



# WEC Nederland Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

(June 2018)

## Introduction

WEC Nederland is committed to the protection and safeguarding of every child, including the prevention of all forms of abuse – those that we minister to and our own MKs. We want to maintain a family-friendly ethos where our children thrive and feel secure. The term *child* is inclusive of anyone under 18 years of age.

The principles of the policy also apply to our work with adults at risk. The categories of adults at risk include, but are not limited to, the elderly who are frail and dependent on others for aspects of their care, those receiving medical care, addicts, the homeless, prisoners, people with disabilities (including learning disabilities) that make them dependent on others, the mentally ill, the recently bereaved, and those receiving structured counselling support.

Although the Branch Leadership Team of WEC Nederland is responsible for what is going on inside WEC Nederland the MK consultant of WEC Nederland is appointed as the person responsible for the implementation of this policy and is the first person to be contacted in case of charges and/or suspicions of abuse or other inappropriate behaviour towards children. In this policy he/she is referred to as the **Safeguarding Officer** or SO. There is a **Deputy Safeguarding Officer** who will act in the same capacity if the SO is not accessible for any reason.

*As a Christian agency we place a special emphasis on:*

- Listening to, relating effectively to, and valuing children and young people whilst ensuring their protection in all locations and facilities where we are responsible to care for them
- Encouraging and supporting parents
- Ensuring that staff involved with children/youth are given support and training
- Having a good system for dealing with concerns of possible abuse

## 1. Definition of Child Abuse

A general term to describe inappropriate, immoral, unethical or threatening behaviour by

- a. an adult toward a minor, or
- b. of one child toward another child where there is a difference in power, based on age or physical, intellectual or emotional capacity definitions. The commonly accepted age difference is 3 years, or more precisely 1095 days, but age difference is not the only factor involved in deciding if the incidents involve abuse.



The following four categories of possible criminal abuse are acknowledged: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and emotional abuse. The category of spiritual abuse has been added to this document for completion, although in itself would not normally be recognised as criminal. Child abuse can be committed with or without the consent of the victim. It can occur in a one-on-one encounter or in a group setting.

**Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse is any act that results in a non-accidental physical injury, intentional or unintentional. It includes unreasonably severe corporal punishment, excessive slapping/spanking done in anger, punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, squeezing, administering poisonous substances, burning, holding under water, pulling hair, holding against one's will, or any other action that inflicts injury. WEC does not allow corporal punishment in any ministries that it runs.

**Sexual Abuse:** This occurs when a child is used sexually by an adult or young person. Sexual abuse occurs when a child or young person is pressurised, forced or tricked into taking part in any kind of sexual activity with an adult or young person. This can include kissing, touching the young person's genitals or breasts, intercourse or oral sex. Making a child look at pornographic magazines, internet sites or films is also sexual abuse, as is sexually explicit text messaging or other communication.

**Neglect:** Persistent or severe neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development.

**Emotional Abuse:** This is the failure to provide the appropriate emotional and physical security and protection that a child requires for stability and full emotional and social development according to their personal potential. It is a pattern of behaviour over time that impairs a child's functioning or development. This can be hostility towards or rejection of the child, such as unreasonable restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, threatening, deliberately instilling fear, humiliating, blaming or discriminating. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It also includes witnessing any incident of threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse (emotional, physical or sexual) between parents or family members. All bullying is a form of emotional abuse - some involves physical abuse. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment, but this category is used if this is the only or main form of abuse.

**Spiritual Abuse:** Linked with emotional abuse, spiritual abuse could be defined as an abuse of power, often done in the name of God or religion, which involves manipulating or coercing someone into thinking, saying or doing things without respecting their right to choose for themselves. Some indicators of spiritual abuse might be a leader who is intimidating and imposes his or her will on other people, perhaps threatening dire consequences or the wrath of God if disobeyed. He or she may say that God has revealed certain things to them and so they know what is right. Those under their leadership are fearful to challenge or disagree, believing they will lose the leader's (or more seriously God's) acceptance and approval. Although very unlikely to be viewed as a crime, it is sinful and destructive behaviour and creates a climate in many cults and cult-like churches where other forms abuse can take place.



## Additional Forms of Abuse of Adults at Risk

**Financial:** Examples include, but are not limited to, the theft of money, property or possessions; pressure to make wills or other major financial transfers in favour of an individual or an organisation; being charged excessive amounts for goods or services; or any other form of financial exploitation.

**Discriminatory:** This includes, but is not limited to, harassment, unequal treatment, withholding or providing sub-standard services, and the use of derogatory language because of a person's age, cultural background, gender, disability, sexuality, religion or race.

**Institutional:** The mistreatment of an adult by an institution or individuals within it. This can be caused by neglect and/or active ill-treatment. Churches are institutions and can be offending abusers if such mistreatment is proven. Examples include fixed rules and routines to control people, not having access to personal possessions, and people being prevented from doing things they have a right to do.

**Domestic:** This is the use of threatening and/or violent behaviour to control others within the family. It can be sexual, physical and psychological and is rarely limited to single incidents, but is normally a repeated pattern of behaviour. Enforced or manipulated isolation of nuclear family members from extended family and friends is a form of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse and violence is more widespread in churches than has previously been acknowledged.

## 2. Screening of all staff and volunteers

- A.** WEC Nederland will ask all future members to make a statement whether any form of possible child abuse from the past is currently still having an impact in the emotional, social or physical functioning. If the answer is positive, further help may be recommended before accepting this person into WEC.
- B.** All applicants to WEC are to be further checked for their suitability to work in situations where they will have contact with children. Referees will therefore be asked questions concerning that suitability. The applicant will be made aware that referees will be asked questions that cover this area. Recommended questions include the following
- i.** Is there any reason to be concerned about the applicant's behaviour with children?
  - ii.** Has any child, parent or other adult ever made a complaint about behaviour with children against the applicant?
  - iii.** Would you have any reservations about placing your own child, or children in the extended family, in the care of the applicant?
  - iv.** Were the relationships the applicant formed with children, parents and other adults appropriate for the roles they were performing?
  - v.** If you have answered yes to any of the above questions please explain why.
- C.** Any person found to have a record of past offences against children cannot join WEC International.
- D.** All WEC Nederland members, short termers, associates and volunteers who have access to children and vulnerable adults will be required to produce a certificate of police clearance (VOG).



- E. Any member who joined WEC before police checking was a routine part of the application process is required to ask for a check if this is possible should they transfer to ministry with children and/or vulnerable adults.

### 3. Education & Training

- A. **WEC Nederland members** should be made fully aware of the branch's Safeguarding Policy, which should be part of the orientation process for new members. Ongoing child protection and safeguarding training and repeat signing of the CPSP should form part of the regular annual staff review procedure.  
All staff need to be aware of good practice and the need to be accountable to others in their work with children. All staff also need to know what the warning signs of abuse are, as outlined in the appendix and what to do in the case of suspicion of abuse or if they hear an allegation. Staff will understand that failure to follow the CPSP is a disciplinary issue that will lead to consequences up to dismissal from the mission and reporting to the legal authorities.
- B. **Short-term Teams (WEC Treks)** working with children and vulnerable adults also need to know about the WEC Nederland CPSP and should have necessary training during their orientation. They should each be given the contact details of the SO and deputy SO. All WEC Nederland teams must ensure that adequate Safeguarding training has been done by the short-term team when receiving them, and if not then ensure adequate training takes place on arrival to WEC Nederland.
- C. **Children** need to be educated in an age-appropriate fashion about the dangers of abuse and that there are people who will listen and take them seriously if they have concerns in this area. At a very young age this should be along the lines of when to say no and what kind of touch is not acceptable. They need to know to whom they should report if anything happens that troubles them. The level of teaching will work upwards from that, so that by the teen years the emotions and consequences of abuse can be discussed. Again it should be clear to whom the children can speak if they have concerns.

### 4. Good Working Practices

WEC Nederland's primary purpose in this policy and in our practice arising from it is the protection of children. However, good practice also serves to help protect staff from potentially compromising situations and from the risk of unfounded allegations. Workers must be vigilant to retain discretion in their relationships with the children; it is possible to be deceived into compromising activities that can be used as blackmail, especially charges of sexual exploitation, by street-wise children.

The following measures are recognised as good practice

#### A. Visibility

All work with children should be planned in a way that minimises risks as far as possible. This plan includes being visible to other adults when working with children. Visibility can be accomplished by planning activities in areas where other adults are present and at a time when other activities are occurring. It can also be accomplished by installing windows in all classrooms and other rooms occupied by children or by keeping doors open.

#### B. Overcoming Isolation

At least two unrelated adults should be present in work with children unless in a formal context such as a school classroom. Staff are to avoid being alone with individual children. For example, drop off siblings last in a carpool or provide travel with the member's own children or



another unrelated adult. An adequate number of adults should supervise events away from schools or centres, especially for overnight activities. Recommended guideline ratios are 1:5 for children aged 11+ and 1:3 for younger ones.

The level of supervision and administering of personal care such as using the toilet must be appropriate to the age of the child whilst accepting that a few children have special needs. Where First Aid or a medical procedure that is privacy-invasive is to be given, ensure that another member of staff of the same sex as the child is present, unless emergency requirements prevent it happening. In all areas of life a child's privacy is to be respected.

### **C. Accountability**

All WEC Nederland personnel are expected to interact with children in a mature, capable, safe, caring and responsible manner, with a high level of accountability. They are responsible for giving and accepting feedback from others to maintain our high level of professionalism and integrity in interactions with children.

- i. Always be accountable to other adults regarding interactions with children.
- ii. Parents should take the prime responsibility for protecting their own children and to educate them appropriately as to how they can protect themselves.
- iii. Parents and/or supervisors are to be notified beforehand of any activities with children, for example, before transporting a child, keeping a child after school, a youth activity or when tutoring a child.
- iv. Counselling or other necessarily confidential meetings with children should be done in a room with windows, or the door ajar, and only when another adult is close by, aware that the meeting is occurring and willing to stay in the vicinity until it is completed.
- v. In an emergency situation, find another unrelated responsible adult to assist in any procedures or transport arrangements. Where this is not possible notify other adults by phone of any planned action.

### **D. Technology**

Care must be taken to avoid inappropriate use of technology so as to protect children from abuse and exploitation, for example, to prevent inappropriate internet content and use. Parents are strongly encouraged to monitor their children's mobile phones and internet activity.

*(Further information in Internet Safety and e-Communications with Children Guidelines Appendix)*

### **E. Discipline**

Discipline should be primarily used to teach and correct rather than punish. It should not include excessive corporal punishment, shaming, yelling at or belittling a child or other forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

### **F. Differential Treatment**

Adults should avoid favouring or showing differential treatment to particular children to the exclusion of and in the presence of others. Adults are not to form exclusive friendships with children, even if they are totally free of any sexual intent.

### **G. Touch**

Because healthy, caring touch is valuable to children but unhealthy touch is abusive, the following guidelines apply:

- i. Touch should be in response to the need of the child and not the need of the adult.
- ii. Touch should be open rather than secretive. For example, a hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.



- iii. Touch must be age appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the adult. It must be with the child's permission and any resistance from the child should be respected.
- iv. Touch should always communicate respect for the child. Adults should avoid doing things of a personal nature for children that they are able to do for themselves, including dressing, bathing, etc.
- v. Adults and other children should not beat, pinch, push, hold against their will, or otherwise assault children.
- vi. Touch should be morally and culturally appropriate.

The following behaviours between staff and children are inappropriate and are not to be engaged in: touching buttocks, chests, genital areas or thighs; showing affection in isolated areas or when alone with a child; lying on a bed with a child; flirtatious or seductive looks; any form of affection that is unwanted by the child; sexually suggestive or explicit language, showing sexually-suggestive pictures or videos or playing sexually-suggestive games with any child; any behaviour that could be interpreted as sexual in nature.

Team members should monitor each other in the area of physical contact, helping each other by pointing out anything that could be misinterpreted.

#### **H. Verbal Interaction**

Words should be used to support and encourage a child, such as praise, positive reinforcement and appropriate jokes. Inappropriate verbal interaction includes the following: shaming, belittling, humiliating or name calling; using harsh language to instil fear, threaten or humiliate the child; cursing or making derogatory remarks about the child, their family and/or their place of origin. Inappropriate verbal interaction also includes negative comments that relate to physique or body development; telling derogatory or sexual jokes; making sexually suggestive comments; telling inappropriate secrets; discussing sexual encounters or desires with children.

#### **I. Parental Involvement**

Parents are responsible for knowing where their children are. Therefore, parents should be informed of planned activities (e.g. trips included in the schedule for the school or youth group term).

#### **J. Monitoring Child-to-Child Behaviour**

The following actions may involve abuse or inappropriate behaviour of one child to another and are prohibited: bullying; derogatory name-calling; ridicule or humiliation; singling out a child for negative treatment or exclusion; child-to-child inappropriate sexual contact up to and including attempted or actual intercourse; use of sexually explicit language; showing of sexually explicit images; slapping or any other form of hitting; pushing; holding against their will or otherwise assaulting another child.

When possible, the parents or other adult carers of the alleged victim should go to the parents/carers of the perpetrator and work it out between them. If the behaviour continues despite parental or carer involvement, the parent or carer of the victim may take the complaint to a higher authority (the designated person or deputy), as it affects the wider community.

All reports or reasonable suspicions of child on child abuse are to be treated as seriously as those of adult on child incidents and reported immediately to the WEC Nederland SO or deputy.



## 5. Dealing with Disclosures and Reasonable Suspicion of abuse

All cases of suspected child abuse must be responded to in a manner which best ensures the child's immediate and future safety. Staff will respond to suspected child abuse by writing down observations, impressions, and any communications which cause concern. No staff member will act alone but report any concerns to the WEC Nederland SO.

### A. Receiving a disclosure

- i. Keep calm as the child tells you his or her story and indicate that you are taking whatever you hear seriously. Do not express shock or disbelief; try to keep a neutral, but concerned expression. Do not ascribe any guilt to the child for being allegedly involved or for not telling anyone sooner. Be very sensitive to the emotional needs of the child and try to relieve the stress and anxiety which accompany an abuse situation.
- ii. Do not promise confidentiality, but do assure them that you will only involve a few other people. Specify who you will inform.
- iii. Don't push for further information; if you show that you are ready to listen, including giving the child time to say what he or she wants, the child should be willing to open up fully. Do not interrupt or ask more questions than you need to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. Be very careful not to use closed (answered by "yes" or "no") or leading questions. Instead use open questions, e.g., "Is there anything else you want to say?" or "Can you tell me more about that?"
- iv. Take seriously what you are hearing, but avoid condemning the alleged offender. It is possible to get into a very difficult situation if a child is not telling the truth and you draw out more "information" about alleged incidents. It is possible to create major legal and personal problems for falsely accused individuals and counter litigation is not unheard of.
- v. Be aware that the child may have been bribed or threatened not to tell anyone.
- vi. Take notes as soon as possible after your meeting, recording exactly what was said and the time of the meeting. It is recommended that the report be written within 30 minutes of hearing the allegation. Pass this information on as soon as possible and do not attempt to investigate yourself, unless you are the WEC Nederland SO or other person designated for this role, in this case the team should be informed to make preliminary enquiries as soon as possible. Do not speak to anyone else regarding what had been disclosed, particularly the parents of the victim.
- vii. A report should include the following information:
  - The name of the person writing the report
  - The child's name and the name of his/her parents
  - The nature or extent of any injury
  - The present location of the child
  - The alleged offender's name
  - How the information was obtained
  - Details of what was reported or suspected (dates, times, places, specifics of what happened); the spoken words should be quoted as exactly as possible
  - The date of writing the report
  - Who has been contacted and when - in the case of a member of the branch, this should only be WEC Nederland SO or their deputy. If the SO hears the first disclosure then he or she should name the other safeguarding teammembers on the report.



- viii. Any member receiving an allegation is to be encouraged to seek pastoral support if needed.

Because the Netherlands is a country with well-developed social services and police child protection units it is the duty of the safeguarding team to report to them and assist with their investigations. The safeguarding team itself should not investigate. In countries which do not have well-developed social services and police child protection units, see Appendix C how to investigate.

## **B. Investigating a disclosure**

If the safeguarding team are satisfied that a child or group of children are in danger, e.g. from a physical abuser who could well inflict injury on them for speaking out, measures must be taken **immediately** to ensure that the danger is removed, either by removing the children to a place of safety or by suspending and removing the offender from the children's presence. The safety of children is the most important first consideration in any procedure or investigation.

- i. Any initial fact finding should be done preferably within 24-48 hours of the allegation being made, led by the SO, together with the local leaders (unless the allegations involve these people) and one or two other people. This team should be small and of mixed gender and should only find out facts rather than seek to conduct an investigation.
- ii. An incident report is to be passed on to the International Safeguarding Office (ISO). Area Directors (ADs) should also be informed that an incident is being investigated and kept informed and involved as appropriate throughout the process. The extent of their involvement and how much information they receive will depend among other things on
  - the balance between the need to inform as few people as possible about extremely sensitive issues and the ADs need to know
  - the level of expertise that the ADs may have in this area
  - the ability and availability of the ADs to assist and support the WEC Nederland Team and ISO

The ISO will consult with the safeguarding team on the necessary course of action and is to be included in any investigatory team either as the overall safeguarding team leader or as an authoritative external consultant, depending various factors such as

- a. the level of knowledge of the WEC Nederland safeguarding team
  - b. the seriousness and potential mission-wide and international impact of the allegation
  - c. the availability of the ISO to come in person
  - d. any other relevant considerations
- iii. In countries with well-developed social services and police child protection investigation procedures, the police and appropriate social services are to be informed of any substantive allegation or suspicion of abuse. In The Netherlands this is de confidential advisor (Vertrouwensinspecteur) of the police, who works together with 'Veilig Thuis' (an organisation which gives advise and support in case of (child) abuse and violence). This is the legal duty of WEC Nederland and its members. The police will take over the investigation.
  - iv. Because we are a member of Stichting Gedragscode Leidinggevenden (SGL), the safeguarding team will contact them for advise, when a disclosure is received of an incident in the Netherlands.
  - v. For Dutch WEC members in countries without well-developed social services, see Appendix C.





## 6. Explanation of terms

### **CPSP – Child Protection and Safety Policy**

**SO - Safeguarding Officer**, formerly **Child Protection Officer** – the person responsible within the organisation for the implementation of this policy and is the first person to be contacted in case of charges and/or suspicions of abuse or other inappropriate behaviour towards children. In WEC Nederland this is the MK consultant of WEC Nederland, currently Kezia schoonveld

**Deputy Safeguarding Officer** – the person who will act in the same capacity if the SO is not accessible for any reason, currently Marieke Lascher

**ISO – International Safeguarding Officer** – the person responsible within WEC International for the implementation of Child Protection and Safety, currently Steve Bryant.

**Safeguarding team** – a team appointed by the SO to investigate the allegation of child abuse, consisting of the SO, Deputy SO and one or two other people.



## **Appendix A: Signs of Abuse**

Some of the signs listed below may be the result of another disturbance in the child's life. Some caution will need to be exercised if children show some of these signs. It should not be automatically assumed that they are the result of abuse. However, they do indicate a problem of some description that needs to be monitored and dealt with as appropriate, not just ignored.

### **Physical:**

- Injuries such as bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc. not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries to parts of the body not normally associated with falls or rough games such as black eyes, unexplained facial bruising, torn inside upper lip
- Injuries that have not received medical attention
- Reluctance to change for or participate in games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained abdominal pains
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse
- Self harm

### **Neglect:**

- Under nourishment and failure to grow
- Constant hunger
- Persistent tiredness
- Repeatedly begging for, stealing, cajoling or bullying others for food
- Constant dirty, ill-groomed appearance, even at the start of a day
- Untreated illnesses and listlessness

### **Sexual:**

- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and a detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour
- Inappropriate sexual play/language, including sexual pro-activity or seductive behaviour with adults
- Severe sleep disturbance
- Disturbed eating patterns such as anorexia or bulimia
- Escape attempts such as running away or refusing to go home
- Behavioural changes such as bed wetting or soiling ○
- Recurrent urinary tract infections

### **Emotional:**

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour such as withdrawal, becoming clingy, aggressive or depressed
- Nervousness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under achievement or lack of concentration
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Self harm
- Inappropriate relationships
- Persistent tiredness



## **Appendix B: Internet Safety and e-Communication with Children**

Safety on the internet, with hand-held communication devices, and during off-line screen time is a vital facet of child protection. The dangers posed cover 4 main areas

1. Unhealthy overuse leading to addiction for a minority.
2. Inappropriate uploads and posting of information. This includes, but is not limited to, posting or sending offensive messages, pictures of a sexual nature - including self-generated images in sexting, material critical of the host culture or authorities, and putting too much personal information into a public domain. Once uploaded such photographs and information may be extremely difficult to remove and may affect future training and employment opportunities.
3. Viewing or downloading inappropriate content. This includes, but is not limited to, illegal or "pirate" data and entertainment, violent games, pornography, gambling sites, misinformation, radical political and religious sites, pro-anorexia, and suicide sites.
4. Direct threats when a child is deliberately targeted . The two main areas are cyber-bullying - usually by other children - and grooming where predators target children for sexual or other exploitation. Children can also be subject to data theft risks. An emerging danger is from smart phone "hook-up" apps using GPS location technology designed to facilitate casual sex between consenting adults; in theory these are for over 18s only, but technically smart children can bypass restrictions.

Most of these dangers are the same anywhere in the world. In restrictive host countries however, a child posting material critical of the authorities there could lead to a breach of security, the risk of expulsion, and even place national friends in danger. Also in host countries where predatory paedophilia is a major problem because of weak law enforcement the risks of posting too much personal information are higher. Faced with this wide range of threats there are a number of safeguarding measures that parents, teachers and other children's members need to implement. These include

- Regulation by specifying and enforcing time limits for leisure internet use generally. Also set specific limits for more addictive uses such as social media sites and games. The internet should be used under supervision at home, in school, and in clubs.
- Filters provide a measure of protection, even though they can be bypassed by technologically aware children. It is more effective to install filters for all internet access devices used by the family, including those used by the parents, explaining why parents don't want to see offensive material themselves. "Covenant Eyes" is proving a useful filter and regulation system at the time of writing (2015), but systems and names will change. Also the DNS on the router can be set to "Open DNS"
- Accountability between children and parents or with other responsible and trusted adults to monitor all internet use. This works better if there is an element of shared trust with the adult concerned talking about his or her own internet use.
- Education. Regulation and filtering are futile in the long run unless our children believe the message of internet safety for themselves. Tablets and smart phones allow potentially non-stop internet access meaning that it is not possible to regulate what children may see on such devices belonging to others. Education is vital to help children believe for themselves in the need for safety. It is also needed for parents and other responsible adults to understand how to best help children with internet safety. Education should include maximising positive and balanced internet use such as how to sort out useful from irrelevant information and getting the most from its enormous communication benefits.



- A helpful safety guide is **ZIP IT, BLOCK IT, FLAG IT**.  
**Zip it** - keep personal information private, and don't post or send offensive messages.  
**Block it** - prevent access to harmful or offensive material by using agreed filters and following simple protocols such as deleting unknown e-mails, not responding to pop-up adverts or too good to be true offers.  
**Flag it** - tell a responsible adult if anything disturbing happens such as offensive material coming to them despite the filters. This is particularly important with cyber-bullying or if they receive messages or offers from unknown "friends" in chat rooms or by instant messaging.

## **E-Communication with Children**

There have been a number of cases now where teachers and youth leaders have been reprimanded or dismissed for inappropriate personal e-contact with children. What began as friendly messages and passing information led on to sharing personal information via text, e-mail or other electronic means. This in itself can be viewed as grooming, where an adult develops a friendship with a child, gives them treats and favours, compliments or other positive attention with a view to sexual contact. Grooming can begin when the adult concerned knows what they are doing, but the adult can also cross the line from correct communication to sharing personal information without realising the dangers.

Despite the obvious dangers when the staff member is not much older than the students, this kind of inappropriate contact can happen between staff and children of any age.

In many children's ministries overseas leaders and other staff are much closer to the students than in passport countries. They often function as substitute family members, being viewed and viewing themselves as close friends to the children. In some MK schools it is almost expected (although never written in policies) that all staff will be social media "friends" with students who are old enough.

If staff choose to be social media friends, or use other e-communication, the principles to work to include the following

- a) Group text messages, e-mails or open contact via social networking sites to organise events or issue reminders to prepare for school or club activities are acceptable.
- b) Sending greetings for birthdays or other major events is acceptable - especially if done in the same sort of way for all students
- c) Posting messages on an open social network site is acceptable as long as the content isn't embarrassing or too personal in any way

These things though are a warning sign that things could be going wrong

- a) Private messages being sent by any means (that also includes traditional hand or post delivered ones) could easily be misinterpreted in themselves
- b) Frequent messages to the same child, even if sent publicly
- c) Frequent private messages such as daily "encouraging" texts
- d) Texts and e-mails being sent early in the morning or late at night - it suggests secrecy
- e) Sharing of personal information such as the staff member's struggles with loneliness, other team members, or feeling homesick
- f) Any sexual content, even simple observations about how attractive the child is.



**Appendix C Investigating a disclosure or other report of reasonable suspicion of abuse for members in countries without well-developed social services and police child protection units**

- i. If the allegation merits further investigation with possible interviews and hearings, a trusted individual from outside of the team of WEC should also be involved. This could be someone from within the broader mission community, but should be someone who has at least completed the Child Safety and Protection Network (CSPN) training course in investigation procedures. The WEC ISO can serve as the trusted individual from outside of the WEC Branch involved unless factors such as knowing one or more of the alleged offenders and/or victims cause a conflict of interest, or the allegation is of misconduct so serious that someone outside of the mission is needed.
  - a. A full investigation should be undertaken when any of the following criteria are met:
    - i. Disclosure or reasonable suspicion of serious physical injury
    - ii. Disclosure or reasonable suspicion of serious neglect
    - iii. Disclosure or reasonable suspicion of sexual abuse
    - iv. Disclosure involving bruising and soft tissue injury to babies
    - v. Disclosure of abandonment (or leaving alone) where the child is exposed to danger
- ii. It is vital that all investigations should be impartial and should be seen to be so. Unless the allegations involve the parents or legal guardians, they should be involved as soon as possible with the proviso that they must not take any action to resolve the allegation with the alleged perpetrator, as this could compromise any investigation and resolution. It should be noted in assessing whether a case merits further investigation that even apparently minor event or events could have a major impact on the child.
- iii. Pending an inquiry, the alleged perpetrator should be suspended from duty. If the allegation involves an older child in an institution they should be relocated away from the alleged victim.
- iv. As soon as an investigation begins the safeguarding team are to request that the wording of all official information and statements must be agreed by the team members. The safeguarding team should also request that all staff, children and parents involved or concerned in any way only release information in line with the official statements. This applies to any form of communication whether written or verbal. The purpose is to prevent the spread of rumours, partial truths and false reports that can
  - a. Compromise any investigation taking place
  - b. Identify and additionally abuse the victim or victims
  - c. Identify and possibly incriminate someone who could prove to be innocent of an alleged offence
  - d. Compromise any subsequent reporting procedure to legal authorities
  - e. The ISO has template letters from the Child Safety & Protection Network to be distributed to the various groups of people involved to request this information management.
- v. Counsel and support will be offered to the alleged victim and perpetrator during the investigation.
- vi. All procedures are to be followed as discreetly as possible.



- vii. Records of any interviews must be thoroughly kept. Recordings and exact transcripts of comments along with the dates and times of the interviews should be used, if possible. Records are to be backed up and kept indefinitely by WEC Nederland, any relevant WEC membership granting entities, the ISO and IO.
- viii. Emergency medical attention, when necessary, should be sought immediately. The adult hearing the allegation of abuse is to inform the SO who will advise the child's parents and any others they think are necessary, including a doctor.
- ix. The SO should take any steps necessary to protect the child and any other children from harm which may include the immediate removal of the alleged offender from the presence of the children.
- x. Investigation beyond the initial fact finding incurs costs. If these are not high because a competent investigation group is available to WEC Nederland, they can be covered by the WEC NL general account. If costs begin to rise then a separate fund is to be set in place to cover travel costs for independent investigators, WEC Nederland staff involved and for any medical and counselling support.

### **B. Where the allegation is proven to be true**

If the allegation is proven to be true, then action will be taken according to the gravity of the incident.

- i. The police will decide whether to prosecute the person involved.
- ii. Disciplinary procedures will be implemented in keeping with the International CPSP 5.6. which says: *The offender, if proven guilty, will be dismissed from WEC without the possibility of reinstatement.*
- iii. Where the allegations of abuse made overseas are substantiated and the member dismissed as a result, then WEC Nederland branch and the receiving branch concerned will act in line with the legal requirements of both the host and passport countries of the perpetrator. This will mean police or social services action and a sex offender's registration in cases of sexual abuse. References for future employers will include the reasons for dismissal from the mission. The mission will also inform the leaders of the sending church and any other children's organisation that the person may have links with.
- iv. The child, as well as his or her parents, may need professional medical and psychological care. The WEC Nederland SO and the team, in consultation with the family, will determine what care is needed. The level of care needed should be determined by how the child and the parents have reacted to the problem, how severe the abuse was, and how many times it took place. The relevant also need to be informed.
- v. The offender will be offered counsel and pastoral support to begin a restoration and rehabilitation process if this is possible.

### **C. Where the allegation is proven to be false**

- i. If the review or investigation indicates that reasonable grounds do not exist to believe that abuse or neglect has occurred, the SO will notify the alleged victim, accused person, and their supporting branch, AD and ISO. A Statement of Findings will be given to each and a copy kept in their files.



- ii. Where accusations have proven to be false, public disclosure of this fact is vital if the accusation was public knowledge. The results of the investigation should be immediately reported to the closest supervisor who will take appropriate action to fully reinstate the member to their post.
- iii. Money should never be paid to anyone who tries to blackmail a member or in response to any demands for "compensation".
- iv. Ongoing pastoral care and counselling to fully restore the falsely accused and their family will be given.
- v. The real reasons for the allegations will need to be determined and appropriate action taken. The child or children involved may well need professional support to deal with different issues.

#### **D. Where an allegation is unresolved**

- i. Sometimes it is impossible to determine the truth of a child abuse allegation. In such cases, the investigation team should send confidential letters to the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator to inform them of the inconclusive results. These letters should also be sent to the relevant Supporting Branch, AD and ISO.
- ii. The SO or someone delegated by the safeguarding team will speak with the alleged perpetrator. Points to be addressed include, but are not limited to:
  - Reviewing the WEC Nederland CPP together
  - Discussion about how the person will relate to the alleged victim
  - What strategies will need to be in place to avoid any repetition of allegations
- iii. The SO or someone delegated by him or her will then speak with the alleged victim. The issues to be addressed include, but are not limited to:
  - Reassuring the alleged victim that what they said has been taken seriously and investigated as thoroughly as possible
  - Arranging with the alleged victim to continue to monitor the situation as appropriate. For example, arranging to meet with the alleged victim on a regular basis to review their well being.
- iv. The allegation and the investigative findings must be kept confidential; otherwise there could be legal complications for both the alleged perpetrator and WEC International.

#### **E. Follow up action in the mission**

WEC Nederland and WEC International should conduct a review of policies and procedures to assess if structural changes are needed to help prevent any similar incidents in the future. This review is to include all aspects of recruitment, training, good practice understanding in the ministry members, accountability, reporting and investigation procedures. The WEC ISO may lead this part of the process. If others lead this review then the WEC ISO should be informed and consulted at all stages because of the possible mission-wide implications of any such review.



## F. Allegations of historic abuse

Historic abuse may have occurred before the person joined WEC, or if they grew up within WEC abuse could have happened within the family, within the team, at an international school, in a boarding home etc. If an allegation is made by a WEC Nederland member any fact-finding and investigation will be led by the WEC ISO working with WEC Nederland and any Supporting Branches involved. In most Supporting Branches the police and/or other statutory authorities will need to be informed. WEC Nederland will work with all of these groups in any investigation procedures.

- i. In cases of alleged abuse before joining the organisation the procedures outlined in Section 2.G on screening should be followed.
- ii. In cases of alleged historic abuse whilst the family or alleged perpetrator were organisation members
  - The alleged victim will need support and possibly appropriate counselling.
  - If children could still be at risk from the alleged abuser the police and/or social services are to be informed as appropriate to ensure measures are taken to protect children.
  - Where the police and/or social services lead an investigation no further action is to be taken without their guidance
  - Where the alleged abuser is still in the employ of the organisation, any suspension should be undertaken in consultation with the police and/or social services

Allegations of past abuse are notoriously difficult to prove, especially when the alleged abuse took place in an overseas context many years ago. Research to establish the full facts and responsibilities can be very difficult and needs to be taken into account in all dealings with a person who has experienced such abuse.

However, all such allegations are to be taken seriously and not in any way show bias towards maintaining the reputation of WEC Nederland, WEC International or individual past members over and above seeking justice for the survivors of abuse.

