

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy for West Street Church, Somerton

This policy was agreed at a Congregational Meeting held on 18th October 2018

West Street 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.

West Street 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.

West Street 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.

West Street Church fully agrees with the statement reiterated in *Creating Safer Space 2007*:

As the people of West Street 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.

West Street 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.

West Street 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 Safeguarding Policy; government legislation and guidance and safe practice in the URC group, Methodist 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 also acknowledge the shared responsibility of all of us for safeguarding vulnerable adults who are on our premises.

West Street Church appoints Pam Dixon as church Safeguarding Officer (Adults) and as church Safeguarding Officer (Children) 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 URC Mid Somerset Group, URC SW Synod, Methodist circuit and district safeguarding officers
- iv) promote safeguarding best practice within the local church with the support of the ministry team
- v) ensure proper records are kept 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) ensure that all safeguarding training which is required is undertaken by those in post and appropriate records kept and 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 Congregational Meeting annually
- x) ensure the church completes a yearly 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) ensure the church completes a risk assessment on each area of activity in the church; that this is stored and reviewed at least annually, and that it is readily available on request
- xii) ensure that the church recruits safely for all posts
- xiii) ensure that the church has a safeguarding noticeboard with a copy of the current, signed 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* (2017).

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 church safeguarding officer with the property steward and/or their representatives at least annually for safety for children and vulnerable adults and the risk assessment report will be given annually to the Congregational Meeting in written form. This will include fire safety procedures. The

Congregational Meeting will consider the extent to which the premises and equipment are suitable or should be made more suitable.

- iv. Any church-organised transport of children or vulnerable adults will be checked to ensure the vehicle is suitable and insured and that the driver and escort are appropriate. An agreed record to be kept in the church file for each driver/car.
- v. Promotion of safeguarding is recognised to include undertaking those tasks which enable all God's people to reach their full potential. The Congregational Meeting 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 who will meet at regular intervals with the worker. A record of these meetings will be agreed and signed and the record kept. 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 upon appointment.

e) Guidelines for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults

A leaflet outlining good practice and systems will be produced and given to everyone who works with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This leaflet will be reviewed annually. The Congregational meeting may produce its own material or use appropriate connexional leaflets (eg the *Quick Reference Guide or Code of Safer Working Practice*).

f) Ecumenical events

Where ecumenical events happen on church premises, safeguarding is the responsibility of this Congregational Meeting.

g) Events with church groups off the premises

Adequate staffing, a risk assessment and notification of the event to be given to the church safeguarding officer PRIOR to the agreement for any event or off site activity. Notification of the event will be given to the church secretary, Pam Dixon. If the activity is unusual or considered to be high risk the church safeguarding officer will contact the circuit safeguarding officer 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 will be given a copy of the church safeguarding policy and the appropriate leaflet². The lettings secretary will consider the various users of the building in making lettings. All lettings will be notified to the church safeguarding officer who will keep the records and take advice as appropriate from both the District Safeguarding Officer and Circuit Safeguarding Officer.

i) 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 DSO is consulted as statutory services may need to be informed. A complaint may be made to a person who will be appointed by the Congregational Meeting and who is currently Pam Dixon. If a complaint is made to another person, it should be passed to Rev Craig Manley or Rev Tim Richards who will arrange to meet with the complainant and attempt to resolve the complaint. If the complaint is regarding this person or a member of their family it will be referred to one of the ministers.

If the complaint relates to the minister it will be referred to the superintendent minister. If the complaint cannot be resolved, consideration will be given to invoking the complaints system of the Methodist Church which will involve initially speaking with the local complaints officer, who is Rev Tina Swire who is the superintendent minister or to Rev Ruth Whitehead, who is URC SW Synod Moderator.

j) Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Congregational Meeting. The date of the next review is October 2019.

k) 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.
- lii) 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.

SignedDated
Chair of Congregational Meeting

² Such as the code of safer working practice leaflet in the appendices or the quick reference guide <https://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk/books/pe750-sg-16/safeguarding>.