



WEC Nederland

Safeguarding Policy February 2026

Introduction

WEC Nederland is committed to the protection and safeguarding of every child of our members and those we work with. We are also committed to protect every adult at risk in any of our ministries. This includes the prevention of all forms of abuse. We want to maintain a family-friendly ethos where our children and adults at risk thrive and feel safe. For this policy anyone under 18 is a child: this follows most countries and widely-accepted international standards.

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 Leaders of WEC Nederland are responsible for what is going on inside WEC Nederland the MK consultant of WEC Nederland, Kezia Schoonveld, is appointed as the person responsible for the implementation of this policy and is the first person to be contacted in case of reports and/or suspicions of abuse or other inappropriate behaviour towards children or adults at risk. In this policy she is referred to as the **Safeguarding Officer** or SO. She is also responsible for the branch Safeguarding Policy, practice, and training in WEC Nederland. Maaïke Verhorst is the **Deputy Safeguarding Officer** who will act in the same capacity if the SO is not accessible for any reason. They will work together on branch safeguarding.

As a Christian agency we place a special emphasis on:

- Valuing children and adults at risk; ensuring their protection wherever where we are responsible for them
- Encouraging and supporting parents to provide a safe and healthy family environment
- Ensuring that staff involved with children/youth are given support and training, including a full understanding of this policy and good safeguarding practice.
- Having a good system for dealing with concerns of possible abuse

1. Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse is 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. Children can become victims where there are power differences of learning difficulties, disabilities, economic vulnerability, and/or lower physical strength.



The four commonly-recognised categories of child abuse are physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and emotional abuse. Some policies also specify exploitation including the sex trade and forced labour (child slavery). 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 another child. 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. Use of child sexual abuse material in any form is abusive; this includes AI-generated, cartoon, animation, or any other method of production as well as those that involve real child victims. Developing a romantic relationship with a child, or a member of staff with an adult at risk on the ministry, is not allowed.

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. Failure to provide necessary protection on any of our ministries, and failure to report concerns are a neglect of duty. Failure to report to the authorities when required can be a criminal offence. Neglect in this policy does not include families living in extreme poverty through no fault of their own.

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, excessive non-physical punishments such as long-term 'grounding', 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 expectations 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. Witnessing any incident of domestic abuse between parents (emotional, physical or sexual) is a form of emotional abuse that must be reported to the branch SO. All bullying is a form of emotional abuse.

Spiritual Abuse: Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional abuse. It misuses 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. (*Definition based on the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service document "Safe and Secure - the Manual" Standard 8:8.7*) Although very unlikely to be viewed as a crime, it is sinful and destructive behaviour and can create a cult-like climate in our teams and ministries where other forms abuse can take place.



B. Definition 'adult at risk' abuse

All the above apply to adults at risk; these are additional types of abuse that affect them.

Financial: Examples include, but are not limited to, the theft of money, property or possessions; pressure to make wills or other 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. Most financial abuse is from family members but some religious organisations with an excessive focus on money can also be offenders. Some organisations and preachers have a high media profile and use that to raise funds for themselves. (This does not apply to charities raising money for the benefit of others, but to organisations and individuals that use it for their own benefit.)

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. A high percentage of institutional abuse cases happen in residential centres.

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. It also includes 'Gaslighting' where the offender denies the reality that the victim sees and experiences, making the victim question his or her sanity. Domestic abuse and violence is more widespread in churches than has previously been acknowledged.

Other Relevant Information

Abuse of trust

'Where a person aged 18 or over is in a specified position of trust with a child under 18, it is an offence for that person to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of that child, or to cause or incite that child to engage in or watch sexual activity.' (Sexual Offences Act 2003 from the UK)

There are similar laws to the one quoted above in many other countries. It is legal for consenting partners to have sex above the national or state age of consent, but it is illegal if it is a person in authority having sex with someone in their care – e.g. a teacher with his/her 16-year old student, a youth leader with a 17-year old youth group member. It can apply to other forms of child abuse, and the same principles apply for adults at risk.

Grooming

This is when an adult or another child develops a false relationship with a child or adult at risk to build trust with them, with the purpose of sexual and/or other exploitation. The groomer may use charm, bribery, promises, and other methods to build that trust. Groomers often try to win the trust of the victim's family and friends. Once the victim trusts the groomer, or the groomer has some other kind of influence, abuse of the victim begins.

Self-harm

15% to 20% of teenagers self-harm or have done in the past, but people of all ages can be affected. It is self-inflicted abuse usually because of very strong emotional stress. The internet is also a factor for some as it can add to stress levels and puts ideas into the mind. This includes:

- Deliberate stabbing, burning or cutting of the body
- Non-lethal poisoning (often with excess easy-access pills such as paracetamol)
- Extreme risk taking such as riding bikes downhill without brakes
- Excessive exercise that damages health



- Misusing alcohol or drugs
- Eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia and pica (eating inedible things)

WEC Practice and safeguarding

As with all members of WI, WEC Nederland members are required to follow the WEC Practice document, as well as the WI and WEC Nederland safeguarding policies. WEC Practice section I has recommendations for personal life, such as sexuality and gender issues. It is useful to distinguish between offences in the two categories. E.g. a branch member involved in sexual activity outside of marriage with a consenting adult is not guilty of a crime in most countries, but it is sinful. If the sexual activity is with a child, or a recognised adult at risk on a branch ministry, it is a safeguarding issue and is a crime. Misconduct with adults not in a specified 'at risk' group is not a safeguarding one.

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.
- 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.
- F. Police checks are to be regularly renewed.
- G. All national co-workers need to fulfil the same conditions as our own members. Where police clearance is not possible, references from local leaders and previous employers need to be thorough on safeguarding.
- H. If any current staff confide that they were the victims of child abuse, the following need to happen:
 - i. The local leaders will provide pastoral support. Counselling from member care supporters is to be sought where appropriate.
 - ii. If children could still be at risk from the alleged abuser, the police and/or social services in the abusers' home area are to be informed as appropriate to help protect children.

3. Education & Training

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. The minimum level for those joining WI is Level 2 (L2). For those who join to lead a branch or a ministry with children or adults at risk, Level 3 (L3) is needed. Repeat signing of the policy should form part of the regular annual staff review



procedure. Full L2 training is required at least every 5 years. The same applies to L3 training for those who need it.

All staff need to be aware of good practice and the need to be accountable to others in their work with children and adults at risk. All staff also need to know what the warning signs of abuse are, as outlined in the appendix A and what to do in the case of suspicion of abuse or if they hear a disclosure. Staff will understand that failure to follow the safeguarding policy is a disciplinary issue that will lead to consequences up to dismissal from the mission and reporting to the legal authorities. These issues are all covered in L2 and L3 training. *For further training requirements, see appendix G.*

4. Good Working Practices

WEC Nederland's primary purpose in this policy and in our practice arising from it is the protection of children and adults at risk. However, good practice also serves to help protect staff from potentially compromising situations and from the risk of unfounded allegations. Members must be careful and watchful in their relationships with children and adults at risk; 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 in working with children and most of them apply equally to work with adults at risk. Private arrangements such as babysitting are not covered by the branch policy, although the principles in the policy are still helpful.

A. Visibility

All work with children and adults at risk 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 giving 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 and adults at risk 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.

- i. Always be accountable to other adults regarding interactions with children and adults at risk.
- 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

Children and adults at risk need to be protected from abuse, exploitation, giving away personal information, and any other harm. Inappropriate internet content must be blocked and inappropriate use prevented where possible.

- i. Proper internet protection should be put on all public computers.
- ii. Parents are strongly encouraged to monitor their children's smart phones and internet activity.
- iii. Staff should not telephone or exchange personal e-mail, social network, SMS or text messages with children. There are a few exceptions to this, such as when staff act in the place of parents as boarding home parents or at a children's home.
- iv. Parents/Supervisors are strongly encouraged that all films, TV content, and computer games watched by their children are legally acquired, age appropriate and of a suitable nature.
- v. No WEC Nederland run activities will use any media such as films, television shows, music, or internet sites of an unsuitable nature for the children present.
- vi. Parents/Supervisors are strongly encouraged monitor the content of the music children are listening to, and the music videos they are watching, and to ensure that they have been legally acquired. *Further information in internet safety and e-communication with children guidelines, see Appendix C)*

E. Discipline

Discipline should be primarily used to teach and correct rather than punish. It is not to include excessive physical punishment by parents. No-one is to use shaming, yelling at or belittling a child or other forms of hostile treatment.

F. Differential Treatment

Responsible adults should avoid favouring or showing differential treatment to particular children or adults at risk to the exclusion of and in the presence of others. Ministry staff members are not to form exclusive friendships with children or adults at risk, 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 staff member.
- 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. Adult staff members should avoid doing things of a personal nature for children or adults at risk 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 and adults at risk.
- vi. Touch should be morally and culturally appropriate.

The following behaviours between staff and children and adults at risk are inappropriate and are not to be engaged in: touching buttocks, chests, genital areas or thighs; showing affection in isolated areas or when alone together; lying on a bed together; 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 children and adults at risk, 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; cursing or making derogatory remarks about the child or adult at risk, 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.

I. Parental Involvement

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

J. Monitoring Child-to-Child Behaviour

The following actions may involve abuse or inappropriate behaviour of one child to another and are prohibited: bullying; offensive and/or hurtful 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.

Child on child abuse accounts for a very high, and growing, proportion of offences at 30-40% of all reports. 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 abuse must be responded to in a manner which best ensures the immediate and future safety of the child or adult at risk concerned. Staff will respond to suspected 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 or adult at risk 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 secrecy, but do assure them that you will only involve a few other people. Specify who you will inform. The rules of confidentiality with adults at risk are different: normally an adult can ask that the disclosure be passed on to no-one else. Reporting disclosure information about abuse of an adult can only be done in these situations:
 - The adult gives permission to share
 - The adult does not have the mental capacity – typically due to dementia or mental illness
 - The adult making the disclosure, or other adults, are in danger from the abuser
 - There has been, or there is a serious risk of criminal behaviour.
 - A child is also involved in the situation and is at risk – in such cases reporting is **always** required.
- ii. Don't push for further information; if you show that you are ready to listen, including giving the person time to say what he or she wants, they 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. “Describe or explain to me what happened” or “Tell me more about that.”

- iii. 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 or adult at risk 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.
- iv. Be aware that the child or adult at risk may have been bribed or threatened not to tell anyone.
- v. 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 alleged victim.
- vi. 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, or the adult at risk's name
 - The nature or extent of any injury
 - The present location of the child or the adult at risk
 - 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 team members on the report.
- viii. A reporting form can be found at the Safeguarding page of WISP, see [Reporting Forms](#)
- viii. Any member receiving an allegation is to be encouraged to seek pastoral support if needed.

6. Explanation of terms

CSPN - the Child Safety and Protection Network, www.cspn.org, of which WEC International is a member. This is a collaborative network of mission agencies, faith-based NGOs and international Christian schools intentionally and strategically addressing issues of child safety

SP - Safeguarding 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 reports and/or suspicions of abuse or other inappropriate behaviour towards children and adults at risk. 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 Maaïke Verhorst

ISO – International Safeguarding Officer – the person responsible within WEC International for the implementation of Child Protection and Safety, currently EunHya Ha and Karie Kolb. They can be contacted at: iso@com4all.org.

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

SEM – Stichting Evangelisch Meldpunt, www.wijzijinsem.nl, of which WEC Nederland is a member.



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 show a real problem that needs to be monitored and dealt with as appropriate, not just ignored.

All forms of abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour such as withdrawal, becoming clingy, aggressive or depressed
- Nervousness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under or over achievement or lack of concentration
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Self-harm, including substance abuse and eating disorders
- Inappropriate relationships
- Severe sleep disturbance, persistent tiredness and lack of energy
- Escape attempts such as running away or refusing to go home
- Behavioural changes such as bed wetting or soiling

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 and flirting with adults or other children
- Recurrent urinary tract infections, injuries to the genitals and/or anus
- Use of pornography at a young age
- Change of internet use – suddenly using it more or less
- Secrecy and anger towards others related to internet use
- Many new phone numbers, texts & social media messages on the phone and/or other internet devices

Emotional:

- Low self-esteem and lack of confidence
- Avoidance of the abuser or those who look similar
- Excessive obedience, does everything they are told
- Small children can show too much affection to strangers
- Struggle to control emotions, may express themselves in an extreme way
- Have few friends



- Children seem isolated from parents
- Aggression towards other people

Appendix B: Dealing with disclosures B-G

B. Responding to an incident, disclosure, or reasonable grounds for suspicion of abuse

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.

If the safeguarding team are satisfied that a child, group of children, or adult/s at risk are in danger, e.g. from a physical abuser who could injure them for speaking out, measures must be taken **immediately** to ensure that the danger is removed, either by removing the children and adults at risk to a place of safety or by suspending and removing the offender from the victim's presence. The safety of children and adults at risk 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 report being made, led by the SO, together with the local leaders (unless the report is about 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 try to investigate.
- 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 response taking place 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

- the level of knowledge of the WEC Nederland safeguarding team
 - the seriousness and potential mission-wide and international impact of the disclosure
 - the availability of the ISO to come in person
 - any other relevant considerations
- iii. Where the report is about a very serious safeguarding issue, and/or it could have a serious impact on the whole of WEC International the ISO will inform the International Leadership Team.

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 advice 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.

Because we are a member of Stichting Stichting Evangelisch Meldpunt (SEM), the safeguarding team may contact them for advice, when a disclosure is received of an incident in the Netherlands.

A full response is needed when any of the following criteria are met:

- Disclosure, witnessed incident, or reasonable suspicion of serious physical injury
- Disclosure, witnessed incident, or reasonable suspicion of serious neglect

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- Disclosure, witnessed incident, or reasonable suspicion of sexual abuse
- Disclosure or witnessed incident involving bruising and soft tissue injury to babies
- Disclosure or reasonable suspicion of abandonment (or leaving alone) where the child or adult at risk is exposed to danger
- Disclosure, witnessed incident, or reasonable suspicion of emotional abuse - including spiritual abuse

If emergency medical attention is needed, it is to be found immediately. The adult hearing the report of abuse is to inform the SO who will advise the child's parents and any others they think necessary, including a doctor. The same principle applies to adults at risk.

All responses must be impartial and seen to be so. They must also be as discreet and confidential as possible. When deciding if a case needs further organisational response, it needs to be remembered that even events that seem 'minor' could have a major impact on the child or adult at risk.

Unless the reports involve the parents or legal guardians, they should be involved as soon as possible, but they must not take any action to 'resolve' the problem with the alleged offender, as this could compromise any legal investigation or organisational response.

When a response is taking place, the alleged offender is to be suspended from duty. If the report involves a child in an institution, the alleged offender is to be relocated away from the alleged victim/s. The branch SO is to take any other steps necessary to protect the child and any other children from harm. An alleged offender is not to be allowed to resign during a response process.

As soon as a response 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

- Compromise any legal investigation or organisational response taking place
- Identify and additionally abuse the victim or victims
- Identify and possibly incriminate someone who could prove to be innocent

Counsel and support will be offered to the alleged victim and perpetrator and their families during the response process. This support must come from different people to avoid a conflict of interest. Early support and counselling intervention for victims and families can make a huge difference in long-term recovery. The alleged offender can suffer from extreme stress so support from the beginning by someone not involved in the response process is essential. The same is true for his or her family.

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. WEC Nederland, any relevant support branches, and the ISO are to back up and keep records indefinitely. Follow up investigations many years later are sometimes needed. Safeguarding records are different to ordinary personnel files which should be destroyed after several years. All records, including e-mails and message communication, must be stored in separate, confidential files and not mixed with personal records. WEC Nederland safeguarding records are to be passed on to each new branch SO.

Response beyond early fact finding could be costly. If the costs are not high because a competent group is available to WEC Nederland, they can be covered by a local administration account. If costs begin to rise then a separate fund is to be set in place to cover travel costs for the response team including WEC Nederland staff, and for any medical or counselling support.

C. Where the allegation is proven to be true

- If the report is found to be true, action will be taken based on the seriousness of the incident. A member who has committed an offence according our policy's definitions that is criminal and/or



seriously immoral or unethical will be dismissed without the possibility of resignation or future reinstatement.

- ii. 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.
- iii. 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 ADs also need to be informed.
- iv. The offender will be offered counsel and pastoral support to begin a restoration and rehabilitation process if this is possible.

D. 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 false report will need to be determined and appropriate action taken. The child or children involved may well need professional support to deal with different issues.

E. 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 person who was accused. Points to be addressed include, but are not limited to:
 - Reviewing the WEC Nederland SP 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 wellbeing.

iv. The allegation and the investigative findings must be kept confidential, otherwise there could be legal complications for both the accused person and WEC Nederland.

F. 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.

G. Disclosures 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 a disclosure 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 direction and 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.

Appendix C: Internet Safety and e-Communication with Children

Safety on the internet, with any and every device, 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. Smart phone "hook-up" apps using GPS location designed to bring consenting adults together for casual sex also pose a danger. In theory, these are for over 18s only, but children with a small amount of IT knowledge 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.

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.
- How to recognise bias, fake news, propaganda. How to make good decisions about accuracy and truth
- getting the most from its enormous communication benefits

The need to self-limit internet time and other screen time

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 messages from unknown people (including 'friends' of friends), 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 are many 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, social media etc. 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 situations it may be expected (although never written in policies) that all staff will be social media "friends" with students, youth group members etc who are old enough.

If staff choose to use social media, or any 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
- d) Often youth leaders use a special phone for contact with young people who don't use the leader's personal number. That phone can be checked by another, unrelated staff member

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 D: Why do we not accept those guilty of past safeguarding offences?

Sexual, physical, and emotional abuses are offences with high rates of recurrence. This is why both Christian and secular organisations working with children or adults at risk include a section about not accepting those guilty of such offences.

For an offender who expresses repentance there are also two major practical issues.

1. Knowing how genuine the repentance is: nearly all legal and organisational disciplinary systems are more lenient with an offender of any kind who expresses regret and remorse – including repentance in Christian circles. However, many offenders know this and can 'play the system' to gain a more lenient sentence or disciplinary action only to repeat the behaviour. In some cases, the statements of regret are openly contradicted or withdrawn outside of the legal or disciplinary context.



2. The repentance may well be genuine at the time, but the abusive behaviour is an ingrained pattern or besetting sin that can recur. Sometimes this recurrence can come after several years therefore there is no easy timeline of being free that can be applied.

Both of these issues have affected the attitudes of many churches (including Evangelical churches and missions) in the past, with the frequent and heavily-publicised extreme problems that this caused. Restoration of a repentant offender has to be managed to ensure that children and adults at risk are protected and that the offender is supported in overcoming a besetting sin which can permanently harm others.

Appendix E: The Theology of Safeguarding

Each and every person is fearfully and wonderfully made, knitted together in their mother's womb, and loved by God who knows everything about them (Psalm 139). All are precious and have worth to God. Jesus tells us that we are each called to love others and to treat them with the respect, dignity and love that we would want to receive ourselves (Matthew 22: 39). Therefore, we want to be a place of welcome and care for all – whatever their age, abilities, health or history. Our safeguarding commitment is based in Biblical values. In the Old Testament there are many references about caring for the needy and vulnerable people in our communities (Exodus 22v21-24, Lev 19v34, Deut 10v18, Proverbs 15v25 etc) The New Testament has the same principle, so that the children and adults at risk in our care receive the truth in a loving family and Christian community (Eph 6v4, Matt 19 v13-15, Mark 9v37, Col 3v21, 1 Tim 5v8-10 etc). Protection from all forms of harm, as much as it is possible for us to do so, is a basic minimum part of this. *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* (John 13: 35 – NIV)

Jesus challenged injustice, spent time with marginalised people and spoke out for those who had no voice (Matthew 23). Therefore, we work to be a place of righteousness and justice to protect from abuse and deal effectively with any concerns that arise – however costly that may be. There are very serious warnings about leading children astray (Luke 17v2) and abuse has been a major factor in some children going astray.

Safeguarding is protecting adults at risk and children from harm, abuse or neglect. It also involves giving love, care and support to all who have been affected by such damaging behaviour. If we believe the things listed below, safeguarding should be an automatic part of our practice.

- All people are precious in the eyes of God, their Creator
- Christians should follow the example of Jesus in his compassion and care for others
- Churches and Christian organisations are to be sanctuaries of safety and peace,

Appendix F: Recommended questions for referees can 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?
- i. v. Is the applicant:
 - A loner with few or no meaningful adult friendships?
 - Someone who spends a lot of time in hobbies or activities with children so that he or she spends little time with other adults?
 - Someone who appears restless and moves frequently in jobs, living arrangements or someone who struggles to maintain friendships?
- vi. If you have answered yes to any of the above questions please explain why.



Appendix G: Training requirements for national co-workers, short termers and children

A. National co-workers need also to be aware of WEC Nederland’s safeguarding policy and should be trained at the start of any period of service with children and/or adults at risk, and join refresher safeguarding training with, or at the same time as, WEC Nederland personnel. They need to know the relevant sections of child protection law in The Netherlands. National co-workers will understand that failure to follow the policy is a disciplinary issue that will lead to consequences up to dismissal and reporting to the legal authorities.

B. Short-term Teams (WEC Trek) working with children and vulnerable adults also need to know about the WEC Nederland safeguarding policy 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.

