

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy for Four Oaks Methodist Church

This policy was agreed at a Church Council held on 22 November 2023

The Methodist Church, along with the whole Christian community, believes each person has a value and dignity which comes directly from God's creation 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.

Four Oaks Methodist Church 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.

Four Oaks Methodist Church recognises that it has a particular care for all who are vulnerable whether by disabilities or by reduction in capacities or by their situation. It is recognised 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. It is intended to support the Church in being a safe supportive and caring community for children, young people, vulnerable adults, for survivors of abuse, for communities and for those affected by abuse.

Four Oaks Methodist Church fully agrees with the statement reiterated in *Creating Safer Space 2007*:

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.

Four Oaks Methodist Church recognises the serious issue of the abuse of children and vulnerable adults and recognises 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). It acknowledges the effects these may have on people and their development, including spiritual and religious development. It accepts its responsibility for 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 promotion of welfare so that each of us can reach our full potential in God's grace.

Four Oaks Methodist Church commits itself to:

1. **RESPOND** without delay to any allegation or cause for concern that a child 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 Connexional Safeguarding Policy, government legislation and guidance, and safe practice in the circuit and in the churches.

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

Church Council Four Oaks Methodist Church:

It is the responsibility of each Church Council to appoint a Church Safeguarding Officer (SGO) and there should be no gaps in this crucial provision. It is not appropriate for the minister to fill any gap, because of the potential conflict of roles. The role will usually be undertaken on a voluntary basis although expenses should be met. Church Council Appoints Anne Thompson as church Safeguarding Officer (children and vulnerable adults) and supports her in her role, which is to:

- i) support and advise the minister and the stewards in fulfilling their roles
 - ii) provide a point of reference to advise on safeguarding issues
 - iii) liaise with circuit and district safeguarding officers
 - iv) promote safeguarding best practice within the local church with the support of circuit ministers
 - v) assist the Minister in keeping records of all incidents/concerns according to Methodist policy and practice (see *Safeguarding Records: Joint Practice Guidance for the Church of England and the Methodist Church* - Updated Jan 2015).
 - vi) be aware of all safeguarding training which is required is undertaken by those in post and keep appropriate records which can be made available.
 - vii) attend training and meetings organised to support the role
 - viii) oversee safeguarding throughout the whole life of the church (eg lettings, groups, property etc)
 - ix) report to the Church Council
 - x) assist the church in completing a regular audit/monitoring on safeguarding confirming that policies are in place for the church and all groups and lettings in the church and that these have been annually reviewed
 - xi) help the church to recruit safely for all posts
 - xii) maintain the church safeguarding noticeboard with a copy of the current safeguarding policy, contact numbers for local and national helplines and other suitable information.
- a) Purpose** The purposes of this safeguarding policy are 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* (2020).

b) 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) The church premises will be assessed by the caretaker or other appointed person at least annually for safety for children and vulnerable adults and the risk assessment report will be given annually to the Church Council in written form. This will include fire safety procedures. The Church Council will consider the extent to which the premises and equipment are suitable or should be made more suitable.
- iv) Where suitable, church-organised transport of children or vulnerable adults may be outsourced to a local taxi company – people may make their own arrangements with friends. See appendix for guidelines of church-organised transport. These must be adhered to.
- 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.

These things are to safeguard those working with children, young people and those adults who may be vulnerable.

c) Appointment and training of workers Workers will be appointed after a satisfactory DBS disclosure and following safer recruitment procedures of the Methodist Church. Each worker will have an identified supervisor. Each worker will be expected to undergo basic safeguarding training, within the first 6 months (agreed by Methodist Conference in 2011 -*Creating Safer Space Report*) of appointment. The other training needs of each worker will be considered (eg food hygiene, first aid, lifting and handling, etc).

d) Pastoral visitors In terms of safeguarding, pastoral visitors will be supported in their role with the provision of basic safeguarding training.

e) Guidelines for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults A leaflet outlining good practice and systems is available to everyone who works with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

f) Ecumenical events Where ecumenical events happen on church premises, safeguarding is the responsibility of this Church Council.

g) Events with church groups off the premises Adequate staffing, a risk assessment and notification of the event to be given to the church SGO PRIOR to the agreement for any event or off site activity. Notification of the event will be given to the church council secretary, (as appointed). If the activity is unusual or considered to be high risk the church SGO will contact the

circuit SGO in order that it can be ratified or any queries raised.

- h) Other groups on church premises** Where the building is hired for outside use, the person signing the letting agreement (www.tmcg.org.uk/property/letting-property-and-third-party-use) will be given a copy this policy. The Centre Manager will consider the various users of the building in making lettings.
- i) Fundraising** The church will be mindful and sensitive about safeguarding vulnerable adults with regard to fundraising. We will always remain vigilant towards avoiding potential emotional, mental or financial harm.
- j) Complaints procedure** It is hoped that complaints can generally be dealt with internally by the organisation. However, if the complaint is of a safeguarding nature, relating to possible abuse of children or vulnerable adults, then it is very important that your district safeguarding officer is consulted as statutory services may need to be informed. A complaint should be addressed to the superintendent minister, the Revd. Nick Jones. If a complaint is made to another person it should be referred to him. Meetings will be arranged with the person making the complaint and, usually, the person against whom the complaint has been made, in an attempt to resolve it. If the complaint is against the superintendent, it should be sent to the District Chair, the Revd. Novette Headley: office@birminghammethodist.org.uk
- k) Review** This policy will be reviewed annually by the Church Council
- l) Key concepts and definitions**

- i) A child is anyone who has not yet reached their eighteenth 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 or illness or traumatic circumstances, may not be able to take care or protect themselves.
- iii) Safeguarding and protecting children 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, by an adult or by a child. It may be an infliction of harm or a failure to prevent harm.

Dated Signed.....Secretary of Church Council

Date for Review November 2023

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