

PottersWood Safeguarding Policy

Policy Statement

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

21 July 2007

1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to define the measures taken at PottersWood Methodist Church to meet the objectives of the Policy Statement. Since the responsibility is shared by all, each of us has a part to play.

The Methodist Church has commissioned the production of a Safeguarding Booklet ¹ to advise Churches how to implement the requirements of Safeguarding. Most of the contents of this document are derived from that booklet.

The procedures are defined in such a way that individual tasks can be performed by any office holder. Since the work can be shared, it should be shared.

Since the process is easy to understand, it is a simple matter for Church Council members to verify that it is being properly implemented. Such a review should be carried out annually.

If changes to the procedures prove to be necessary, then a Safeguarding Working Group should be appointed to revise this document.

2 Guidance

2.1 Safe Practice

As far as possible, an adult should not be left alone with a child or young person where there is little or no likelihood of the activity being observed by others. Groups can work within the same room or in an adjoining room with the door left open.

No worker or pastoral visitor should meet a child or young person off Church premises without a parent or other adult being present.

There should always be at least two adults present with a group, particularly when it is the only activity taking place on Church premises.

Supervision should always be provided for young children entering and leaving the premises when it is dark.

Where children or young people have to be transported by car or minibus, there should be more than one passenger in the vehicle. Where this is not possible, the passenger should sit in a rear seat.

Other examples of safer practice include:

- Allowing others to see into the room (keep doors open, leave curtains open)
- Linking a Church steward with each activity for children and young people.
- Invite parents or Church members on a rota to 'sit in' on the activity, make the drinks, or staff the snack bar.
- Bar access to unwanted visitors
- Have other (appropriate) groups meet on the premises at the same time
- Encourage parents to deliver and collect their children

2.2 Recognising Abuse

The four main areas of abuse, physical, sexual, emotional and neglect, may come to the notice of a person in a number of different ways:

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

2.2.1 Disclosure by the child

If a child or young person wants to talk about abuse:

Listen, do not question, never push for information Accept what the child or young person says, keeping calm and looking at them directly Reassure the child or young person that they are right to tell you and that you take them seriously Even when a child or young person has broken a rule, they are not to blame

Be aware that the child or young person may have been threatened

Let them know that you need to tell someone else, do not promise confidentiality

Let the child or young person know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.

Make notes as soon as is reasonably practicable, writing down exactly what was said, where possible using the child's own words. Record dates and times of the events, when you were told about them and when you made the record. Sign your notes. Always keep a copy for yourself.

Remember that you are not the investigating agency and that the child or young person may need to talk later to a specialist. Any probing may interfere with further investigations and make the child or young person repeat painful information.

Helpful things to say are:

I believe you.....I am glad you told me.....It is OK to tell.....You are brave to tell.
What happened was wrong..... I am sorry that it happened..... It is not your fault. I will try to help

Try to avoid words such as:

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

Never make false promises.

2.2.2 Information

If another person wants to give you information about alleged abuse:

- Listen rather than question
- Accept what the person says and keep calm
- Ask them to make a note of what they were told or observed
- Reassure the person that they are right to tell you
- Let them know that you need to tell someone else, do not promise confidentiality
- Let the person know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens
- Make notes as soon as is reasonably practicable, writing down exactly what was said, where possible using the person's own words. Record dates and times of the events, when you were told about them and when you made the record. Sign your notes and keep a copy for yourself.

2.2.3 Observation

Some children and young people may display one or more of the following signs. There may be an innocent explanation but the signs can also be the key to identifying potential abuse.

- Bruising, cuts or burns on the child, particularly if these are on parts of the body not normally injured in accidents
- Changes in behaviour such as the 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
- the child is kept away from social activities and has few friends
- Lack of attachment or lack of trust towards parents and other family members
- Having strange secrets, telling untruths
- Persistent self comforting behaviour such as rocking

2.2.4 Taking Action

If you suspect abuse:

- Do not delay
- Consult with the person to whom you are responsible for work with children and young people or with another appropriate person e.g. the minister in pastoral charge.

- the responsible person will contact the statutory services responsible for child protection in your area (Social Services, NSPCC or police)
- Advise the superintendent minister of your action.

Such action, even if it later proves to have been mistaken or unnecessary, is justifiable if based on concern for a child.

3 Appointments

3.1 Standing Orders

Clause (2) of Standing Order 01 of the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church ² includes the sub-clauses:-

(i) no person who has been convicted of or has received a formal caution from the police concerning an offence mentioned in the First Schedule to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 shall undertake work with children and young persons in the life and work of the Church.

(ii) no person who has been convicted of, or has received a formal caution from the police concerning sexual offences against children shall be appointed to any office, post, or responsibility or engaged under any contract to which this sub-clause applies unless authority for the appointment or employment has been obtained under clause (5) below.

Clause (5) of the Standing Order identifies ways in which we can deal with the situation if someone cannot meet the requirements of sub-clause (ii).

3.2 Formal Disclosures

The Safeguarding Booklet ¹ contains detailed advice to Churches on how to implement these Standing Orders. There are also statutory obligations. Checks must be carried out on all workers with young children. These checks are described as Disclosures. The Churches Agency for Safeguarding (CAS) has been set up to liaise with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) to deal with Disclosures.

A full list of those people who are required to complete documentation and apply for a Disclosure is contained on page 26 of the Safeguarding Booklet. The list includes:

- Junior Church workers and Sunday School teachers
- Workers with children and young people (e.g. After-school clubs, Shell clubs, youth groups)
- Leaders of church-run music, dance and drama groups which include children and young people.
- JMA secretaries

- Workers with families
- Leaders and workers in church-run pre-school groups (in certain situations this may be handled by Ofsted.)
- PottersWood Safeguarding Officer (if appointed)
- regular helpers in work with children and young people.
- leaders and helpers in Parents and Toddlers groups, if the children are gathered in a group separately from their parents.

The process of obtaining a Disclosure is defined on pages 15 to 18 of the Safeguarding Booklet.

Technically, a Disclosure is only valid on the day it is issued, and will be out of date from that moment. It is for this reason that continued safe practice is essential.

A new disclosure should be obtained every five years in a continuing post. When a new Disclosure is obtained, the old Disclosure becomes obsolete.

It may be that a person already has obtained a Disclosure for a different post. Information on how to deal with this situation is contained on page 13 of the Safeguarding Booklet.

Persons listed in section 3.3 may request or require a CRB check.

3.3 Officeholder Register

Anyone who holds an office, duty, or responsibility needs to complete a simple declaration that they have understood the need for them to comply with and have read and understood this document. Those involved are:

Anyone who has lone access to Church premises. e.g. keyholders, cleaners on the premises when children are not there.

Those who have face to face contact with children and young people without the presence of another adult. e.g. Church secretaries.

Those who carry out duties off church premises in which the person may be seen as a representative of the Church, e.g. Minibus driver, ecumenical representative.

Members of the Church Council,

Worship leaders,

Organists, pianists and choir leaders,

Pastoral visitors and class leaders, and Communion stewards.

This requirement is achieved by maintaining a Register of Officeholders. This is an adaptation of form C of the Safeguarding Booklet. A blank page of this register is attached to the end of this document.

Each person who takes up a particular office should complete a record in this register before assuming his or her duties.

When a person ceases to hold a particular office, the end date should be recorded.

Such a register provides a readily-available list of people who are eligible to hold a key. It can be referred to whenever a key is issued, or whenever an audit is carried out.

It provides a useful reference to Church members as to who is doing what at any particular time. It also provides a reference as to who did what in the past, and can eventually be stored in the archives.

4 Use of the Premises

4.1 Keys

All keys to the external doors of the premises are such that two signatures are required before a key can be cut. Those who authorise the cutting of keys are appointed by the Church council.

Every key is identified with a unique number.

Two special-purpose keys are available; one for use by anyone who hires or uses the hall for a special event, and one for use by a contractor who needs access to the premises to carry out contract work.

4.2 Notice Boards

Notice boards are available for safeguarding notices such as the phone number of the NSPCC Child Protection helpline, and the name and phone number of the Circuit Safeguarding Officer.

4.3 Hire of Premises

Apart from the use of the hall as a polling station, any person who uses or hires the premises for regular or occasional use should be asked to sign the Safeguarding Users Declaration form before permission is granted.

A blank copy of the Safeguarding Users Declaration form is attached to this document.

The back hall of the Church is regularly hired for use as a polling station by South Gloucestershire Council. It is fair to assume that this Council is a responsible body and that the Returning Officer is a responsible person who is well aware of the Safeguarding Regulations. A simple statement to this effect could be included in the contract of hire.

4.4 Key Register

A blank page of this register is attached to this document.

Everyone who is issued with a Church key should sign the Key Register.

Anyone who has signed the Officeholder Register may hold a key on a long-term basis.

If there is an agreement to hire the premises on a regular basis, and the Safeguarding Users Declaration form has been completed, then the signatory may hold a key on a long-term basis. This form is an adaptation of form E of the Safeguarding Booklet.

A key may be held on a short-term basis; e.g. by a person who hires the hall for a single event, or by a contractor who needs access to the premises to carry out contractual work

The person issuing the key should initial the appropriate record in the Key Register, to authorise the loan of that key.

If a new key is cut, then a new page should be added to the register. If the key is not immediately issued, then the person who organised the production of the key should record his or her name in the register. The new key should be stored in a secure location in the Church.

When a key is returned, and not immediately reissued, the person accepting the key should add an entry to the register, and should return the key to the secure location.

A long-term keyholder may lend a key to a Church member, provided the purpose of the loan is clearly defined, and the loan is for a period of less than 24 hours. The keyholder remains responsible for the way the key is used.

If a key is lost, then the relevant page of the register should record that fact. This page should remain in the register. The key identification number should not be reused. The Church Council should decide whether or not to replace the lock.

The Key Register provides a useful reference to Church members as to who is holding a particular key at any particular time. It also provides information as to who held what key in the past, and can eventually be stored in the archives.

References

1 Safeguarding - good practice in the care of children and young people. 2003.
Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR.
www.methodistchurch.org.uk

2 The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church. Volume 2. 2006
Methodist Publishing House, 4 John Wesley Road, Warrington. Peterborough
www.mph.org.uk