



CHRISTCHURCH

METHODIST & UNITED REFORMED

SAFEGUARDING
POLICY

2009

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CHRISTCHURCH METHODIST & UNITED REFORMED

We are all made in the image of God and Christ came that we should have life in all its fullness. Therefore everyone has the right to find nourishment for their life journey in a safe place. At Christchurch we seek to safeguard all members of the church community, of all ages. This means that :

- dignity will be respected
- abusive behaviour will not be tolerated
- there will be sufficient support for those who need it
- allegations will be taken seriously

New guidance will be issued during 2009 regarding working with **vulnerable adults**. At the present, churches are not 'statutory care' providers under the Care Standards Act and therefore not regarded as working with vulnerable adults. However the ecumenical group 'Churches Forum for Safeguarding' have adopted the following definition of a vulnerable person as being one who may be at risk and in need as a result of: sensory impairment, a learning disability, a physical illness, a mental illness, a reduction in physical, mental or emotional capacity. Within Christchurch we need to follow good practice in regard to the needs of these people. [Please ask one of the safeguarding secretaries for more details should you need them]

SAFEGUARDING YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN.

"It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children and young people". We are committed to this statement and to seeking to provide a safe environment for children and young people in Hitchin. The church meeting will be responsible for the institution and oversight of work amongst the church's children and young people. The principles and safeguards within the umbrella term "Good Practice" should at all times and within all groups be observed.

The areas of this policy fall into three sections:

- A] Preventing and reporting abuse
- B] Staff roles and recruiting procedures
- C] Good practice Guidelines

The policy recognises the obligations and duty of care on organisations working with children and young people as covered in The Children Act [1989]. This act defines children and young people as anyone up to the age of 18. The policy is applicable to all workers, staff and volunteers. [Please note in this policy children and young people under 18years will be referred to collectively as young people]

A) Preventing and reporting abuse

It is the duty of all Christchurch members as well as those working with young people, to prevent and report any abuse discovered or suspected. The normal rules of confidentiality cannot be observed when abuse is discovered or suspected. Everyone and especially youth leaders should be familiar with the following information on types of abuse, reacting to abuse, and reporting abuse. If anyone suspects, discovers, is told/learns about abuse occurring in or outside the church to one of our young people, they should follow the reporting procedures.

1. Types of Abuse

All leaders should receive guidance on what constitutes abuse and how to recognise it. The definitions of child abuse by the Department of Health, DFEE, the Home Office and Welsh Office (1991) are as follows:

Physical - Actual or likely physical injury to a young person, or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) to a young person, including deliberate poisoning, suffocation and Munchausen's syndrome by proxy.

Sexual -Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a young person.

Emotional - Actual or likely severe adverse affect on the emotional and behavioural development of a young person caused by persistent or severe emotional treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment. This category is used where it is the main or sole form of abuse.

Neglect - The persistent or severe neglect of a young person or failure to protect a young person from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold, starvation or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of a young person's health and development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

The following may be signs of abuse:

Physical - Unexplained injuries or those which have received no medical attention, hidden injuries, shrinking away from unexpected arm movements.

Sexual - Allegations made by the young person, pre-occupation with sexual matters, sexual activity through words, play or drawings, severe sleep disturbances with fears and phobias, being sexually provocative with adults.

Emotional - Regression in behaviour, nervousness, sudden under-achievement, inappropriate relationships with adults/peers, attention seeking, running away/stealing/lying, looking uncared-for.

Neglect - Scavenging for food, unkempt clothing, listlessness, underweight, poor hygiene.

NB: Physical abuse and neglect are difficult to hide. Sexual abuse can be almost impossible to identify and prove. Many symptoms of distress can point to abuse but there may be other explanations. It is important, therefore, that the above signs are not taken as indications that abuse has taken place. They should make us stop and think, but not necessarily jump to conclusions.

There are a number of different ways in which abuse may come to our notice.

- Disclosure by the young person
- Information from a third party [e.g. friend, family member, another worker]
- Observation of unexplained injury or changes in behaviour.

2. Reacting to abuse.

A young person may tell you of abuse because of obvious physical damage.

In an emergency, act at once.

If a young person is clearly in distress from a physical injury, seek medical attention immediately.

Take the young person to A&E or phone for an ambulance. Tell the medical services what the young person has told you or of any suspicions you may have. Remember anything the young person says and record this as soon as possible.

You may suspect abuse, you may discover or witness abuse or someone may report abuse to you. However you become aware of abuse, it is important that you follow this guidance:

- Do not delay
- Do not confront the person who is alleged to be responsible for the abuse
- Record any observations and keep an account of what you have been told by other leaders or the young person. These records must be accurate and factual.
- It is not your role to investigate - concentrate on presenting information clearly
- Contact one of the appointed Child Protection Link Persons or safeguarding secretaries. [Names and telephone numbers are found at the end of this policy]
- Do not discuss with anyone other than the person to whom you should report the matter.

If a young person wants to talk about abuse

- Accept what the young person says, keeping calm and looking at them directly from time to time.
- Make sure that another adult knows that you are talking privately and is present in the building.
- Helpful things you may say are ‘I believe you’ ‘Thank you for telling me’ ‘It’s not your fault’
- Let them know that you need to tell someone else - do not promise confidentiality.
- Even when a young person has broken a rule, they are not to blame.
- Be aware that the young person may be being threatened.
- Never push for information, avoid asking questions, let the young person talk.
- Reassure the young person they were right to tell you.
- Let the young person know what you are going to do next, who you need to tell.
- Make notes as soon as possible, writing down exactly what was said and when he/she said it. Record dates and times of these events and keep the hand written record, even if these are subsequently typed up, for an indefinite period.
- If it is considered that the person making the disclosure is likely to be at risk by returning home, immediate contact should be made with one of the agencies listed below

It should also be remembered that not only can an adult abuse a young person but also a young person can abuse another young person and an adult another adult.

Role of Child Protection Link Persons

To act as a link for leaders who may suspect a young person is being abused either at church or at home or in any other situation.

To act as a listener for a young person wishing to share about a situation which may involve abuse. It has to be acknowledged that young people may approach the leader of their group to fulfil this role.

To be available for any member of the church family to talk about safeguarding matters.

If abuse is suspected, to report the matter to the correct agency and inform one of the Ministry Team.

3. Reporting abuse - suspected, disclosed or discovered.

All leaders should be aware of the reporting procedure.

Leaders should inform their senior leader and/or the Link person or Safeguarding Secretary appointed by the church. One of the safeguarding team will act as the contact to outside agencies and any advice given or actions to be reported, will be passed back to those who need to know. It must always be remembered that in safeguarding matters, we act on a need to know basis at all times.

One of the ministry team should also be informed.

It is the responsibility of the safeguarding team to ensure that cases of abuse are reported. It is normal procedure to contact the Children, Schools and Families Team. If the child or young person is in immediate danger, the police should be contacted.+

Children, School and Families Call Centre **01438 737500 or 01923 471500.**

Hitchin Police Station **0845 3300222**

Herts. Constabulary [Child abuse Investigation Unit]**01462 425173**

Childline Helpline **0800-1111**

The NSPCC can be contacted for advice - the helpline is open 24 hours a day - **0808 800 500**. Also available for advice is the CCPAS (Churches' Child Protection Agency) – **0845-1204550** and Churches Agency for Safeguarding **0207 467 5216**

Anyone can bypass the procedures to contact an outside agency to share concerns, if they feel that the leader they are responsible to is not dealing with the concern, or is implicated in some way.

In every area, Social Services and police have procedures for investigating cases where a child may be at risk. Sometimes a child protection case conference will be convened. It may be appropriate for a church representative to attend. This person may be present to share information or in a support capacity. It is important to be clear which role is being undertaken.

Consideration should be given on a case-by-case basis, to the support that can be given to an abused young person, recognising that support needs to be non-judgemental, appropriate and long term. External help available through Social Services or other counselling agencies may be advisable.

Those groups that are part of an outside organisation e.g. scout and guide movement may wish to follow their own procedures as set by their own association for reporting abuse. However, they must inform the Minister/Link person so that these persons are aware if an incident arises.

4. Integration of offenders into the church

Where a known offender joins the church, it will be important to extend love and friendship to the individual. At the same time the ministry team, safeguarding secretary plus others as appropriate will need to ensure that a frank discussion takes place with the person concerned and efforts are made to sustain communications.

- Clear boundaries should be established for the protection of the young people and to lessen the possibility of the adult being wrongly accused of abuse
- Church leaders should ensure they maintain close links with probation /supervising officer.
- Be open with the offender.
- Prepare a contract which includes, for example ;
- Attending designated meetings only.
- Sitting apart from young people
- Staying away from areas of the building where young people meet.
- Attending a house group where there are no young people.
- Never being alone with young people.
- Never working with young people.
- Get the offender to sign the contract
- Enforce the contract and provide close support /pastoral care.

- Ensure that key workers know the situation, consider whether to tell the church but in general work on a need to know basis.
- Ban the offender from the church if the contract is broken and tell other churches/probation officer.
- If the behaviour of someone attending the church gives cause for concern but they are not an offender and they have not abused or they have been accused but not convicted, then a similar procedure should be gone through – boundaries drawn but support given.
- Regular contact between local churches should be established and a list of named safeguarding persons be held

5. **Helping victims of abuse.**

As a church we are committed to supporting victims of abuse and encouraging them in their faith.

B] Staff roles and recruiting procedures

1. Structure of work and roles.

The Church meeting is responsible overall for youth and children's work.

Safeguarding Secretary - A person/s should be appointed to administer the safeguarding policies, administer forms and references as necessary, be involved in relating safeguarding matters to the church meeting and providing training and updates to those working with young people.

Youth and Children's Leader –is responsible for the oversight of all 7-18 years activities and considers future strategy for youth and children's ministry at Christchurch

Youth Coordinator - will have an overview of Youth work and keep the church meeting informed of developments and support needed in this area.

Youth leaders - will have specific roles within the groups they work with. Some of these roles may be prescribed by external bodies such as the uniformed organisations. There will be a simple agreed "job/role" description, with the opportunity for regular review.

Child Protection Link Persons - At least 2 people shall be appointed, one male and one female to be a link for young people who need to talk privately about abuse. These people must be fully aware of procedures to be followed once a child has made contact. They will act as links to the external agencies should abuse be reported, suspected or discovered. A 'Childline' poster is displayed on the notice board in the corridor as part of this support.

Youth Council - will meet with representatives of all youth work to plan and review youth and children's work at Christchurch.

2. Appointment of workers

All existing workers with young people will be required to obtain an Enhanced Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau. Officers of Scouts and Guides will obtain Disclosures through their own organisations.

New workers with young people will complete an application form with personal details and disclosure of criminal records and references. This will be lodged with the Safeguarding Secretary. References will be taken up, and checks carried out as appropriate with the Criminal Records Bureau. An informal interview will take place with an existing youth leader and a member of the ministry team. A job description will be provided and training needs identified. There will be a 12-month probationary period after which there will be an opportunity to review the appointment.

The Church Meeting will approve all appointments of people working with young people.

The Safeguarding Secretary will hold a list of all workers with young people.

Standard disclosures will be required from the following -:

Regular helpers with children and young people

People preparing refreshments or serving in a tuck-shop

Leaders and helpers in parent and toddler groups [if the children are gathered in a group separately from their [parents/carers]

Caretakers and cleaners working when children on the premises

Appointments not requiring a disclosure- the following people holding office or carrying a duty or responsibility must be aware of the safeguarding policy of Christchurch and will be required to complete a self-declaration form. Such people are:

- Members of the Leadership Team.

- Worship leaders
- Organists, pianists and choir leaders.
- Pastoral visitors.
- Communion stewards.
- Posts involving lone access to church premises:
- Key holders
- Flower arrangers.

3. Training.

All youth workers will receive training in safeguarding procedures and recognising abuse. Other training needs will be identified and supported wherever possible.

C] Good Practice Guidelines

1. Health and Safety.

1.1 The rooms and buildings where young people meet will be regularly checked for physical safety. This will be the responsibility of the property committee and youth leaders. Any dangers from the physical fabric of the building will be reported to the relevant committee.

1.2 Entrances and exits will be well lit. Each group will assess the risk of the automatic doors, and make appropriate arrangements according to the age and needs of their specific group. As directed by the Property Committee, if a group is alone in the building, the front door must be locked.

1.3 Group leaders should be aware of the fire exits, and draw these to the attention of their groups. Groups should be clear about what to do in the event of a fire and not only read and obey the instructions given by the property committee for leaving the building and use the car park as an assembly point but allocate specific roles to the helpers in the group.

1.4 There will be access to First Aid boxes. Accident books and incident books will be recorded in as appropriate. The incident book will be locked in the church safe and can be obtained from the safeguarding secretary. The main church first aid box is located in the corridor opposite the crèche.

1.5 There should be access to the telephone that is situated in the vestry.

2. Activities in the church building involving young people.

2.1 Leaders will have emergency contact numbers for young people within their group. They should have basic written information about any medical/other needs relevant to the activities of the group.

2.2 A register of young people and adults attending a session should be kept. Each group will decide on its registration procedures and these should always be adhered to.

2.3 As far as possible, an adult will not be left alone with a young person. There must always be at least 2 adults present with a group. If a leader needs to be in a pastoral care situation with a young person, a record of this should be kept and another adult should be aware of this meeting and in the building.

2.4 The ratios required under the Children Act are:

0-2 years	1 adult to 3 children
2-3 years	1 adult to 4 children
3-7 years	1 adult to 8 children

For over eights the recommendation is :

Up to 20 young people - 2 adults (preferably one of each gender)
One additional adult for every 10 extra young people.

2.5 Young people should leave the building with a parent/carer or an adult they have permission to go with. If a young person leaves the premises during the session, we are still responsible for the young person until the parents or police are informed. Written parental consent must be obtained for a youngster to leave at the end of an activity without an adult.

2.6 Sometimes young people playing outside, or visitors will join in church organised activities without the knowledge of their parents. If this happens each individual group must decide what action to take. In general, young people should be welcomed and an attempt made to gain some factual details about them [a telephone call to parents is a good way of making contact] then recorded in a register. An appropriate leaflet could be sent home with them giving a contact number for the group.

2.7 Young people using the building should be aware of their personal responsibilities towards others and the implications of any negative behaviour. Each group should decide the boundaries that are appropriate for their group, all leaders and helpers should know what these boundaries are and the youngsters in the group should be regularly reminded of them. Group leaders should be clear as how to deal with negative behaviour, consistency of action is very important. If an incident takes place a written record should be made –the incident folder is kept in the safe and available from the safeguarding secretary.

2.8 Good sense suggests that it could be a risk to show pictures which identify individual children by name, age and telling where they may be found. However young people pictured in groups where an individual cannot be identified, can be displayed. Photographs for use in the press or on a website may be taken only if, under the Data Protection Act 1988, permission has been received from the adult concerned or the parent of the child to be photographed.

3. Activities outside the church building

3.1. Trips out - parental permission will be obtained in writing, and any medical needs noted. Forms are available from the Safeguarding Secretary for different outings. Forms can also be found in the URC guidelines located in the vestry. Contact numbers should always be taken with the group. A list of contact numbers should also be left with someone who is not going on the outing.

3.2 An appropriate number of adults will accompany a group visiting outside the church premises. (Always at least 2).

3.3 Transport – Drivers transporting young people must carry a full driving licence and valid insurance. Young people travelling in cars should always wear an appropriate restraint according to their age, height etc. Children should not be transported without parental consent and the knowledge of the leader. It is realistic to expect that at times a driver may be alone with a youngster in a car e.g. dropping off the last young person. Routes should be planned so that this occurrence lasts for the shortest time possible and that the child is sat in the back seat.

If a mini-bus is used we must ensure full compliance with mini-bus regulations.

A member of the ministerial team should be informed of any major incident/accident which occurs both inside or outside the building so that he/she is aware of the situation.

We recognise that in an emergency, it may not be possible to follow the above guidelines 'to the letter'. The safety of the young person is paramount.

Letting Arrangements

Those that hire the premises for regular and occasional use will be informed of our Safeguarding policy and will be asked to comply with this and the Home Office Code of Practice.

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years, but any aspect of it can be discussed at Youth Council or the Church Meeting if the need arises.

Acknowledgements

The Methodist church 'Safeguarding' April 2003
URC Good Practice Handbook, 3rd edition.
Churches Child Protection Advisory Service

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