

**POLICY FOR SAFEGUARDING THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**1. DEFINITION OF SAFEGUARDING:**

Safeguarding is about preventing the abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults. The abuse is experienced in four main ways:

- \* Physical
- \* Emotional
- \* Neglect
- \* Sexual

**2. POLICY STATEMENT FOR DISPLAY**

The Methodist Church is committed to working for the wholeness of each individual within God's purpose for everyone.

We seek to safeguard all members of the Church community, of all ages.

It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children and young people.

**3. IMPLEMENTATION OF PROCEDURES: RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL, MINISTER IN PASTORAL CARE AND THE OFFICERS.**

**The church and minister will fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with the latest edition of "Safeguarding" and the following:**

- Approve the appointment of all workers/volunteers.
- Confirm, on an annual basis, that all disclosures are in place and that workers with vulnerable people are aware of guidance for good practice.
- Provide funding for training as required.
- Ensure they are providing a safe environment.
- Include safeguarding as an item on the Church Council Agenda.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The Church should appoint a small group, who, confidentially, would make the necessary arrangements for anyone convicted of child abuse, who may wish to attend the church.
- This policy and its appendices should be circulated to all workers ( paid and voluntary), to people who come into contact with children, young adults and vulnerable people and to organisations and groups using the church premises. Such organisations and groups must either adopt this policy or produce an adequate policy themselves, as part of the leasing agreement.

**This policy was adopted by Church Council on.....**

**Signed by**

.....**Minister in pastoral charge**

.....**Church Secretary**

**Recommended review date.....**

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **GUIDELINES FOR WORKERS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Our Church greatly appreciates the commitment of employed workers and volunteers with young children and young people as this is a primary focus of our ministry. With this importance in mind, these guidelines have been produced in order to protect young people and the people who work with them.

#### **Preparation for the job**

1. Read the Church's policy for safeguarding the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and other material if possible. "Safeguarding Children and Young People" is very useful, although it is due to be updated very shortly.
2. Speak to someone about doing the job. Be sure you are clear as to the job description. It is worth knowing what you are letting yourself in for!
3. Find out about usual practice- how the group functions and what its aims are. Try to familiarise yourself with any check lists, codes of behaviour, rules etc which may apply.
4. Talking to someone who is independent is useful. It might be advisable to have a mentor or support group.
5. You will need to fill in an approved form and give the name of a referee. Such information is confidential and will be kept safely.

While jobs will vary, in all cases you should expect the Church to organise regular meetings with the other helpers. This is to facilitate effective reviewing, planning and sharing of experiences as well as for training and discussions about leader's relationships with the children and young people

You should be aware of emergency information about the premises, where the exits are and where first aid facilities are kept.

The following information is the Church's guidelines and recommended practice, together with advice on what to do if abuse is suspected or discovered.

#### **Practical Guidelines**

1. Have two adults present with the group. Arrange, as far as possible, that an adult is not left alone with a child or young person where there is little opportunity of the activity being observed by others. Groups could work at opposite ends of a large room or with an adjoining door open for example.
2. Make sure you have a comfortable ratio of adults to children, taking into account the activity

3. Have details of names and addresses (kept securely) and the emergency services (if possible with access to a phone).
4. Activities should be suitable for the young people involved. Don't attempt to provide activities in which you do not feel confident.
5. Be consistent- no child should be highly favoured or harshly treated.
6. Assess your situation and record your risk assessment.
7. Do not allow unauthorised people onto the premises.
8. Do not arrange to meet a child or young person off the premises without a parent or other adult present.
9. Think about the premises- eg. Don't expect children to walk along a dark unsupervised path to reach the meeting place.
10. Avoid working with an unknown group or individual unless someone is within calling distance.
11. When going off premises:
  - a) Ensure that parents/carers are informed, and have completed a consent form for the activity.
  - b) Never have fewer than two adults- preferably one of each sex for a mixed group.
  - c) Check the place before hand and carry out a risk assessment, including travel arrangements to and from the activity.
  - d) Check on insurance- for the group (under Church insurance) and car insurance
  - e) Arrange to have more than one passenger in a vehicle whenever practical. Children should sit in the back. Adhere to seating regulation regarding booster seats etc. If hiring transport enquire if driver has CRB check if he is transporting young people.
12. It is important to be open with other leaders- share your burdens and your joys!
13. Special arrangements should be made if working alone is unavoidable.
14. Introduce a system whereby children may talk with an independent person or organisation.

### **What to do if....**

If you do happen to find yourself in the situation where you suspect someone is being abused or allegations are being made, then it is your duty to report your suspicions without delay.

Abuse may come to notice in a number of different ways:

- Disclosure by the person being abused
- Information from a third party (eg. Friend, family member, another worker)
- Observation of unexplained injury or changes in behaviour.

**If a child or young person/vulnerable adult wants to talk about abuse:**

1. Accept what is said, keep calm and look at them directly.
2. Listen carefully: do not question or push for information- it must be given freely.
3. Let them know you need to tell someone else. Do not promise confidentiality.
4. Even when a person has broken a rule, they must be made to realise they are not to blame.
5. Be aware that the person may have been threatened.
6. Reassure the person that they were right to tell you and you take what they say seriously.
7. Let the person know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.
8. Make notes as soon as possible, writing down exactly what was said and when it was said. Record dates and times and sign it with your name. Keep a copy.

**Helpful things to say:**

I believe you. I am glad you told me. It is OK to tell. You are brave to tell.

It is not your fault. I will try and help.

**Try to avoid**

What? Why? When? Where? Who? How?

Are you sure? Why didn't you say before? I can't believe it. This is really serious. Don't tell anyone. I am shocked.

**REMEMBER** You are not the investigating agency and the person may need to talk later to a specialist. Any probing may interfere with further investigations.

**If it is a third party wanting to talk to you:**

1. Listen carefully.
2. Keep calm.
3. Ask them to make a note of what they have been told or observed.
4. Reassure them that they were right to tell you
5. Let them know that you must pass on the information.
6. Tell them what you will do next and that you will let them know what happens.
7. Make your own record and keep a copy.

**If you make observations that concern you, such as:**

- Bruising, cuts, burns, particularly if these are on parts of the body not normally injured in accidents.
- Changes in behaviour such as a child becoming very quiet and withdrawn.
- Aggressive behaviour particularly with friends, severe tantrums or lack of attachment to parents.
- Loss of weight, which can be sudden or gradual and is not linked to illness.
- Inadequate or inappropriate clothing.
- Sexually explicit behaviour such as explicit games and showing an awareness which is inappropriate for the child's age.
- Very frequent masturbation, aggressive and inappropriate sex play.
- The child only seems happy with you.
- The child is kept away from social activities and has few friends.
- Lack of attachment or trust towards parents and other family members.
- Having strange secrets, telling untruths.
- Persistent self comforting behaviour such as rocking.
- Eating problem, including over eating and loss of appetite.
- Disturbing sleep, nightmares and bedwetting.
- Soreness or itching in the genital area, pain on urination and difficulty in walking.

Keep a note of any explanation given. If suspicions reoccur then you suspect abuse.

**If you suspect abuse:**

- 1 Without delay, contact an appointed person and agree what further action is necessary. The appointed person will report the allegation to the Police, Social Services, NSPCC etc as appropriate.
- 2 Ensure that the Vicar, Minister and Superintendent Minister are advised of your actions.

**Make sure that you know who you may contact.**

**What will happen next:**

1. The Superintendent Minister will ensure that the person in pastoral charge of the church is aware of the situation and is given adequate support.
2. At this point the Child protection Team is involved and will:
  - Consider what you have told them together with other information already held or received
  - Assess the strength of the allegation.
  - Investigate if they suspect a child or young person is suffering from harm. In many areas they will do this jointly with the police. This will involve
    - a). Visiting the person's home
    - b) Contacting other agencies which may have information on the person and the family.
    - c) Holding a child protection conference where all professionals can share their observations and to which parents may be invited.
    - d) Informing the police if they suspect an offence has been committed. This could lead to criminal proceedings
    - e) Taking action where necessary to protect the person.

### **Employers- Guidelines for keeping safe from harm**

1. Adhere to the Policy and advice given in the Safeguarding Book issued by the Methodist Church.
2. Plan work so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children and young people may occur. Complete risk assessments of activities, transport and venues.
3. Introduce a system whereby children may talk with an independent person or organisation.
4. Apply agreed procedures for protecting children to all paid staff and volunteers.
5. Give all paid staff and volunteers clear roles and responsibilities. Paid workers should have job descriptions that show clearly their responsibility for the protection of children and young people. Volunteer should have a clear idea of what is expected of them.( Part 2 of new Safeguarding Form).
6. Use supervision as a means of protecting children, young people and workers. There should be regular opportunities for workers to meet to review, plan work, share experiences, receive training and talk about relationships with children and young people. Leaders should take the opportunity to observe those working with young children.
7. Treat all would- be paid staff and volunteers as job applicants for any position involving contact with children. Fill in safeguarding Form A and apply for Disclosure.

8. Gain at least one reference from a person who has experience the applicant's paid work or volunteering with children. Make the request clear that the work will be with children and young people.
9. Interview the applicant before the appointment and find out about past contacts with children and young people.
10. Find out if any applicant has previous convictions for criminal offences against children. The new disclosure process will help meet the requirements of this Guideline.
11. Make paid and voluntary appointments conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period. (Requirement of Methodist Church standing Order 600)
12. Issue Guidelines on how to deal with disclosure or discovery abuse.
13. Train paid staff and volunteers, their line managers or supervisors and policy makers in the prevention of child abuse.

**Fuller explanations and details are to be found in the Safeguarding Book issued by the Methodist Church.**

**Some information about abuse**

Last year in Bristol there were on average over 300 children on the child protection register.

The Trust Study for Adolescence found that 20 000 young people attempt suicide in Britain each year.

Most abuse is carried out by adults who are close to the child- primarily parents and relatives or other members of the child's immediate circle of contacts.

The abused child is never responsible for the abuse.

There will almost certainly be members of any church community who have experienced abuse themselves.

An adult who was abused as a child may never have been able to speak to anyone about that experience.

It is difficult for children to tell someone about abuse; often they have been threatened or may not have the words to tell what has happened.

An abused child needs to be able to tell someone who will listen and believe them.

Children need to know that their views and choices are respected. The ways in which children are respected and valued within the church community will affect their ability to talk confidently in that environment about bad experiences.