

## **St Paul's Methodist Church**

### **Policy on the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults**

**St Paul's Methodist Church** welcomes and seeks to follow the guidance set out in the Methodist Church document 'Safe from Harm'.

We believe that everyone has the right to lives free from abuse and recognise our responsibility to do everything in our power to safeguard those using our premises and to support anyone who gives us cause for concern.

The church will display up-to-date posters from organisations, which adults or children may contact if they have cause (e.g. Childline).

People who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults may become concerned if they have knowledge of possible harm to one of the above. They could become aware of this in a variety of ways, which may include:

- The sharing of a confidence
- Observation of a child/adult having sustained injuries where there is a concern about the explanation or the frequency of the injuries.
- Witnessing inappropriate interaction between parents, or any other adult, and a young person.
- Someone showing unusual emotional distress.

All the previous should be taken seriously and the member should refer their concerns to an appropriate contact, such as the minister, Circuit or District Safeguarding Officer. Other contacts who will discuss your concerns and provide appropriate advice are the Local Social Services or the NSPCC Helpline. Any concerns about the safety of a person should be referred on to the appropriate Authorities, which will decide what action, if any, needs to be taken.

### **What is significant harm?**

Some people are in need because they are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of the young person. The local authority is under a duty to make enquiries, or cause enquiries to be made, where it has reasonable cause to suspect that a young person or vulnerable adult is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm (s47 of the Children Act 1989).

### **What is abuse and neglect?**

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment – a person may abuse or neglect a young person or vulnerable adult by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Young people or vulnerable adults may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

- Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a person. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of,

or deliberately induces, illness in a young person.

- Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a person such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the person's emotional development. It may involve conveying to people that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on the person. These may include interactions that are beyond the person's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the person from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing people frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of people. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a person, though it may occur alone.

- Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving people in looking at, or in the production of, sexual on-line images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

- Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the person's health or development. Neglect may involve a parent or Carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a person from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a person's basic emotional needs.

### **Minimising the risk of abuse**

We are committed to practices which will minimise the likelihood of any children, young people or vulnerable adults using our premises being abused and will also protect adults from false accusations.

### **Groups managed by the church**

All groups will have a minimum of two adults (i.e. people over 18) present during meetings and outings. An adult should not be left alone with a group containing people under 16.

Adults may need to assist young children with using the toilet and with other care such as first aid or helping with dressing. This will be cleared with parents when a child first joins the group via consent forms.

Young people may seek to hold an adult's hand and offer them a hug. Accepting this contact within a group does not compromise the adults concerned.

Children in King's Kids and other groups will be expected to behave in a polite and orderly way and to treat one another with respect. Adults will use a positive approach to reinforce their expectations. Any sanctions will be used calmly and fairly and adults will discuss any ongoing concerns with the child's parents. Physical punishment will never be used.

### **Registration and training**

The Minister holds a register of adults approved to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults within church activities. Group leaders will check with the minister before a new adult is involved with a group.

Adults who wish to begin working with children or vulnerable adults in church activities will complete an enhanced disclosure form and complete 'Creating a Safer Space' Safeguarding training. Only after clearance has been received from The Churches' Agency for Safeguarding, may that person take up their post.

All adults working with children or vulnerable adults in church activities will familiarise themselves with this policy document.

All adults working with children and vulnerable adults must attend training in safeguarding at an awareness level.

### **Complaints**

If a child, young person, person or other adult expresses concern or makes a complaint against an adult working within a church group, the following steps will be taken:

1. The adult to whom the complaint or concern is expressed will refer the matter to the group leader and the Minister.
2. If the group leader and Minister agree that there is cause for concern they will agree the appropriate action and speak to the adult concerned. The Minister will record the complaint and the record will be held in the Minister's safe.
3. If a serious concern is raised then the Minister will seek advice from the Circuit and District Safeguarding Officers and/or the Social Services Protection Team or refer the matter to the Police.

If a child, young person, vulnerable adult or parent makes a direct approach to Social Services or the Police with their complaint, the Minister and Church will co-operate fully with the agencies concerned.

The group leader and Minister will keep any complaints or concerns entirely confidential.

### **Groups using our premises**

Before accepting an ongoing booking for any organisation working with children, young people or vulnerable adults, a representative of the church will discuss their policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding. Most will have a policy developed through their umbrella organisation (e.g. Scouts). A copy of each group's Safe from Harm policy should be lodged with the Church's copy of the booking contract.

If the church representative (i.e. the Booking Secretary) has concerns about the arrangements for safeguarding children or vulnerable adults (e.g. levels of supervision, policies for responding to complaints) then the booking will not be accepted.

### **Concerns or disclosures**

Where a child or vulnerable adult discloses abuse to an adult or where behaviour, comments or general well-being causes concern the following steps should be followed:

1. If a child or vulnerable adult has made a direct disclosure of abuse, the adult should remain calm and express their support. They should not ask leading questions or say anything else which may prejudice a future enquiry.  
**Do not** get the child/adult to tell you their story.
2. The adult concerned will consult the Minister and the leader who has been trained in safeguarding.
3. The Minister will seek advice from the Circuit, District, Social Services team or the Police.

All parties will maintain absolute confidentiality.

The Minister and group leader will offer support to the adult reporting their concerns.

### **Accidents and incidents on Church premises**

Group leaders are responsible for contacting parents or Carers in the event of injury, for ensuring that any injured persons have appropriate first aid and/or are taken to hospital and arrangements are made to supervise the rest of the group while an accident is dealt with. They are also responsible for alerting the church to the incident by completing the accident book and if necessary contacting the minister or a steward directly.

The Church maintains a first aid box and an accident and incident book in which to record any accidents on the premises and any 'near misses', which could have resulted in injury. These are located in the old kitchen. The Minister will check and countersign the book each month.

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