

Croydon Methodist Circuit

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Croydon Methodist Circuit 35/41

POLICY STATEMENT

This Church fully agrees with the British Methodist Church Connexional statement for 'Creating Safer Space': *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.* This policy addresses the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It is intended to be a dynamic policy to support the Church in being a safe supportive and caring community: for children, young people, and vulnerable adults; for survivors of abuse; for communities; and for those affected by abuse.

The Church recognises the serious issue of abuse and that this may take the form of: physical, emotional or sexual abuse; neglect; domestic violence; financial, spiritual or institutional abuse. It acknowledges the effects abuse may have on people and their development, including spiritual and religious development. It accepts its responsibility for working towards 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 promoting welfare so that each of us can reach our full potential in God's grace.

The Church commits itself to 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.

The Church commits itself to ensuring the implementation of Connexional Safeguarding Policy, Government legislation and guidance, and safe practice in this Church and Circuit.

The Church commits itself to 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.

The Church affirms and gives thanks for the work of those who are workers with children, young people and vulnerable adults and acknowledges the shared responsibility of all of us for safeguarding.

It is the responsibility of each one of us to protect those who are vulnerable, including adults, children and young people from harm, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; neglect; domestic violence; financial, spiritual or institutional abuse, and to affirm, encourage and support those working with them.

The Church annually appoints appropriate Safeguarding Officer(s) and supports them in their role which is to:

- Support and advise the minister and the stewards in fulfilling their roles
- Provide a point of reference to advise on safeguarding issues
- Liaise with Methodist Circuit and District Safeguarding Co-ordinators

- Promote safeguarding best practice within the local church with the support of Circuit ministers and members of the Circuit safeguarding team as a working group.

PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this safeguarding policy is to ensure procedures are in place and people are clear about their roles and responsibilities for the safety of children and adults in our care and using our premises. It is to be read in conjunction with the Methodist Safeguarding Policies, Procedures and Guidance Handbook (200), which can be found on the Circuit Website: www.croydonmeth.org.uk

GOOD PRACTICE

We believe good practice means that:

- All people are treated with respect and dignity. Individual consent will be sought for participants on events i.e. attendance, photographs and publicity
- Nobody acting on behalf of the Church should meet or work alone with a child, young person or vulnerable adult where the activity cannot be seen. Where this is essential for pastoral reasons another adult should be made aware and, a written note kept noting date, time and place of visit.
- The church premises will be assessed for safety. A report will be given annually to the Church Council. This will include fire safety procedures. The Church Council will consider the extent to which the premises and equipment are suitable for children, young people and vulnerable adults or should be made more suitable.

- Transport arrangements to or from church activities are the responsibility of parents or carers, if they make arrangements among themselves, but are the responsibility of the church if the church activity organises them. Any church-organised transport of children or vulnerable adults will be safe and legal and the driver and escort appropriate. Where under 18's have to be transported by car or minibus arrangements, as far as possible, will be with more than one passenger in the vehicle. Where this is not possible i.e. last drop off, the remaining passenger will sit in a rear seat and the same child should not be left until last each time. Seatbelts must be worn, with booster cushion when under 12 years or 1.35 metres. (It is not the responsibility of the driver to provide a booster cushion. This should be provided by parent/carer at the beginning of the event.)
- When events take place off the premises, adequate staffing will be ensured for such events, together with consent forms. Uniformed organisations will work within their own legal requirements and procedures. Adequate notification of the event and details for emergency contact purposes will be given to a nominated person e.g. Safeguarding Officer. This person should not be related to anyone taking part, and not attending the event.
- Promotion of safeguarding is recognised to include undertaking those tasks which enable God's people to reach their full potential. The Church Council will actively consider the extent to which it is succeeding in this area.

E SAFETY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In accordance with the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, we will take all possible steps to protect young people from significant harm or risk when using the internet or any other form of technology.

Leaders must not communicate with children or young people (0-18 years) via leader's personal social networking profiles or email accounts. Messages must be in a group format with more than one leader in the group. Only children/young people who are known should be involved via communication in this way.

These steps will include:

- Obtain permission from the parent/guardian of any young person (under the age of 18) before they are contacted or pictures or videos are posted of them. If the child is over 12 the parent/guardian must also sign a consent form, which will be completed annually.
- Images of church activities involving children and young people should not be on personal accounts unless the child or young person is part of your family
- Leaders should not add or accept requests to follow or friend young people (under 18) from personal profiles if your relationship with them is only as a leader. The only interaction must be in a space where two or more leaders are able to see what is being communicated.
- Any inappropriate posts by children, young people or leaders to a group should be removed by the administrator(s) of the site. The reasons must be explained to the person who posted the content.
- Administrators of groups or sites on social media should ensure that there is no access for anyone under the minimum age for that medium
- **Facebook.** A group may be set up. This option allows for group chats; however, it should be set as private so that only people approved by the administrator(s) of the group can join. The group should have two or more administrators aged over 18 who have been through the safer recruitment process. Any young person who leaves the church or youth group, or turns 19, should leave the group or be removed.

- **Twitter.** You can create a page to be private; the owner must approve anyone to view it. Other people will not be able to post to your “wall”. An official church account should take every effort not to follow anyone under 18, or comment, like or re-tweet any of their posts.
- **Instagram.** You can create a page to be private; the owner must approve anyone to view it. Other people will not be able to post to your “wall”. It is possible to have a public page for advertising events/outreach since you will have permission from anyone of whom you may be posting photos. An official church account should take every effort not to follow anyone under 18, or comment, like or re-tweet any of their posts. Two or more leaders should have access to the account in case a young person contacts it via the direct messaging function.
- **Snapchat.** It is possible to have a public profile which allows anyone to view your story. This is not an appropriate platform for leaders to communicate with children and young people. It is possible that young people in the group may have each other as friends on Snapchat and issues of peer-to-peer abuse will need to be investigated if they appear.
- **WhatsApp.** It is possible to create group chats; however, mobile numbers are visible to everyone in the group and so there should only be used if there are two leaders in the chat, and ideally not using their personal number. Leaders should never message young people outside the group. Any young people in the group should have consent from their parent/guardian to add their mobile number and participate in conversations. Parents should be informed about the nature and purpose of the group.
- **Zoom.** Children under 16 cannot create a Zoom account; however, a parent/guardian can give consent for their children to access their account with supervision. The meeting link should only be shared with the children and young people who are part of the group.

- **YouTube.** This is not suitable as a medium for communication. A YouTube channel can be a good place to host videos because they can be made private/unlisted so that only people with the link can access them.
- **Communication.** For online video meetings, boundaries should be explained and agreed when facilitating virtual groups. Communication with young people should not be outside standard working hours. Only communicate with a young person in a group context involving two or more leaders. If you are contacted directly by a young person via social media alter the other administrator or account holder to remain accountable. If a young person contacts you and appears to need urgent help or appears to be at immediate serious risk, contact 999, social services or other relevant services, and inform your Church Safeguarding Officer. If the young person does not seem to be at immediate risk contact your minister or Church Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.
 - **Via social media.** Communications should avoid tagging people or using full names. Generally, posts should be announcing events, but questions can be asked in a closed group. Set boundaries if asking for prayer requests.
 - **Via email.** Emails sent to multiple young people/parents should have their individual email addresses in the “blind copy” (BCC) section. A second leader should be copied (CC section) as a direct recipient. Alternatively, send emails from an email address to which multiple leaders have access.
 - **Via texting/WhatsApp/direct message.** Leaders should only have young people’s mobile numbers if they have been given consent to this form of communication. Texting should only be used for communication and not conversation. You should avoid texting one on one wherever possible; it is

better to set up a group conversation in which two or more leaders are included.

- **Photography/video.** Leaders, children and young people should not send pictures that are obscene, indecent or menacing. It is a criminal offence to take, make, permit to be taken, distribute, show or possess an indecent or sexually explicit image of a child under 18. When posting photographs or videos on social media the settings should be set so that individual children or young people cannot be tagged. If a child has been tagged by someone else the comment should be removed. Leaders are responsible for ensuring that young people in a group are aware of issues of consent, why it is important, and how to respect someone's wishes not to be in photos or be tagged in photos on social media.
- **Storage.** Wherever possible, images taken by leaders should be taken on church-owned equipment rather than personal mobile devices. They should be stored in an electronic file on devices that have security passwords. Where possible, these devices should be owned by the church/organisation rather than the group leader. Photos should not be taken on personal devices unless they can immediately be moved to church storage and all backups removed from the device. If in doubt, do not take photos. Images and videos should be wiped from a device's memory before being disposed of.
- **Mobile phones.** It is the leader's responsibility to guide young people about what is an acceptable use of the phone, including when it is and is not appropriate to be on your phone during an event or session. Mobile phones should not be allowed where they would be a distraction from a safe awareness of the environment. In any event or session in which phone access is restricted, parents/guardians should know the leader they can contact in case of an emergency.

- **Use of church-owned equipment, such as computers, tablets, game consoles etc.** If devices are used as part of a group's activities leaders should ensure that all games, videos and films are age-appropriate. Passwords should be in place on any device. Internet searching should be monitored and age-appropriate. If WiFi is available, safe-settings or parental controls should be in place.

Other useful contacts:

Circuit Superintendent Minister:

Rev Dr Stephen Day 020 8656 6997

Members of the Croydon Methodist Circuit Safeguarding Team:

Revd Cameron Kirkwood 07554 149 059

Linda White 07961 367 788

Methodist London District Safeguarding Officer:

Becky Skinner 07960 877740

Police Child Protection Unit: 020 8726 6000

Croydon Adult Abuse Helpline: 020 8760 5697

Childline: 0800 1111

To be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Principles displayed in church buildings. www.croydonmeth.org

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