

**Assembly of God, Fraserburgh
Child Protection Policy**



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Version 1.1**

(Encompassing AOG, Scotland Child Protection Policy Version 3.3)

Assembly of God, Fraserburgh Child Protection Policy

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Definitions:

Church Council – as appointed in accordance with the church's working practices, also known as the Trustees.

Child Protection Co-ordinator – The person to whom the Leaders (as described below) are responsible i.e. Pastor, Elder or appointed Co-ordinator etc. hereafter known as CPC.

Child Protection Unit - made of 3 to 5 members appointed as detailed below, known as CPU.

Group - The programme, outreach, club, event, etc.

Leader - The volunteer who runs, and is ultimately in charge of, a Group.

Worker - A volunteer helping to run the group as part of the leader's team.

Current Members of the Child Protection Unit are detailed in Appendix

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Mission Statement: "**[To] give every man, woman and child the opportunity of understanding the gospel and to provide a church where they can grow in ministry for the glory of God.**"

Statement on the Protection of Children:

It is our aim to glorify God and see spiritual growth amongst the youth and children we work with. In doing so, it is the Church Council's (hereafter the CC) desire and responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment for those who participate in our programmes and use our facilities.

It is the duty of every person working with children and youth to prevent abuse and report any abuse discovered or suspected.

It is the duty of the CC to appoint a Child Protection Co-ordinator (CPC), plus if suitable, two trusted people not in the Church Council, plus at least one person from the Church Council, which could be a Church Leader, to support and help in any decisions that have to be made. This will allow for a degree of independence in the decision-making. This group shall be known as the Child Protection Unit. (CPU).

Is the duty of the Child Protection Co-ordinator along with the CPU to evaluate every area of concern and pass the information to the CC. It is the duty of the CPC to inform the appropriate Authorities in the event of any situation arising. It may be that the CPC will need to act urgently and will inform the CC as soon as is convenient.

Our Working Practices must be agreed to and followed by every Group Leader and Worker. They are made up of the following:

- Application and 'Screening' Procedure for Leaders and Workers
- Guidelines for Safe Youth and Children's Work

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Application and 'Screening' Procedure for Leaders and Workers

Some of this may seem a bit too formal and unnecessary for a ministry setting, but we are not immune to potential problems, and should a situation occur with a Worker, we can show that we have done all within our power to prevent such a volunteer working for us.

Leader to gain approval from CPC before approaching potential Worker or if asked by potential Worker.

Person intending to be a Worker to be given a copy of 'Guidelines for Safe Youth and Children's Work' and also must complete application form which includes:

- Reason for interest in the group
- Declaration of any convictions (including 'spent')
- Details of two Referees

CPC to approve and obtain references

Leader to meet with Worker to clarify role and expectations, and both to complete a 'Job Description' which includes:

- Person to whom Worker is immediately responsible
- Description of Worker's role
- Agreed time scale

The same procedure applies to potential Leaders.

Working with Offenders

Where someone attending a church is known to have abused children, whilst extending friendship to the individual, the CC, in its commitment to the protection of all children, will meet with the individual and discuss boundaries that the person will be expected to keep.

Helping Victims of Abuse

As a church we are committed to supporting victims of abuse, and encouraging them in their faith.

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Guidelines for Safe Youth and Children's Work

These guidelines are intended not only to protect the young people in our care, but the Workers from any allegations as well. Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.

General guidelines

Physical contact

- Physical contact between children and adults can be quite healthy. Within church work setting however, appropriate touch, even hugs, should only happen in public places and never when an adult and child are on their own.
- The level of personal care (e.g. toileting) should be appropriate and related to the age of the child – accepting that some children have special needs.

Sexuality

- Workers need to be particularly careful in what they say and do when around children.
- If a child has a "crush" on you, be careful not to encourage it. Speak to your Group Leader/CPC for advice and guidance. Other Workers should help with these awkward situations, e.g. interrupt and/or distract a child's words/actions towards another Worker.
- Respect the privacy of children and avoid sexually provocative games, touch or comments/conversations.

Rooms and Ratios

- Avoid being in a room on your own with any child.
- Whenever possible have a minimum of two Workers present with a group, particularly when it is the only activity taking place on church premises. If the group is made into smaller groups with one Worker, do this in one large room or adjoining rooms.
- Certain activities to be safe will require more than two workers.

Where confidentiality is important (e.g. counselling a young person) ensure that others know what is happening and where. Someone else must be in the building, preferably in an adjoining room.

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Transport

When giving lifts home, take children of the same sex as you or mixed. Plan to drop off more than one person at your last stop. Should a child have to travel a short distance with you on their own, make sure a parent is informed and it is better that they are seated in the back seat.

Homes

Workers may only enter a child's home if a parent is there.

Children may only be invited to your home if another adult is present and a parent's permission has expressly been given. E.g. by letter, or you speaking personally to the parent

The need for a child to visit alone should be cleared with the CPC.

Discipline

- Discipline out of love not anger.
- Encourage good behaviour by
 - :Saying so when it happens.
 - :Building healthy relationships.
 - :Being a good role model.
 - :Setting clear ground rules and the consequences of breaking them.
 - :Giving them appropriate responsibility.
- Never smack, hit or physically discipline a child except by "holding" or restraining to the extent that is necessary which may be used if there is an immediate danger of personal injury to the child or another person.
- Change tone of voice, but avoid shouting to tell children off.
- Don't make threats you cannot, would not or should not carry out. Think before you speak!
- When taking a child aside to talk to them, do so within sight of other Workers and if serious, with another Worker.
- Don't compare children to one another and don't humiliate them in front of the group.
- Consequences for bad behaviour should be progressive in nature.
E.g.: warning, separate from friend etc...
- If a child's behaviour is constantly disruptive and you are not sure what to do, seek advice and guidance from your Group Leader/CPC.

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- If you have to send a child home, or ban them for a week or permanently, ensure that their parent/guardian knows this, and the reasons why, as soon as possible.
- Be consistent as a team and as individual Workers.
- Each child is unique; therefore children will sometimes need to be dealt with differently. Seek to recognise and learn ways to do this.
- Encourage their strengths and challenge them to change.

Incidents and Accidents

- Leaders and Workers should all know where the Group's or the church's first aid kit is kept.
- Never attempt a first aid procedure you are not trained in.
- Prayer for an injured person is acceptable, but in the case of an emergency the ambulance should be called for first.
- Always fill out an 'Incident/Accident Report Form' and on the same day hand it to your leader.
- Incident/Accident Report Forms should be handed to the Group Leaders and then to the CPC to be filed at the Church office so that they can be referred to should there be any need for follow up.
- The Group Leader should always speak to a child's parent/guardian in the event of an accident.
- Depending on the nature of an incident, the Group Leader may need to speak to a child's parent/guardian. If you are unsure, seek advice from your CPC.

Note: An incident may be a fight, threatening behaviour, various bullying or other types of abuse (see p.8) if you are unsure, ask your Group Leader.

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Suspected and Alleged Child Abuse

First and most important – whether it is your first contact with suspected child abuse or not: -

- **Ensure the welfare of the child**
- **Talk to the person you are responsible to, whether Group Leader or CPC.**
- **Don't talk to anyone else.**

What is a child?

- A child is regarded as any person under the age of 16 years.

What is abuse?

- Physical abuse – including hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning, biting, administrating poisonous substances, suffocating/drowning, and excessive force.
- Neglect – a failure to meet basic essential needs of a child, or if a child is left unsupervised at a young age.
- Emotional abuse – children harmed by constant lack of love and affection, or threats, verbal attacks, taunting or shouting.
- Sexual abuse – involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children or adolescents in sexual activity that they do not fully understand, or to which they are unable to give informed consent, or which violate the social taboos of family roles.
- Verbal Abuse – a use of words to attack or injure an individual, to cause one to believe an untrue statement, or to speak falsely of an individual
- Bullying – repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons.
- Racial Abuse – Racial abuse is treating someone differently or unfairly simply because they belong to a different race or culture. Racism takes many different forms including; personal attacks of any kind including violence, written or verbal threats or insults, etc.

A child may suffer more than one category of abuse.

Who abuses children?

- Very rarely a stranger.
- Often someone close to a child, e.g. parent, carer, baby-sitter, sibling, relative or friend of the family.
- Sometimes someone in authority such as a teacher, youth leader, and children's Worker, or, very sadly, a church Worker/leader.
- Sometimes, paedophiles and others who set out to join organisations (including churches) to obtain access to children.

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The Law

We have a responsibility under The Children's (Scotland) Act 1995, which was introduced to promote and protect the welfare of all children, and states that: -

"Care or control of child by person without parental responsibilities or parental rights.

(1) Subject to subsection (2) below, it shall be the responsibility of a person who has attained the age of sixteen years and who has care or control of a child under that age, but in relation to him either has no parental responsibilities or parental rights or does not have the parental responsibility mentioned in section 1(1)(a) of this Act, to do what is reasonable in all the circumstances to safeguard the child's health, development and welfare; and in fulfilling his responsibility under this section the person may in particular, even though he does not have the parental right mentioned in section 2(1)(d) of this Act, give consent to any surgical, medical or dental treatment or procedure where -

- (a) the child is not able to give such consent on his own behalf; and
- (b) it is not within the knowledge of the person that a parent of the child would refuse to give the consent in question.

(2) Nothing in this section shall apply to a person in so far as he has care or control of a child in a school ("school" having the meaning given by section 135(1) of the [1980 c. 44.] Education (Scotland) Act 1980)."

It should be noted that it is the responsibility of a voluntary agency, such as ourselves, to refer concerns to the Social Services or the police, working together to interview parties and undertake investigations under Section 47 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 where this is necessary.

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Child Abuse; Procedures

If a child has physical injury or symptoms of neglect

Contact your Leader urgently who in turn must inform their CPC at the first possible opportunity.

Where emergency medical attention is necessary, then, of course, seek it immediately.

Refer to your Church's Protection Referral Flow Chart.

If you suspect sexual abuse or an allegation is made

Inform your Group Leader urgently who in turn must inform their CPC at the first possible opportunity.

Refer to your Church's Protection Referral Flow Chart.

Make notes as soon as possible, writing down exactly what the child said, including the child's name, age, address, relevant family information and details of the situation and the activity that preceded disclosure.

If the allegation involves the Group Leader, then speak directly to the CPC. If the allegation involves the CPC, another Leader must be contacted instead.

Do not speak to the parents (or anyone else). The fact that you may feel the child's story is unlikely must not prevent appropriate action being taken. For example, a child may say that an older young person has abused him/her. In reality, the perpetrator could be a parent or close relative, but naming another person may be the only way in which this child can seek help.

It is the responsibility of the CPC to pass on the possibility of abuse to the Social Services Department. The role of the church is essentially collecting and clarifying the precise details of the allegation and providing the information to the Social Services Department, whose task it is to investigate the allegation.

Where a parent alleges sexual abuse by another person, the parent should be advised not to inform the alleged perpetrator.

All children's Workers should be aware that any allegations or suspicions are covered by pastoral confidentiality, and that, therefore, church members have no rights to this information. The sharing of information is therefore limited to a need to know basis. This will protect the interests of all the parties concerned.

N.B. – Church leaders will often experience difficulty in making appropriate judgements. Professionals (e.g. family doctors etc.) are advised that they should discuss their suspicions with a specialist colleague first, with a view to then informing the statutory agencies. **It is suggested that the AOG Lead Signatory should first of all be approached for advice on how to**

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handle such disclosure. If needed outside Agencies can provide follow-up support at each stage of the process.

If a child tells you that he/she has been abused

Follow the procedure in "If you suspect sexual abuse or an allegation is made"

Here are some guidelines to help you help the child:

General points:

- Accept what the child says.
- Keep calm; do not appear to be shocked.
- Look at the child directly.
- Be honest
- Let them know that you will need to tell someone else – don't promise confidentiality.
- Even when a child has broken a rule they are not to blame for the abuse.
- Be aware the child may have been threatened.
- Make notes as soon as possible, writing down exactly what the child said, including the child's name, age, address, relevant family information and details of the situation and the activity that preceded disclosure.
- Never push for information or question the child. If it appears that you have put words in their mouths at the time of disclosure, this will jeopardise any necessary legal action.

Helpful things to say:

- I believe you.
- I am glad you have 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?
- Why? How? When? Who? Where?

Never make false promises.

Never make statements such as "I'm shocked, don't tell anyone else".

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Concluding

- Again reassure the child they were right to tell you and that you believe them.
- Tell the child what you are going to do next, and that you will let them know what happens.
- Immediately refer to your Leader/CPC.

Even if abuse is no longer happening it is still important to report the matter, as the adult may be abusing other children. Also it may be that the child will need guidance and help in overcoming the effects of the abuse, plus the police may wish to prosecute.

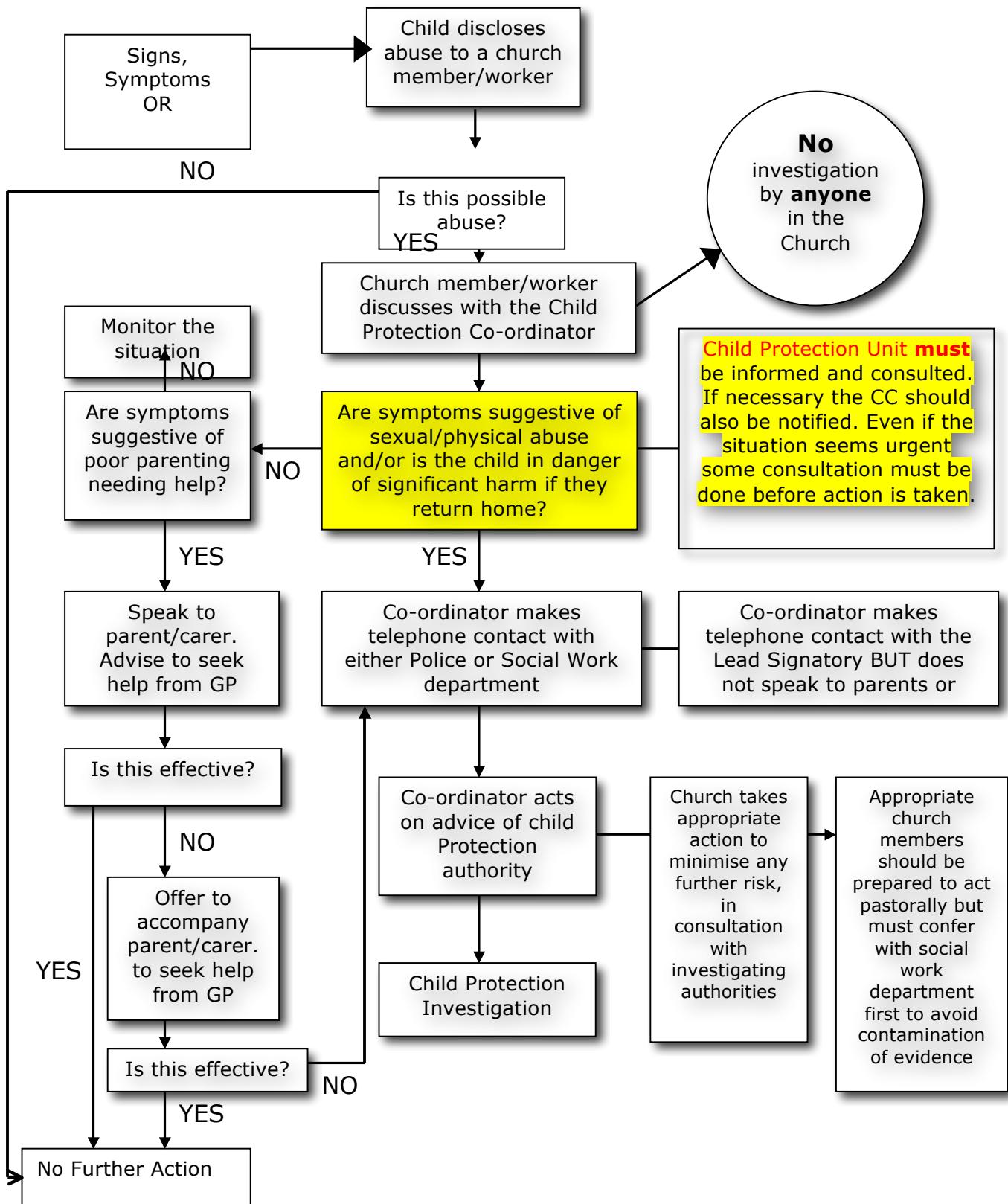
Reporting any kind of abuse is a serious matter and should be done after consultation with the CPU, in order to avoid mistakes. Taking a little time over decisions may seem time wasting but may save a lot of unnecessary hurt in the long term.

Confidentiality

No Youth or Children's Worker is permitted to divulge any information concerning a child, or his/her family or anything a child may tell them to anyone other than the designated people previously mentioned. This is in order to protect the interests of the child. This confidentiality is a continuing requirement at all times and is required even when Workers are "off duty" or no longer involved in the work.

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Child protection referral process



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Child Protection Unit (CPU)

Child Protection Co-ordinator (CPC)

Name: Joyce Allan
Contact Details: 07886 370071

Other Child Protection Unit Members (CPU)

1. Grace Donn
2. Matthew Roger
3. Peter West
4. Victor West

Independent Advisors

- Kerri Dalton
- Avril Sutherland

Leaders

Youth Ministries

Leader – Danny Murphy & Youth Leadership Team

KNL

Leader – Lisa Lyall and Children's Leadership Team

Lazers

Leader – Julie Strachan and Annemarie Taylor

Toddlers

Leader – Fiona Buchan, Jane Stephen & Jayne Nicol

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Application and Reference Forms

Reference request



Re: _____

Re (applicants name)

The above named person has applied to do voluntary children's/youth work with our organisation and has given your name as a referee.

It is our aim to glorify God and see spiritual growth amongst those we work with. In doing so it is our desire to provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

I would be grateful therefore if you could provide a reference on the enclosed form and return it to me.

Many thanks in anticipation of your help.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like any further information.

Minister/Pastor/Child Protection Co-ordinator

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Character Reference

Name of Applicant: _____

Name of Referee: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Daytime telephone number _____

How long have you known the applicant? _____

In what capacity do you know them? _____

Please tick where applicable:

The applicant submits to authority:

Readily Usually Reluctantly With difficulty

The applicant works without supervision:

Very well Fairly well Needs Direction Very Poorly

The applicant is:

Always reliable Usually reliable Unreliable

Do you consider the applicant suitable to work with children and/or youth? Yes/No

Do you know of any reason why the applicant should not work with children and/or youth?

Any additional comments: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for your time.

Please return this completed reference to AOG Central, 2 Queens Road, Fraserburgh

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Youth/Children's Worker Application Form

This application is to be completed by anyone wanting to work in any position involving supervision or custody of children or youth.

It is our aim to glorify God and see spiritual growth amongst those we work with. In doing so it is our desire to provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth that participate in our programs and use our facilities.

Surname: _____

Forename(s): _____

Maiden or Previous Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Home Address: _____

Post Code: _____

How long have you lived at the above address? _____

Telephone: Day: _____ Evening: _____ Mobile: _____

Name of Church attended: _____

How long attended? _____

Name and address of Minister: _____

I am a Christian and know my salvation to be real Yes / No

I have been a Christian for _____ years

Please give details of previous experience of looking after or working with children and/or youth, including details of any training received. (Lack of experience/training does not necessarily preclude you from serving.)

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Which Department do you wish to serve in? _____

In what capacity do you wish to serve? _____

Your reason for interest in this work? _____

What qualities do you think you will bring to the role? _____

Please provide us with details of two people who have known you for at least three years, one of which is not connected with your church and not related to you, and who would be willing to act as referee in support of your application:

Name 1: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Day time Telephone: _____ "Relationship" to you: _____

Name 2: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Day time Telephone: _____ "Relationship" to you: _____

Declaration: I confirm that the information given above, whether in my own hand writing or not is true to the best of my knowledge, that I have read and fully understand the Child Protection Policy, and know what the procedure is in the event of any incident arising.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

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AOG, Scotland : Child Protection Declaration

If you intend working with Children or Youth, the Assemblies of God, Scotland require you to complete and sign the following Declaration. Once completed, you should place the Declaration in a sealed envelope and hand it to your Child Protection Co-ordinator as part of the application process for working with Children or Youth. You do not need to reveal any of the information on this form to your Child Protection Co-ordinator, although you may choose to do so.

The disclosure of all criminal convictions is essential, including those regarded as spent under the rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Having previous convictions does not by itself prevent you from being approved, however, the failure to disclose criminal convictions may lead to refusal to appoint you as a volunteer.

The Child Protection Lead Signatory (CPC) will not disclose the information on this Declaration to your Pastor or anyone else in your Assembly. The information may only be shared with the Assemblies of God Scottish Region Child Protection Advisory Panel and the Assemblies of God Scottish Region Child Protection Appeal Panel if the CPC needs to take advice before reaching a decision or if you appeal against the decision of the CPC or Advisory Panel.

Please delete YES or NO as appropriate for each of the following:

1. Have you been disqualified from or refused any post involving the care of children? YES / NO
2. Have you had a child (a person under the age of 18 years of age) removed from your care? YES / NO
3. Have you had any registration as a childminder or person responsible for providing day care to children refused, restricted or cancelled? YES / NO
4. Have you had your rights and powers as a parent removed or restricted? YES / NO
5. Have you been convicted of any criminal offence, or are you at present the subject of any criminal investigations or have you any criminal charges pending? YES / NO

If you answered "YES" to any of the above, please give full details overleaf, including dates, circumstances and outcomes. You may also give any additional information you may feel is appropriate and that you may wish to be taken into account. (Continue on a separate sheet of paper if necessary). I may need to discuss this with you.

Declaration: *I confirm that the information given above, whether in my own hand writing or not, is true and accurate. I further undertake that, in the event of my being convicted of or charged with any criminal offence after the date I sign this declaration, I will notify the Child Protection Lead Signatory in writing of this as quickly as possible.*

Signed: _____ *Date:* _____

Print Name: _____