

Safe & Secure

Ensuring the well-being of children and young people within the church community



Introduction

Churches are often on the frontline when it comes to helping children and families, both within their congregations and the local community. Everyone has a responsibility to put children's needs first and every church needs to set an example by safeguarding the children with whom it comes into contact.

Unlike most other organisations, places of worship open their doors to everyone and often when other places are closed. This means pastors and church workers can be called upon at anytime if there is a crisis. In most situations leaders will know what to do, how best to help. But when it comes to the care of children, expert advice is sometimes



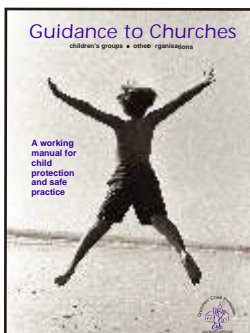
needed, perhaps from an organisation with specialist knowledge or skills. Most importantly Children's Services (formerly Social Services) or the police will need to be contacted when a child's safety or well-being is at stake. This leaflet has been designed to help church leaders know what to do and how to respond if or when these situations arise.

First things first

It is essential for any church committed to keeping children safe to have in place a child protection policy and follow good working practice. Indeed, if any church is seeking charitable status, they will have been told by the Charity Commission that they need to adopt a child protection policy before their application will be considered.

To some this may seem very difficult, but the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) has a model child protection policy in its manual, 'Guidance to Churches', that can be adapted and used as well as other forms and information on disc that can be downloaded. It also contains a wealth of information on child protection and working safely. The implementation of a policy demonstrates the church's commitment to good child protection. It also means those working in this area can do so confidently because they know

what they should be doing (or not doing!) and what the church expects of them. As far as the law is concerned, a 'child' is someone under the age of 18 years.



A child protection policy needs to include:

- How to respond if there are concerns/suspicions of abuse.
- A named contact (and deputy) in the church to co-ordinate concerns and take action
- Safe recruitment procedures for both paid workers and volunteers
- Guidelines for running church activities with children and young people

Good working practice includes:

- Treating all children and young people with dignity and respect
- Respecting personal privacy
- Being available, but also being ready to refer a situation or problem for someone more experienced to deal with
- Being sensitive to needs, likes and dislikes
- Avoiding questionable activity eg. rough/sexually provocative games and inappropriate language
- Following accepted guidelines relating to physical contact
- Challenging unacceptable behaviour
- Reporting all allegations / suspicions of abuse

© CCPAS child protection manual 'Guidance to Churches'

In terms of understanding the basics of child protection, every church leader or worker should consider the following:

1. What is child abuse?
2. Signs of possible abuse
3. How to respond to concerns or allegations of abuse
4. How to keep children safe

1. What is abuse?

The government definitions of abuse are set out in the box on the following page. It can be quite shocking to see these definitions written down and difficult to believe that someone you know could harm a child in this way. The sad thing is that all kinds of people abuse children.

Everyone has different views on parenting. These differences exist between and within all ethnic and social groups. Whilst the recognition of cultural diversity is important, children have a universal right to be protected. Anything that causes harm to a child, whether part of a cultural tradition or otherwise, is never justified. Also, some practices that are acceptable in other countries are illegal in the United Kingdom. For example, it is unlawful in the UK to carry out female circumcision or send a child abroad for this purpose.

It is vital that we make sure that church teaching or practice does not lead to or encourage abuse in the church or family home. There have been reports in the media of a few

cases where children have been subjected to abuse following accusations of being witches (Kindoki) or possessed by evil spirits. When practices such as these come to light they will always be investigated by the authorities and appropriate action taken to protect the children involved. There is also the possibility that criminal proceedings will be taken against those responsible.

Even when children have not been harmed physically, abuse can still

occur where consideration for a child's emotional well-being is not respected. This can happen, for example, in prayer ministry involving children. CCPAS believes that churches have a vital role to play, not only in the general welfare of children, but in the area of prayer. We have published good sense guidance in this area so that children can be safe but still participate in the worshipping life of the church. The key principles are set out below but please contact CCPAS if you would like a copy of the complete guidance.



Guidelines in Praying for Children

1. Parental permission and the permission of the child must always be sought before praying for children.
2. Those praying should always be members of the church who are suitably trained and formally authorised within the church, denomination or movement to do so in recognition of their expertise and experience in this sensitive area.
3. Children are easily frightened and are very susceptible to suggestion. They may also be upset by shouting and may easily believe they are bad, wicked or corrupt. A child should *never* be shouted at or be told they are demonised, possessed or oppressed by the devil, evil spirits or such like.
4. It is very important not to miss problems arising from behavioural issues, learning difficulties, mental health problems, copied or unconventional behaviours, which will usually be the cause of a child's difficulties.

Definitions of Abuse

The Children Act 1989 requires that if the local authority has 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives or is found in their area is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm*', they must make, or cause to be made, such enquiries as they consider necessary.....'

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institution or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. A child may suffer more than one category of abuse. The following definitions of child abuse recommended for registration are as stated in the joint government departments' document, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (draft) published in 2005. Any amendments to the definitions will be posted in the updated version of notes on our website.

Physical Abuse.

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Sexual Abuse.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (eg rape or buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts (oral sex). They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

2. Signs of possible abuse

When considering whether there is evidence to suggest a child or young person has been abused there are a number of possible indicators (listed below). However, there may be other explanations, so it is important not to jump to conclusions but rather seek advice from Children's Services, the Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit or CCPAS. There may also be no signs or symptoms, this does not mean that a report of abuse is false.

Signs Suggesting Physical Abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries that occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc
- Injuries that have not received medical attention
- Neglect - under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care, etc
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc that do not have an accidental explanation*
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse*
- Changes in routine

Indicators of Possible Sexual Abuse

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders - anorexia, bulimia*
- Bed wetting and soiling

Signs Suggesting Emotional Abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy. Also depression/aggression, extreme anxiety.
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

*These signs may indicate the possibility that a child or young person is self-harming, mostly by cutting, burning, self-poisoning.

3. How to respond to concerns or allegations

It is very important to have someone within the church or group whose role it is to be child protection co-ordinator, who can immediately record in writing what they have seen or heard that has worried them and/or what they have been told by someone else.

In the case of suspected sexual abuse or deliberate injury, if there are concerns for a child's safety or if a child is afraid to return home, the correct way to respond to an allegation or concern is for the person responsible for child protection matters to phone the local authority's Children's Services or the police child abuse investigation unit to explain what has happened.

Other people who have knowledge of the situation may consider contacting the parents of the child involved. CCPAS would *not* advise this course of action because it is often not clear who is responsible for the abuse. So, rather than jumping to what might be the wrong conclusions and possibly damaging a police investigation, it is important to speak first to Children's Services or the police and act on their advice. Medical help should be sought in an emergency, and the doctor treating the child should be informed of any concerns.

The relevant phone numbers will be in the local telephone directory, and if not listed, the police child protection unit can be contacted via the main police number. Children's Services and the police are used to dealing with this type of call and will respond sensitively and appropriately. However, if the child protection worker in the church is unsure whether or not they need to contact them, they can ring CCPAS on 0845 120 4550 and talk to someone on our helpline.

Sometimes people are worried about speaking to the police or Children's Services because they are afraid that it might affect their stay in the UK if, say, they are an asylum seeker or refugee. Police officers who work in child abuse investigation are there to find out what has happened to the child and keep them safe, irrespective of their or their family's legal status.

For Christians, the bible makes it clear that it views offences against children very seriously, and should be dealt with by the governing authorities (Matthew 18 & Romans 13). It also teaches respect for the authorities (1 Peter 2 v 13-17). This means that when people commit crimes against children, as in the case of abuse, the authorities should be informed so that justice can be done, those who abuse children are stopped, and children are protected from harm.

Guidelines for responding to a child who may have been abused

- Don't ask questions.
- Don't make promises you may not be able to keep eg. not telling anyone else.
- Accept what you hear without passing judgement.
- Tell the child what you are going to do.
- Make careful notes (the circumstances, what the child said, what you said etc) as soon as possible, preferably within an hour. Include dates and times of incident/recording and keep the notes safely.
- Contact the person responsible for child protection concerns or, in their absence, take action yourself without delay.
- Listen and pass on to the church child protection co-ordinator - do not question or investigate.
- The Child Protection Co-ordinator should contact Children's Services, the police or CCPAS

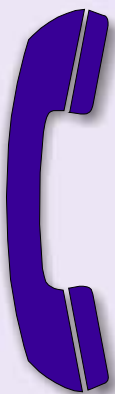


These are extracts from the government publication, 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (2003)

Everyone working with children and families should...

- Be familiar with and follow your organisation's procedures and protocols for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children and know who to contact in your organisation to express concerns about a child's welfare.
- Remember that an allegation of child abuse or neglect may lead to a criminal investigation so don't do anything that may jeopardise a police investigation, such as asking a child leading questions or attempting to investigate the allegations of abuse.
- Refer any concerns about child abuse or neglect to Children's Services or the Police. If you are responsible for making referrals, know who to contact.
- Seek to discuss your concerns with the child, as appropriate to their age and understanding, and with their parents and seek agreement to making a referral to Social Services (Children's Services) unless you consider such a discussion would place the child at risk of significant harm.
- When you make a referral, agree with the recipient of the referral what the child or parents will be told, by whom, and when.
- If you make a referral by telephone, confirm it in writing within 48 hours. Children's Services should acknowledge your written referral within one working day of receiving it, so if you have not heard back within three working days, contact Children's Services again.

CCPAS Helpline 0845 120 45 50



- Advice and support in crisis situations and for those dealing with on-going protection concerns.
- Safe practice guidance to protect children and young people from abuse and workers from false allegations.
- Assistance with the preparation and maintenance of child protection policies.
- External consultation for local churches, denominations and organisations.
- Where possible, counselling children and adults where there are issues of past abuse and providing details of other counselling agencies.

4. How to keep children safe

One way to keep children safe is to teach them how to protect themselves. They can learn that it is OK to say 'no' if someone tries to touch them in places that are 'private'. In the context of abuse, they should be encouraged to talk to an adult they trust, perhaps a teacher or church worker, if someone has done or is doing something to them that is wrong or makes them feel uncomfortable.

It is also important to make sure church is a 'safe' place. It's not just about keeping buildings secure, it's ensuring that everyone who works with children and young people has gone through a recruitment process that includes:

- Completing an application form
- Attending an interview
- Having references taken up
- Undergoing a criminal records check at "enhanced" level
- Serving a probationary period as a worker
- Being appointed only when those with responsibility for recruiting workers (paid and voluntary) are satisfied the applicant is suitable for the job.
- Challenging behaviour of concern / whistle blowing

Teamwork is vital when it comes to keeping children safe. For all those working with children and young people, regular get-togethers are therefore essential so that concerns can be shared and prayed about and any action agreed upon. This should be done in addition to routine planning meetings etc.

Teamwork means each member is responsible to, and for, the others in the group. So if there are concerns about a worker's behaviour, it can be discussed openly with them. Workers should also be able to share concerns with the child protection officer in the church.

Having said this workers and leaders need to be trained how to recognise signs and symptoms of abuse, and how to respond. CCPAS has training resources to help your church equip workers in child protection awareness.



SOS - Supporting Offenders Safely

With the growing recognition that many sex offenders attend church, this training programme examines the issues and includes understanding patterns of sex offending behaviour, risk assessment and written

contracts plus the treatment, pastoral care and counselling of sex offenders in a church setting. Contributors include Donald Findlater (Lucy Faithfull Foundation), David Pearson (CCPAS Executive Director) and other CCPAS personnel.

Contact CCPAS for more details - 0845 120 45 50

Sex Offenders

Another essential area in keeping children safe is how the leadership responds when someone who has committed sexual offences against children attends a church.

Because it is widely recognised that sex offending is often addictive, these people must *never* be allowed to work with children or be left alone with them at any time. Indeed, in some cases, if a sexual offender is permitted to work with children, both the church and the individual could be committing a criminal offence.

There are ways, however, of offering support and care to a sex offender within strict boundaries laid down by the church leadership. CCPAS has useful resources to help in this situation including a whole chapter in 'Guidance to Churches', a leaflet entitled 'Help...a sex offender has joined our church' and a training DVD, 'SOS Supporting Offenders Safely'.

Conclusion

As well as implementing the advice contained in this booklet, one other important thing to remember is that children and young people need role models and much can be achieved simply by being good examples for them to follow. Children are our jewels, so let us make sure we do all we can to keep them safe.

CCPAS is available to offer help and support with the following:

- 24 hour helpline (0845 120 4550)
- Advice and support in child protection matters
- Helping churches develop child protection policies/safe practice guidelines
- Training seminars
- In-house training packs for churches to use

Contact us at:

CCPAS, PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ

Tel: 0845 120 4550

Email: info@ccpas.co.uk

Web: www.ccpas.co.uk

Other useful contacts:

African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance

Tel: 020 7735 7373 Web: acea@eauk.org

ChildLine

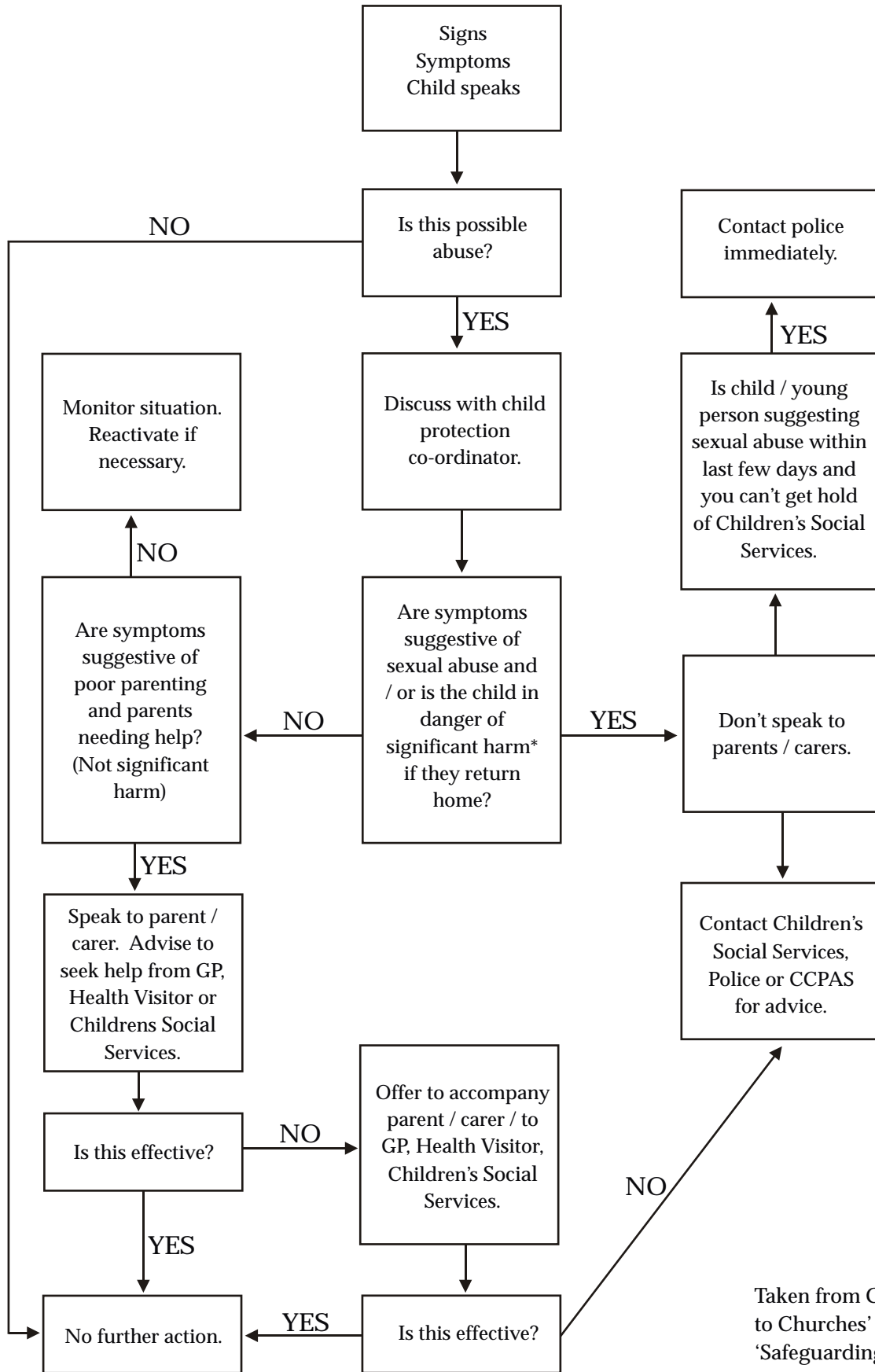
Tel: 0800 1111 (for children) Web: www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC

Tel: 0808 800 5000 Web: nspcc.org.uk

Flowchart

This is not a substitute for a formal child protection policy.



Taken from CCPAS 'Guidance to Churches' and 'Safeguarding Children and Young People' manuals.

'Facing the Unthinkable'

Child Protection Training - Now on DVD



DVDs INCLUDE:

- What is Abuse?
- Signs, Symptoms and Effects
- Taking Action
- Safe Practice
- PowerPoint Slides

SPECIALIST TRACKS:

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- Good practice - African led church
- Children with special needs
- Implementing a child protection policy
- Working overseas

'Facing the Unthinkable' is a comprehensive child protection training course presented by David and Pauline Pearson. As well as instruction in the essential areas, there are several in-depth sessions (specialist tracks) on topics covered within the basic training, plus group tasks and exercises. The pack has been specially designed for flexibility so that tailor-made courses of anything between four and fifteen hours can be run over a number of evenings or days. The DVD includes PowerPoint slides and the approximate running time is 7 hours. The pack comes with Trainer's notes, participants' handbook and the CCPAS manual 'Guidance to Churches', with regularly updated versions available for downloading from the CCPAS website. A certificate is awarded to those who complete the course and test paper.

Contributors:

David and Pauline Pearson, Simon Bass, Julia Stacey, Caroline Comrie-Sinclair, Bill Stone (CCPAS), Steve Kirkpatrick (formerly Thames Valley Police), Arthur Panton (Bristol Social Services), Bob Pull (Metropolitan Police), Katei Kirby (African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance), Dr Jonathan Oloyede (Glory House Church), Dario Bucceri (New Life CF, Margate), Jo Moore (New Life CF, Margate and Diocesan Advisor) and Briony, Martin Lee and Marion Knell (Global Connections), Helen (Foster Carer), and survivors of abuse who need to remain anonymous.

Cost:

Non-members £95.00 (includes a year's CCPAS membership)

Members £65.00

To order, or for more details contact:
CCPAS, PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ.
Tel: 0845 120 4550 Email: info@ccpas.co.uk Web: www.ccpas.co.uk

This booklet has been sponsored by Project Violet
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CHURCHES' 
Child Protection
ADVISORY SERVICE

A French translation of the text of this booklet is available on request or from CCPAS website.