people's problems as if they were your own. Remember, empathy is standing in someone else's shoes, with your feet firmly in your own.

17. Do not under any circumstances touch someone inappropriately when praying or talking with them. Do not initiate hugging - whether same sex or opposite sex. Remember we need to be above reproach.

18. Allow young people privacy when going to the toilet or changing, age appropriate.

19. Follow up, check how they are doing the following week.

20. Fill in a form straight away. Give it to your supervisor. We don't need to know all the intricate details, but the general issue.

11. APPENDIX 2

Where minibuses are used it is expected that all drivers and leaders will adhere to the legal (and where appropriate, local authority) regulations.

12. APPENDIX 3

12.1 Internet and the web

New Media is defined in this document as any technology that is used to communicate a message, e.g. websites, mobile phones and such things as cd-roms and DVD's.

A conversation in this context can be an exchange of emails or text messages.

What needs to be included in any information we provide

- We need to be transparent in all our information. Every website we create or have influence over needs to have a section clearly labelled as a reference to the Refuel Guidelines for work with Young People. This section will spell out what our policy is and what our working practices are.
- All our sites will have the Refuel logo clearly visible which links to our main site.
- Where possible all sms and mms messages should clearly identify the sender and their Refuel connection.
- We will adhere to the STOP command issued when someone no longer wishes us to contact them via sms or mms.

2 Best Practices of those using new Media

- Everyone involved in using New Media will have read and understood the Refuel Guidelines for work with Young People
- Under no circumstances are personal details to be exchanged in a public forum. If someone posts personal details in a public forum then the post must be deleted or modified to remove the details, a note explaining this will then be posted.
- No meetings are to be arranged. This is a rule that can only be broken if the meeting is supervised in a public place. The Director or Head of Children's Ministry of Refuel of the worker must be informed of the meeting and approve of it.
- If at all possible, a record of any sms, mms or email conversations should be kept and archived.
- Refuel workers should use their real names for chat purposes
- All Refuel discussion boards will be monitored by Refuel staff or volunteers
- No conversation is to be entered into that involves sexual or pornographic websites, if they do come up in conversation either ignore the comment or terminate the conversation immediately.
- Any photographs used on our websites will be vetted to make sure they are acceptable.
- Above all the over-riding attitude is a concern for the people we are working with, for their well being and salvation. As long as we are working for their good then what we do and how we approach our work will dictate our working practices for the good.

APPENDIX 4

Event Manager – Craig Mackay - mobile no. 07813872818

Administration – Denise Mackay – Mobile no. 07855473691

Useful phone numbers: Refuel Head Office – 01343 610230

Local Social Services – They can be contacted to ask for advice on a particular situation without having to disclose your name or details

Police - call 101 (999 in emergency)