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MMUK Child Protection Policy & Procedure

Introduction

These child protection policies and procedures were drawn up by MMUK based on the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services Standards and Guidelines ("Keeping It Safe"). They conform to current child protection legislation and guidance.

MMUK Aim

The Melanesian Mission UK is an Anglican mission agency that provides support to the Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACoM), through Prayer, People and Giving.

Statement of Intent

MMUK is concerned that, in all its activities, it safeguards the well-being of every person it interacts with, of whatever age. MMUK takes extremely seriously the responsibility to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of every member of the community, and particularly the abuse of those who are most vulnerable, including children and young people. For the purposes of this policy, a 'child' is defined as anyone under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It is the duty of all those who work with children and young people to prevent harm and abuse of every kind, and to report any abuse discovered or suspected. MMUK acknowledges it has a responsibility for the safety of children that are directly involved in any of its events or activities, or when any disclosures are made concerning a child's safety to MMUK's staff or volunteers. Good child protection policies and procedures are also of benefit to staff and volunteers, helping to provide protection from erroneous or malicious allegations.

MMUK is committed to practices which protect children from harm.

MMUK Worldwide endeavours to safeguard children by:

- child protection procedures and a code of practice for all who work on behalf of the organisation;
- reporting concerns to the authorities in whichever country concerned;
- following carefully procedures for recruitment and selection of staff, volunteers and trustees; and providing effective management for all staff and volunteers through support and training.
- reviewing its Child Protection Policy and Code of Practice at regular intervals.

Furthermore, MMUK plans the work of the organisation so as to minimize situations where the abuse of children may occur.

It is MMUK's policy that:

- All staff working on behalf of MMUK will accept responsibility for the welfare of children who come into contact with the charity in connection with its tasks and functions; and that they will report any concerns about a child or somebody else's behaviour, using the procedures laid down.
- All those who come into contact with children on behalf of MMUK should adhere to the Code of Practice in relation to children.
- Information relating to any allegation or disclosure will be clearly recorded as soon as possible, and there is a procedure setting out who should record information and the time-scales for passing it on.
- The Children Act 1987 states that the "welfare of the child is paramount". This means that considerations of confidentiality which might apply to other situations should not be allowed to over-ride the right of children to be protected from harm. However, every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned when an allegation has been made and is being investigated.
- MMUK's Child Protection policy, and its duty of care to children, will be referred to or included in recruitment, training and policy materials where appropriate, and the policies are openly and widely available to staff and actively promoted within the organisation.
- A culture of mutual respect between children and MMUK staff and volunteers will be encouraged in all its activities, with adults modelling good practice in this context.
- All UK staff should be checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- There will not be any instances of unsupervised interaction between UK Staff and Trustees and children. All visits to schools whether in the UK and Melanesia will be accompanied by local staff.
- Risk assessments are used to ensure that all reasonable precautions are taken to prevent children and young people coming to harm whilst participating in any aspect of the charity's activities.
- It is part of MMUK acceptance of its responsibility of duty of care towards children that anybody who encounters child protection concerns in the context of their work on behalf of MMUK will be supported when they report their concerns in good faith.

Code of Practice

MMUK expects that all its staff will be aware of this Code of Practice and adhere to its principles in their approach to all children.

Parents/carers/ teachers are informed clearly that they remain responsible for the welfare of their children at all MMUK events in the UK and in Melanesia, - but MMUK staff and volunteers are also responsible for working in partnership with parents/carers/teachers to safeguard the welfare of their children.

Staff and volunteers will not be left alone with children and should not take children alone on a car journey, however short.

Staff and volunteers must not make suggestive or inappropriate remarks to or about a child, even in fun, as this could be misinterpreted.

It is important for staff and volunteers not to deter children from making a 'disclosure' of abuse through fear of not being believed, and to listen to what they have to say. If this gives rise to a child protection concern it is important for staff and volunteers to follow MMUK procedure for reporting such concerns, and not to attempt to investigate the concern themselves.

Staff and volunteers must remember that those who abuse children can be of any age (even other children), gender, ethnic background or class, and it is important not to allow personal preconceptions about people to prevent appropriate action taking place.

Good practice includes valuing and respecting children as individuals, and the adult modelling of appropriate conduct - which will always exclude bullying, shouting, racism, sectarianism or sexism.

Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Child Protection Person (DCPP)

MMUK Worldwide has appointed a designated child protection person who is responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children. This person in the UK Ven Dr Michael Gilbertson, Vice Chair of Trustees +44 (0)7921 040154 michael.gilbertson@chester.anglican.org.

In Melanesia it is Dr Abraham Hauriasi, General Secretary, Anglican Church of Melanesia, +67721892/20470/7596777, hauriasi_a@comphq.org.sb

The role of the designated person(s) is to:

Know which outside child protection agency to contact in the event of a child protection concern coming to the notice of MMUK.

Provide information and advice on child protection within MMUK.

Ensure that appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing under confidential cover.

Liaise with local social services and other agencies, as appropriate.

Keep relevant people within MMUK informed about any action taken and any further action required; for example, disciplinary action against a member of staff.

Ensure that a proper record is kept of any referral and action taken, and that this is kept safely and in confidence.

Advise MMUK of child protection training needs; and liaise with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) to review the operation of the Child Protection Policy regularly to ensure the procedures are working and that it complies with current best practice.

Procedure for Reporting Concerns

Staff or volunteers could have their suspicion or concern raised in a number of ways, the most likely of which are:

- the conduct of a member of MMUK staff or volunteer;
- a child "disclosing" abuse;
- bruising or evidence of physical hurt; which may or may not be accompanied by unusual behaviour by a child.
- disclosure or unusual behaviour of an adult, including members of staff from other agencies.

If a member of staff has such concerns they should be reported immediately by telephone to the Designated Child Protection Person (DCPP) and confirmed in writing within 24 hours. Delay could prejudice the welfare of a child. If the concerns relate to the conduct of a member of staff these should be reported by phone to the DCPP at the earliest opportunity.

The DCPP will consider the report and either refer this immediately to the authorities or, after taking appropriate advice, decide not to refer the concerns to the authorities but keep a full record of the concerns.

Definitions of Abuse

1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. It may be the result of a deliberate act, but could also be caused through the omission or failure to act to protect.

2. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve making a child feel or believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

3. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of, or consents to, what is happening. It may involve physical contact, including rape or oral sex, or non-penetrative acts such as fondling.

Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, and by other young people.

It also includes non-contact activities such as involving children in watching or taking part in the making of pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in inappropriate ways.

4. Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, or failing to ensure that a child gets appropriate medical care or treatment.

Recruitment and Selection Procedures

MMUK has a policy that Staff only have supervised access to children in the UK and Melanesia in the normal course of their work. Where volunteers teach classes of children in Melanesia, the local school is responsible for their supervision

Staff and volunteers are required to develop awareness of the issues which can cause children harm; and report concerns following the procedures set out in this document.

No-one shall work or volunteer within or on behalf of MMUK Worldwide who:

- has been convicted of, or has received a formal police caution concerning an offence against children as listed in the First Schedule of the Children and Young Person's Act 1933; or
- has been convicted of or has received a formal police caution concerning sexual offences against children or young people.

This means that:

All who work for MMUK and volunteer will be required to be checked through the Disclosure and Barring Service, and are expected at all times to conform with good practice in their work; and those responsible for the appointment of such workers and volunteers must take all reasonable steps, including obtaining criminal records checks from the Disclosure and Barring Service, to ensure that persons who have been convicted or have received a formal police caution concerning sexual offences against children or young people shall not undertake work with young people under the auspices of MMUK.

Appropriate recruitment and selection procedures for staff and volunteers in the context of child protection have been adopted by MMUK, including the following:

Identification of key selection criteria.

Confirmation of the identity of the applicant including personal details obtained either through using an application form where appropriate, or through other means.

Requirement of a declaration of previous convictions and submission to formal check,

together with the issue of the Child Protection Policy for those candidates whose work will bring them into contact with children or who will have a management responsibility in relation to those whose work does bring them into such contact.

A clear guarantee that disclosed information will be treated in confidence and not used against applicants unfairly.

Documentary evidence of qualifications.

- Use of several selection techniques to maximise the chance of safe recruitment, eg interview, references, checks.
- At least one representative from MMUK meeting personally with every applicant, and an exploration of their attitudes towards working with children.
- Written references.

Responding Appropriately to a Child Making an Allegation of Abuse

1. Stay calm.
2. Listen carefully to what is said.
3. Find an appropriate early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others - do not promise to keep secrets.
4. Tell the child that the matter will only be disclosed to those who need to know about it.
5. Allow the child to continue at her/his own pace.
6. Ask questions for clarification only, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.
7. Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
8. Tell them what you will do next, and with whom the information will be shared.
9. Record in writing what was said, using the child's own words as soon as possible - note the date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure that the record is signed and dated.
10. It is important to remember that the person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional child protection agencies, following a referral from the designated child protection person in the organisation.

Approved

+ Mark Rylands

Signed and dated by Chair of Trustees
Date of next review 2024

17/11/22