

**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY
CENTRAL CHURCH, TORQUAY**

Statement of Safeguarding Principles

It is the Methodist Church's intention to value every human being as part of God's creation and the whole people of God. At the heart of the Methodist community is a deep sense of the place of welcome, hospitality and openness, which demonstrates the nature of God's grace and love for all.

Our church communities are called to be places where the transformational love of God is embodied and life in all its fullness is a gift, which is offered to all people.

Principles

Safeguarding is about the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture. This means we will:

- **promote** the welfare of children, young people and adults
- work to **prevent** abuse from occurring
- seek to **protect** and respond well to those that have been abused.

We are committed to:

- the care and nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and adults
- safeguarding and protecting all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable
- establishing safe, caring communities, which provide a loving environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse.

We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the church, in line with safer recruitment principles, including the use of criminal records checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

We will respond without delay to every safeguarding concern, which suggests that a child, young person or adult may have been harmed, working in partnership with the police and social services in any investigation.

We will seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care.

We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.

Working with the Church Safeguarding Officer, we will support risk assessment of those who present a safeguarding risk within a church environment. We will ensure appropriate pastoral care is offered and measures are taken to address identified risks including referral to statutory agencies, suspension and the use of safeguarding contracts.

In all these principles, we will follow legislation, guidance and recognised good practice.

A Model Church Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy for Central Church

This policy was agreed at a Church Council held on 5 December 2024.

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.

Central 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.

Central Church recognises that it has a particular care for all who are vulnerable whether as a result of disabilities or 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 our wish 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 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.

Central 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, child sexual exploitation 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 promotion of welfare so that each of us can reach our full potential in God's grace.

Central 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 or may suffer harm, 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. **IMPLEMENT** the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, government legislation and guidance and safe practice in the circuit and in the churches.
3. **PROVIDE** support, advice and training for lay and ordained people to ensure that 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 children *and* vulnerable adults who are on our premises.

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Church Council

Legal responsibility for safeguarding rests with the members of the Church Council. The safeguarding officer should be a member of the Church Council or have the right to attend at least annually to report on implementation of the safeguarding policy. Where an individual covers the role in more than one location, they must be able to cover the activities identified in the relevant role outline and be facilitated to attend meetings to report on safeguarding in each location.¹

Central Church appoints: Susan Norman, Church Safeguarding Officer (Adults)

and Susan Norman, Church Safeguarding Officer (Children)

and supports them in their role, which is to:

- provide support and advice to the minister and the stewards in fulfilling their roles with regard to safeguarding.
 - ensure that a suitable, signed church safeguarding policy is available at all times in the church, along with names of current safeguarding officers, national helplines and other suitable information. This must be renewed annually.
 - record all safeguarding issues that are reported to the church safeguarding officer, according to Methodist safeguarding policy.
 - promote appropriate routes for reporting of concerns
 - identify and inform those who are required to attend safeguarding training and maintain records of attendance. Work with the Circuit Safeguarding Officer and District Safeguarding Officer to arrange training.
 - attend training and meetings relating to the role
 - work in partnership with others including stewards and user groups to promote good safeguarding practice on church premises. This may include gaining written confirmation that hirers of church premises are aware of the church safeguarding policy or are using an appropriate policy of their own.
 - check that safeguarding is included as an agenda item at all Church Council meetings and report to the Church Council annually.
 - inform all those with responsibility for recruitment, whether paid or voluntary, of their obligation to follow safer recruitment procedures.
- a) advise the Circuit Safeguarding Officer and/or District Safeguarding Officer of any issues with compliance with safeguarding training, policy or safer recruitment requirements and respond promptly to any request from them about audit of safeguarding activities.

¹ *It is not appropriate for the minister in pastoral charge to hold the Church Safeguarding Officer role because of the potential conflict with their own responsibilities.*

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b) Purpose

The purpose of the church safeguarding policy is to check that procedures are in place and provide clarity about the roles and responsibilities of those trusted with promoting the church as a safe space for all its users.

c) 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 record 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 a written risk assessment 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 or should be made more suitable.
- iv) Any church-organised transport of children or vulnerable adults will be checked to ensure that the vehicle is suitable and insured and that the driver and escort (where required) are appropriate. A record should be kept in the church file for each driver/car.
- v) Activity risk assessments will be undertaken before any activity takes place to minimise the risk of harm to those involved. Approval will be obtained from the event leader/minister. A written record of the assessment will be retained securely.
- vi) 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.

d) Appointment and training of workers in the church

Workers will be appointed after a satisfactory DBS check and following the 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 safeguarding training, within the first 6 months of appointment. The other training needs of each worker will be considered (such as food hygiene, first aid and lifting and handling).

e) Pastoral visitors

Pastoral visitors will be supported in their role with the provision of safeguarding training upon appointment. If they are undertaking tasks for which a criminal records check would be required, this will be undertaken prior to appointment.

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

A leaflet outlining good practice and systems should be given to everyone who works with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This leaflet should be reviewed annually.

g) Ecumenical events

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

h) Events with church groups off the premises

Adequate staffing, a risk assessment and notification of the event will 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 council secretary: Mrs Margaret Newman

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.

i) Other groups on church premises

Where the building is hired for outside use, the Church Safeguarding Officer should be informed. The Church Safeguarding Officer will keep the records and take advice as appropriate from the Circuit Safeguarding Officer. Where the building is hired for outside use, the person signing the letting agreement (which should include Safeguarding Form E), will be given a copy of this policy and the leaflet. The lettings Officer will consider the various users of the building in making lettings.

j) Complaints procedure

There is a formal complaints procedure within the Methodist Church, which allows concerns to be raised about actions or behaviour by a member or officer of the Church. In addition, employed staff will be subject to relevant contractual procedures. All complaints will be responded to with care, diligence and impartiality.

A complaint should be addressed to the superintendent minister, the Revd. Jeff Short. If a complaint is made to another person it should be referred to them. 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 Daniel R Haylett, 18 Velwell Road, Exeter EX4 4LE.

Safeguarding officers must be informed of any complaint or issue relating to the potential abuse of children or adults who may be vulnerable. They will support prompt action to respond to the circumstances of any safeguarding concern, whether or not any party involved wishes to make a formal complaint through the Methodist Church.

κ) COVID-19

Where and when appropriate, the Church will follow the legal requirements and guidelines in force from the Government at the time of each session and when advised will ensure that all persons adhere to the restrictions.

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Review:

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Church Council

Next Review date: November 2026

l) Key concepts and definitions

i) A child is anyone who has not yet reached their eighteenth birthday

ii) Vulnerable adults: any adult aged 18 or over who, owing to disability, mental function, age or or traumatic circumstances, may not be able to take care or protect themselves

iii) Safeguarding: 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 act 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, a community or 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.

Signed:  Chair of Church Council

Dated: 20 November 2025

Minister: **Rev Jeff Short**
29 Oak Park Avenue, Torquay TQ2 7DB
Telephone: 01803 392986
email: supermin@torbay.methodistcircuit.org

Safeguarding Representative: **Mrs Susan Norman**
c/o Central Church, Tor Hill Road, Torquay TQ2 5RF
email: centralsafeguarding@outlook.com

Secretary: **Mrs Margaret Newman**
c/o Central Church, Tor Hill Road, Torquay TQ2 5RF

Methodist District Safeguarding Officers: **Chrissie Slaney**, email: safeguarding@pemd.or.uk
Work mobile 07794 133797
Working hours Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 8.30a.m. – 4.30p

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Appendix A Good Working Practice

- a) Guidelines to protect you
- i) You must never be by yourself with one child, outside of the constant view of another worker
 - ii) You must never run a group by yourself. Always arrange for another worker to attend, even if it is just to be present
 - iii) Where possible seek to have male and female workers at each group, if the group is a mixed gender group. (Single sex groups can be supervised by leaders of the same sex only). Partners (married or otherwise) cannot jointly supervise a group, without a third worker being in attendance.
 - iv) Always be open and communicate with other workers
 - v) Children should always be under Constant supervision
 - vi) Do not dismiss verbal or non verbal signs of abuse (see section c), but take prompt action (see section 6e)
 - vii) You should keep a detailed record of any accident, however small, which occurs. Accident forms will be available for your use
 - viii) FOR JUNIOR CHURCH AND CRECHE ONLY. With reference to a(ii) Junior Church teachers or equivalent are able to run their groups alone, providing that:
 - there is a helper who is moving among all the classes at regular intervals and
 - the doors to their rooms are always left open
- b) Finding out about abuse
- There are three main ways that abuse could come to your attention. They are:
- i) **Disclosure** by the child
 - ii) **Information** from a third party (eg friend, family member)
 - iii) **Observation** of unexplained injury or changes in behaviour
- c) Recognising abuse (observation)
- The indications and signs given below are the common signs of the different forms of abuse. They are by no means the only signs - all can be expanded upon. Obviously if a child is displaying any of the characteristics described, it does not automatically mean abuse.
- i) **Physical abuse** – The first indication of physical abuse is not necessarily the presence of serious injury. Initial concerns should be aroused by bruises and/or marks which do not appear in the ‘common’ bruising areas of a child’s body. Lots of and frequent bruising should also raise suspicion.
 - ii) **Emotional abuse** – This is a possibility if the child cannot interact with others or cannot be part of a group. Not accepting boundaries and persistent bad behaviour can also be attributed to it.
 - iii) **Sexual abuse** – This can be discovered by disclosure, but is more often suspected a result of a child’s behaviour and physical signs.
 - iv) **Neglect** – Evidence of neglect is usually cumulative but it can be identified by the conditions a child lives in or arrives at, your group.
- d) Responding to an allegation of abuse
- i) Listen. **Never** question, **never** interrupt and **never** push for information. let the child tell you in their own words and in their own time.
 - ii) Accept what the child is saying. never belittle it, or argue with them about it.
 - iii) Keep calm and keep eye contact
 - iv) Assure the child that you believe them and that they are right to tell you
 - v) Never suggest that they don’t tell anybody else

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- vi) Never promise confidentiality. Let them know that you need to tell somebody else who can help them
- vii) Never give the child your views on the incident or the accused person as this could influence the child.
- viii) Tell them what you will do now and that you will let them know what happens
- ix) Make careful notes as soon as is reasonably practical. Write down exactly what the child said (where possible using the child's own words but never your interpretation) and what you said. Include dates and times of the incident(s). Note down when you were told (date and time) about it/them, and when you made the notes. Always date and sign the notes.
- x) If the allegation has come to you by way of 'information' you should ask that person to make a written note of what they were told or what they observed. Ask them to sign and date their notes.

** Please remember that you are not an investigator and that the child may need to speak at a later date to a specialist. Any probing may interfere with further investigations and may make the child repeat painful information**

- e) Taking action
If you suspect abuse:
 - i) Do not delay
 - ii) Do not discuss the matter with any other worker but advise the Safeguarding Officer or the Minister as soon as is practically possible. They will discuss the matter with you, and decide upon the best action to take. You will be kept fully advised of any developments.
 - iii) Pass a copy of your notes (if appropriate) to the person whom you advise
- f) What if an allegation is made about a member, worker or leader of Central?
In the regrettable situation of an allegation being made, the following procedures will be applied
 - i) If the allegation refers to a member or worker of Central, they will be asked not to partake in any children's work connected to Central and return their key/s to the Minister or the Safeguarding Officer. This is for their own protection. It will ensure that they are not put into an unnecessarily vulnerable position whilst any investigations are taking place. If they are a children's worker, they will be encouraged to continue liaising with the other workers with regard to the planning and smooth running of the group.
 - ii) If the allegation refers to the Central Minister, their parent Church will take immediate charge of the situation and will advise Church Council for the course of action that will be taken and anything that Central needs to do.
 - iii) If the allegation refers to a paid worker of Central, they will be suspended from their position pending the outcome of the investigation. They will be asked to return any Central key/s to the minister or Safeguarding Officer.

Once the investigating agency has completed their enquiries into the allegation, Church Council will follow the recommendations of the investigating agency as to whether or not to reinstate the member, worker or leader at Central.

ADDENDUM – Useful Contact Details:

Torbay Council – LADO
Ivan Sullivan.
07920 247301. 01803 208541
Email: ivan.sullivan@torbay.gov.uk

Police – Working with Torbay Safeguarding Children’s Board
In emergency call 999. For information/contact 101.

Torbay Adult Social Care –
provided by Torbay and South Devon NHs Foundation Trust.
In emergency call 999
Reporting concerns of abuse to vulnerable adult or yourself, call 01803 219700.
In emergency/out of hours: call 0300 4564 876.

Torbay Children’s Services – In emergency call 999
If you are worried about a child or yourself call 01803 208100.
Out of Hours please call 0300 4564 876

NSPCC: To report concerns, call 0808 800 5000

District Safeguarding Officers:
Chrissie Slaney –
chrissie.slaney@swpmethodist.org.uk
Mob - 07794133797

David Cross –
david.cross@swpmethodist.org.uk
Mob – 07925353553

CHILDLINE:
Offers free, confidential advice and support whatever your worry, whenever you need help. Call 0800 1111