

Christchurch, Abbeydale

Policy for Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

Christchurch Abbeydale is a Local Ecumenical Partnership of the Church of England, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union and the United Reformed Church. In recognising the safeguarding practices of the various denominations from which we are drawn together, we are committed to follow safeguarding protocols and guidelines established by the Methodist Church.

Overarching Statement of Safeguarding Principles

Christchurch Abbeydale, along with the whole Christian community, believes each person has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of humans 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.

Principles

Christchurch Abbeydale 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.

We recognise that we have a particular care for all who are vulnerable whether by disabilities or by reduction in capacities or by their situation. We recognise 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 and is subject to regular review. It is intended to support the Church in being a safe, supportive and caring community for children, young people and vulnerable adults, for survivors of abuse, and for communities and those affected by abuse.

We recognise the serious issue of the abuse of children and vulnerable adults and recognise 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). We acknowledge the effects these may have on people and their development, including spiritual and religious development. We accept the responsibility for ensuring that all people are safe when in our care and that their dignity and right to be heard is maintained. We accept the responsibility to support, listen to and work for healing with survivors, offenders, communities, and those who care about them. We accept our responsibility to work with offenders by offering appropriately supervised and monitored space for them within the Church. We take seriously the issues of promotion of welfare so that each of us can reach our full potential in God's grace.

Christchurch Abbeydale commits itself to:

1. **RESPOND** without delay to any allegation or cause for concern that a child, young person 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 our safeguarding policy following the Methodist Church's guidelines and safe practice and follow closely government legislation.

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, young people and adults who may be vulnerable.
4. **AFFIRM** and give thanks for those who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults, and acknowledge the shared responsibility of all of us for safeguarding vulnerable adults who are on our premises.

Key concepts and definitions

In our policy, we use the following terms:

- i) A child or young person 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 entitlements to services or protection.
- ii) Vulnerable Adults: Any adult aged 18 or over who, due to disability, mental function, age, illness or traumatic circumstances, may not be able to protect or take care of themselves.
- iii) Safeguarding and protecting children, young persons 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, an adult or by a child. It may be an infliction of harm or a failure to prevent harm.

Church Council

Ultimate responsibility for safeguarding within the church lies with the Church Council.

It is the responsibility of the Church Council to appoint a Church Safeguarding Officer. The Church Council has appointed Mrs. Gaye Boggon as Church Safeguarding Officer for children, young people and vulnerable adults and supports her in this role, which is to:

- i) support and advise the minister, church officers and others in fulfilling their roles
- ii) provide a point of reference to advise on safeguarding issues
- iii) liaise with the Methodist Circuit and District Safeguarding Officers
- iv) promote safeguarding best practice within our church with the support of the minister and Church Council
- v) ensure proper records are kept of all incidents/concerns
- vi) ensure that all safeguarding training which is required is undertaken by those in post and appropriate records kept and made available
- vii) attend training and meetings organised to support the role
- viii) oversee safeguarding throughout the whole life of the church (e.g. lettings, groups, property, etc)

- ix) report to the Church Council regularly and to the Church Meeting annually
- x) ensure the church completes a yearly audit/monitoring on safeguarding, confirming that policies are in place for the church and for all groups and lettings in the church and that these have been annually reviewed
- xi) ensure the church completes a risk assessment on each area of activity in the church; that this is stored and reviewed at least annually, and that it is readily available on request
- xii) ensure that the church recruits safely for all posts
- xiii) ensure that the church has a safeguarding noticeboard with a copy of the current, signed safeguarding policy, contact numbers for local and national helplines and other suitable information.

Purpose

The purpose of this safeguarding policy is 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 (2018 – annually updated)*.

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) A quarterly risk review of the church premises is undertaken by the church's health and safety officer, including the suitability of the building for use by children and vulnerable adults. Findings are submitted in writing to the Church Council. The church's health and safety policy, which includes fire safety procedures, is reviewed by the Church Council each year and copies are available for all who use the church. The Church Council considers the extent to which the premises and equipment are suitable or should be made more suitable.
- 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 must be kept in the church file for each driver/car.
- v) Promotion of safeguarding is recognised to include undertaking those tasks which enable all God's people to reach their full potential. The Church Council will actively consider the extent to which it is succeeding in this area.

Procedures

To safeguard those working with children, young people and those adults who may be vulnerable, we will arrange:

a) Appointment and training of volunteers

Volunteers, working with children, young people and vulnerable adults (e.g. Sunday School leaders and helpers, Open the Book team and pastoral visitors) will be appointed after a satisfactory DBS

disclosure and following the safer recruitment procedures of the Methodist Church. Each volunteer will have an identified supervisor who will meet at regular intervals with them. A record of these meetings will be agreed, signed and the record kept. Each volunteer will be expected to undergo basic safeguarding training, within the first 6 months and every 4 years thereafter. Other training needs of each volunteer will be considered (e.g. food hygiene, first aid and lifting and handling).

b) Pastoral visitors

In terms of safeguarding, pastoral visitors will be supported in their role by the Pastoral Secretary, who manages the team and arranges pastoral meetings to share experiences and support each other. Any concerns are brought to the minister and the pastoral secretary.

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

A leaflet, 'Code of Safer Working Practice' will be given to each volunteer working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

d) Events with church groups off the premises

Adequate staffing, a risk assessment and notification of the event should be given to the Church Secretary PRIOR to the agreement for any event or off-site activity. The Church Safeguarding Officer may be consulted. If the activity is unusual or considered to be high risk the organiser should seek advice from the Church Safeguarding Officer and other sources.

e) 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 the church safeguarding policy. The lettings secretary will consider the various users of the building in making lettings and will retain records.

Complaints procedure

It is hoped that complaints can generally be dealt with internally by the Church. However, if the complaint is of a safeguarding nature relating to possible abuse of children, young people or vulnerable adults, then it is important that the Minister and Church Safeguarding Officer are informed immediately. This may necessitate the involvement of statutory services and they may wish to inform the Methodist Circuit and District Safeguarding Officers to support them with this referral.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Church Council.

7th February 2024