

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy for Christchurch Methodist Church United Reformed Church

(This policy was agreed at a Trustees Oversight Group Meeting held on 4th December 2024).

The Methodist and United Reformed churches, along with the whole Christian community, believe that each person has a value and dignity which comes directly from God's creation in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things, this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

Christchurch is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults and affirms that the needs of children or of people when they are vulnerable and at risk are paramount.

Christchurch recognises that it has a particular care for all who are vulnerable whether by disabilities or by reduction in capacities or by their situation. It is recognised that this increased vulnerability may be temporary or permanent and may be visible or invisible, but that it does not diminish our humanity and seeks to affirm the gifts and graces of all God's people.

This policy addresses the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It is intended to be a dynamic policy. It is intended to support the Church in being a safe supportive and caring community for children, young people, vulnerable adults, for survivors of abuse, for communities and for those affected by abuse.

Christchurch fully agrees with the statement reiterated in Creating Safer Space 2007:

As the people of the Methodist Church we are concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God's purpose for everyone. We seek to safeguard all members of the church community of all ages.

Christchurch recognises the serious issue of the abuse of children and vulnerable adults and recognises that this may take the form of physical, emotional, sexual, financial, spiritual, discriminatory, domestic or institutional abuse or neglect, abuse using social media or human trafficking (slavery). It acknowledges the effects these may have on people and their development, including spiritual and religious development. It accepts its responsibility for ensuring that all people are safe in its care and that their dignity and right to be heard is maintained. It accepts its responsibility to support, listen to and work for healing with survivors, offenders, communities and those who care about them. It takes seriously the issues of promotion of welfare so that each of us can reach our full potential in God's grace.

Christchurch commits itself to:

1. **RESPOND** without delay to any allegation or cause for concern that a child or vulnerable adult may have been harmed, whether in the church or in another context. It commits itself to challenge the abuse of power of anyone in a position of trust.
2. Ensure the **IMPLEMENTATION** of Connexional Safeguarding Policy, government legislation and guidance and safe practice within the church.
3. The **PROVISION** of support, advice and training for lay and ordained people that will ensure people are clear and confident about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults who may be vulnerable.
4. **AFFIRM** and give thanks for those who work with children and vulnerable adults and also acknowledge the shared responsibility of all of us for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults who are on our premises.

It is the responsibility of the Trustee Group to appoint the Safeguarding Team (comprising Ministers, Youth Worker and lay representatives) and there should be no gaps in this crucial provision. It is not appropriate for it to be composed exclusively of staff members because of the potential conflict of roles. The role will usually be undertaken on a voluntary basis although expenses should be met.

The Trustee Group supports members of the Safeguarding Team in their role, which is to:

- i) provide a point of reference to advise on safeguarding issues
- ii) liaise with circuit and district safeguarding officers
- iii) promote safeguarding best practice within the local church with the support of circuit ministers
- iv) ensure proper records are kept of all incidents/concerns according to Methodist policy and practice (see Safeguarding Records: Joint Practice Guidance for the Church of England and the Methodist Church - updated April 2019)
- v) ensure that all safeguarding training which is required is undertaken by those in post and appropriate records kept and made available
- vi) attend training and meetings organised to support the role
- vii) oversee safeguarding throughout the whole life of the church¹
- viii) report to the Church Meeting annually
- ix) ensure the church completes a yearly audit/monitoring on safeguarding confirming that policies are in place for the church and all groups and lettings in the church and that these have been annually reviewed
- x) ensure the church completes a risk assessment on each area of activity in the church; that this is stored and is readily available on request. The assessments will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding Group and the Property Group and approved by the Trustee Group.
- xi) ensure that the church recruits safely for all posts
- xii) ensure that the church has a safeguarding noticeboard with copy of the current, signed safeguarding policy, contact numbers for local and national helplines and other suitable information.

a) Purpose

The purposes of this safeguarding policy are to ensure procedures are in place and people are clear about roles and responsibilities for children, young people and vulnerable adults in our care and using our premises. It is to be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church (2017).

b) Good practice

We believe that good practice means:

- i) All people are treated with respect and dignity.
- ii) Those who act on behalf of the Church should not meet or work alone with a child or vulnerable adult where the activity cannot be seen unless this is necessary for pastoral reasons, in which case a written note of this will be made and kept noting date, time and place of visit.
- iii) The church premises will be assessed by a member of the Safeguarding Team with the Property Area Lead and/or their representatives at least annually for safety for children and vulnerable adults and the risk assessment report will be given annually to the Trustee Group in written form. This will include fire safety procedures. The Trustee Oversight Group will consider the extent to which the premises and equipment are suitable or should be made more suitable.

¹ NB outside groups are responsible for their own safeguarding procedures. The Safeguarding Team is responsible for communicating this and getting confirmation that procedures are in place

- iv) Any church-organised transport of children or vulnerable adults will be checked to ensure the vehicle is suitable and insured and that the driver and escort are appropriate. An agreed record to be kept in the church file for each driver/car.
- v) Activity risk assessments will be undertaken before any activity takes place to minimise the risk of harm to those involved. Approval will be obtained from the event leader/minister. A written record of the assessment will be retained securely.
- vi) Everyone will know who to contact should they have a safeguarding concern.

c) Appointment and training of workers

Workers will be appointed after a satisfactory DBS disclosure and following safer recruitment procedures of the Methodist Church. Each worker will have an identified supervisor whom they will meet at regular intervals. A record of these meetings will be agreed and the record kept. Each worker will be expected to undergo basic safeguarding training, within the first 6 months (agreed by Methodist Conference in 2011 - Creating Safer Space Report) of appointment. The other training needs of each worker will be considered (e.g. food hygiene, first aid, lifting and handling, etc).

d) Pastoral Friends

In terms of safeguarding, Pastoral Friends will be supported in their role with the provision of basic safeguarding training upon appointment.

e) Guidelines for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults

In addition to the Safer Space Training Courses and materials provided by the Circuit groups working with children and vulnerable adults receive relevant and appropriate training in safeguarding best practice in their particular areas of work. e.g. training for Holiday Club Leaders, Pastoral Leaders, Open Church Team. A leaflet outlining good practice and systems should be given to everyone who works with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This leaflet should be reviewed annually.

f) Ecumenical events

Where ecumenical events happen on church premises, safeguarding is the responsibility of the Leadership Team of that event.

g) Events with church groups off the premises or 'high risk' events on site

For events involving children or vulnerable adults; or events open to the general public, a risk assessment and notification of the event is to be given to the Christchurch Safeguarding Team PRIOR to the agreement for any event or off-site activity. For off-site events risk assessments must be sent to the District Safeguarding Officer well in advance of the event so they can advise. Once approved notification of the event will be given to the Church Secretary. If an on-site activity is unusual or considered high risk, the Safeguarding Team will contact the Circuit Safeguarding Officer in order that it can be ratified or any queries raised.

h) Other groups on church premises

Where the building is hired for outside use, the person signing the letting agreement will be given a copy of this policy and the appropriate leaflet. The lettings secretary will consider the various users of the building in making lettings. All lettings will be notified to the church safeguarding officer who will keep the records and take advice as appropriate from both the District Safeguarding Officer and Circuit Safeguarding Officer.

When there are groups with children or young people in the church building then it may be necessary to allocate specific entrances or toilet facilities for the sole use of those groups. In these instances other groups and external hirers will be allocated an alternative entrance/exit and

separate toilet facilities. The Christchurch Safeguarding Team will advise the lettings secretary how best to allocate the shared facilities to minimise risk.

i) Complaints Procedure

Any complaints related to Safeguarding should be addressed to the Minister (Rev. Jacob Donkoh). Or if the complaint is about the minister it may then be taken to the Circuit Safeguarding Officer (Sue Chastney) or Circuit Superintendent Minister.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Leadership. The date of the next review is: November 2025.

Key concepts and definitions

- i) A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently, or is in further education, a member of the armed forces, in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change his/her status or entitlement to services or protection.
- ii) Vulnerable Adults: Any adult aged 18 or over who, due to disability, mental function, age or illness or traumatic circumstances, may not be able to take care or protect themselves.
- iii) Safeguarding and protecting children or vulnerable adults from maltreatment; preventing impairment of their health and ensuring safe and effective care.
- iv) Adult/child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect children/specific adults who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm, including neglect.
- v) Abuse and neglect may occur in a family, in a community and in an institution. It may be perpetrated by a person or persons known to the child or vulnerable adult or by strangers; by an adult or by a child. It may be an infliction of harm or a failure to prevent harm.

Dated

Signed Chair of Trustee Oversight Group

Contacts

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