

Tavistock Methodist

Circuit

safe for us all

**Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable
Adults**

Guidelines for Churches in the Tavistock Circuit

2021

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Contacts for Advice and in an Emergency

Circuit and Church Safeguarder

Dr David Benzie (safeguarding@tmc.me.uk) 01822 616329

Ministers

Rev Dr Steve Emery-Wright (Superintendent) 01822 612840

District Safeguarding Co-ordinator

Christine Slaney 0779 413 3797

Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

0345 155 1071
(Out of hours) 0845 600 0388

Devon Adult Services

0845 155 1007
(Out of hours) 0845 600 0388

Police Child Protection Line

Dial 101

1. Related policies

Tavistock Methodist Circuit has a safeguarding policy as does each individual church in the Circuit; both are available from the Circuit Office and are based on national policies. The purpose of this document is to provide information and practical advice to inform day-to-day activity.

The Methodist Church has also published its “*Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church in Britain*”. This is an extensive document that is regularly updated; it should be taken as the most authoritative statement by the Church on safeguarding matters. The full text is available from <https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/policies-procedure-and-information/>

2. Why safeguarding?

As the people of Tavistock Methodist Circuit, we seek to safeguard everyone in our church community from any form of abuse, irrespective of age.

Experience nationally has sadly shown that churches are often targeted by those who seek to abuse and that steps need to be taken to protect not only children and young people but also vulnerable adults. Equally those convicted of abuse often turn to the church for support as they struggle with their feelings.

In addition to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, it is also important that employees and volunteers know how to guard themselves from potential danger and possible false accusations.

What forms does abuse take?

Abuse common to children, young people and vulnerable adults includes:

Physical, Emotional and Sexual abuse, Neglect, Bullying, Domestic violence, Spiritual and ritual abuse.

Children and young people can also be subject to on-line abuse and peer abuse.

Vulnerable Adults can also be subject to on-line abuse, financial & material abuse, discriminatory abuse and institutional abuse.

This list is not comprehensive. More details can be found in the “Safeguarding: Creating Safer Space Foundation Module 2020 Handbook available at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/training/foundation-module-2020-edition/training-materials-foundation-module-2020/>

3. Who needs a Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check?

These people need a DBS Check

1. All employees of the Methodist Church who have any role involving contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults. e.g. **Ministers, Family Workers**
2. Volunteers who have regular contact with children and young people (u18) in church activities. e.g. **Club leaders & helpers**
3. Volunteers who provide advice, guidance or assistance mainly for vulnerable adults. e.g. **Pastoral visitors, Prayer team**
4. **Local preachers & worship leaders**

5. **Musical directors** of choirs mainly of children

These people do NOT need a DBS Check

1. **Key holders** (though they should sign a declaration form)
2. **Those serving refreshments.** e.g. between service coffee.
3. **Organisers of activities open to the public where children are with a responsible adult.** e.g. coffee mornings
4. **Parents or Carers accompanying their own children to an activity.** e.g. Parents at a Parent and Toddler Group
5. **Contractors** on site to carry out repairs or service equipment (but they should be supervised appropriately)

I have a DBS from another organisation. Will that do?

It might, but only if it covers the same age group, and has been registered with the “Update Service” (<https://www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service>). The Update Service enables the Church to check that the DBS is still current.

In any event, you will need to check with the Circuit Safeguarder. DBS online checks are straightforward and can often be completed in less than two weeks so this is usually the easiest way forward. When a DBS check is made PLEASE make it portable (<https://www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service>) as it can make things much easier in future.

Please consult the Circuit Safeguarder for advice on DBS checks.

4. Employees and volunteers

Employees

When recruiting full-time or part-time employees the procedures of the Methodist Church outlined in the *Safe Recruiting* section of the “*Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church in Britain*” must be followed.

No employee will take up their post until references have been taken up and a satisfactory DBS for that post have been received.

Volunteers

Again, the *Safe Recruiting* section of the “*Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church in Britain*” must be followed. Volunteers should not take up work until the checks have been completed.

Important

All employees and volunteers in a Methodist Church are required to have basic training in Safeguarding through the **Creating Safer Space Foundation Module**. ALL volunteers and employees have to complete the Foundation Module and some employees will also need to complete the Advance (leadership) Module.

Please Note: No person may hold office in the Methodist Church who has been convicted of, or been officially cautioned by the Police for, a sexual offence against a child.

5. Practical safeguarding

The number of people who seek to harm children, young people and vulnerable adults is very small but we need to make sure that all organisations and people using the church premises take appropriate steps to reduce the likelihood of abuse or false accusations of abuse to the minimum.

Children and young people (*see section 5 for activities involving children under 5*)

- On church premises no adult should be left alone with a child or young person. Activities should be capable of being observed by others e.g. by leaving a door open.
- On Church premises always have at least 2 adults present with any group of children. For mixed groups there should be at least one male and one female leader.
- Off church premises no church worker should meet a child or young person without a parent or other adult present.
- Ensure another adult knows if a younger child has to be taken to the toilet.
- You should not initiate physical contact. Any necessary contact (e.g. for comfort) should be initiated by the child.
- Administer First Aid with others around.
- Never invite a child/young person to your home alone.
- Do not meet a child/young person off church premises without a parent or other adult present.
- Never take children/young people off the premises with fewer than 2 adults.
- When transporting children/young people by car or minibus arrange to have more than one passenger per vehicle. If this is not possible the remaining passenger should sit in a rear seat, parent's permission having been first obtained.
- Always obtain parental consent for any photographs or videos to be taken.
- If it is necessary to restrain a child/young person from harming her/himself or others always inform the parent. All such incidents should be recorded and the record given to the church Safeguarding representative.
- Record any incidents of concern sign & date them and share them with your group leader and /or Safeguarding rep.

Vulnerable adults

A vulnerable adult is defined as **any adult aged 18 or over who by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation is permanently or for the time being unable to take care of her or himself, or to protect her or himself from significant harm or exploitation.**

All of us may be vulnerable at some time or another. Within the church many, but not all, vulnerable adults will be elderly or those seeking support and prayer in difficult circumstances. There are also people with learning difficulties and others who may appear at a church without warning seeking help.

Exercising pastoral care

- Always respect the person you are working with.
- Be aware of the danger of dependency or emotional attachment in pastoral relationships and seek advice if you have concerns.
- Arrange to visit in pairs if possible. If not, ensure that you tell someone the time and place of your visit.
- Those exercising a prayer or healing ministry should be trained in the theology and non-intrusive practice of that ministry. Any physical contact should always be with the person's permission.
- Care should be taken when helping with physical needs. Always respect the choices of the individual and consider whether this help can be given in terms of your own safety.
- One to one pastoral meetings on church premises should be held where others can see that the meeting is taking place.
- Any gifts offered should be discussed with a supervisor or colleague to decide whether they can be accepted or not.
- Do not canvass for church donations from the vulnerable e.g. those recently bereaved.
- Keep a record of pastoral encounters.

6. Practical safeguarding - activities involving children aged under 5, including crèches

The normal guidelines for safeguarding apply to activities involving children aged under 5 but there are additional considerations.

In this section the word *carer* means the child's parent, guardian or other responsible adult who is acting *in loco parentis*. The guidelines cover situations where the carer is present in the same room with the child (eg Toddler group) as well as situations where the carer is on Church premises but is not in the same room (eg crèche).

Principles

- Circuit Churches are not registered with statutory authorities (eg Ofsted) for the provision of childcare. Children aged under 5 **must** always be accompanied by their carer when they are on Church premises.
- If Church premises are hired as a base for childcare the hirer is responsible for all safeguarding arrangements.
- The Church has clearly identified roles for those who are involved in leading, helping and contributing to activities for children aged under 5. All those who assume these roles ("Role Holders") will be subject to a DBS check. They may not start the role until their appointment has been confirmed.
- Young people under 18 may not hold an official role associated with children aged under 5. A young person may be present at activities with the agreement of the activity leader and the Church Safeguarder. A young person who is present must be supervised at all times and may not engage in any activity involving close personal contact with a child without the explicit agreement of the child's carer.

- Carers are normally expected to stay in the same room as their child. If this is not possible (eg crèche during a service) there must be an agreed way for those looking after the child to contact the parent.
- Attendance registers will be kept for all activities relating to children aged under 5. The register will include the child's name, the carer's name and the Church leaders & helpers. The register will include space for notes to be left on any incidents that occur during the session.

Practice - general

- At the start of an activity all Role Holders and carers will sign-in on the register. If the register includes space for special instructions (eg food) these must be completed.
- Role Holders will not work alone with a group of children. The following ratios of Role Holders to children apply if carers are not in the same room:

Children under 2:	1 adult to 3 children
Children aged 2:	1 adult to 4 children
Children aged 3 and over:	1 adult to 8 children

Some children may be accompanied by a carer. These children are not included when assessing the number of Role Holders that are required.

- Role Holders with responsibility for an activity are normally expected to stay in the activity space for the entire duration of the activity. If there are no carers present and a Role Holder has to leave the room due to an emergency leaving a lone Role Holder with the children the following actions should be taken as long as it is safe to do so:
 - i) The door should be left open so that activity in the room can be observed.
 - ii) If there is a known adult near-by they should be asked to come in to the room as an observer until the Role Holder returns.
 - iii) A note should be made in the register that there was a period of reduced supervision together with the reason.

If a lone Role Holder is accompanied by a carer while another Role Holder is out of the room this should simply be recorded in the register.

- If a Role Holder has to leave the room to deal with an emergency with a child they should, if at all possible, be accompanied by another Role Holder or by a carer as long as there is still a Role Holder left in the activity room.

Consistent with the dignity of the child, any emergency should be managed in view of another adult.

- Food, drinks and snacks may be provided as part of an activity. If these are to be provided it must be brought to the attention of carers when they sign the register. If carers provide food, drink or snacks they must be clearly labelled with the name of the child; it is the carer's responsibility to give these items to their child. If a child has an allergy to any food, drink or snack it is the carer's responsibility to ensure that they are not consumed by the child.
- Any medication is the sole responsibility of the child's carer.

- Any accidents that result in physical harm must be recorded in the Church accident log. If the carer is not present the carer must be informed at the earliest opportunity.
- Activities involving young children occasionally involve touch. Touch should be consistent with the following:
 - i) Touch, including a hug or a child sitting on a knee, should be in public. It should not be behind closed doors.
 - ii) Touch should be related to the child's needs, not the adult's needs.
 - iii) Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the adult.
 - iv) A child has the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in exceptional circumstances when they need medical attention.
 - v) In the first instance comfort for a distressed child should always come from their carer. If the carer is not present any comfort that is offered must be consistent with the four principles above.
- Any Role Holder or carer who has a safeguarding concern about any aspect of an activity should bring it to the attention of the Superintendent Minister or the Safeguarder at the earliest opportunity.

Practice - toileting

- Role Holders working with crèche-age children and toddlers do not change nappies or wet/soiled clothes; this is the sole responsibility of the child's carer.
- If the carer is not present in the activity room (eg crèche during Sunday service) there must be an agreed and reliable method for the Role Holder to contact the carer should there be a toileting need.
- Any help with toileting children should be provided with the knowledge and agreement of the child's parents/carers. Any agreement must be recorded in writing on the Register/Sign-in sheet.
- When taking children to the toilet, Role Holders should always consider the dignity of the child and ensure that as much privacy as possible is given.
- Children should be encouraged to use the toilet cubicle on their own.
- Role Holders should avoid doing things for the child that the child is able to do for themselves.
- If a carer prefers to assist their own child with toileting, they should advise the Role Holders of their preference at the start of the session. Role Holders should then contact the child's carer as necessary.

7. Practical advice for on-line communication

All new forms of communication provide opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in the world. They come, however, with new values. Whereas the printed word has a certain finality of declaration about it, social media is interactive, conversational and open-ended. Moreover, it happens in a public, not private, space. The Methodist Church therefore encourages the user to use social tools as a means of engaging in an interactive conversation with people of all faiths and none. As Gospel people, our conversation should be 'seasoned with salt' (*Colossians 4:6*), and these guidelines aim to help us to do so.

Principles

- Be credible. Be accurate, fair, thorough and Transparent
- Be consistent. Encourage constructive criticism and deliberation.
- Be cordial, honest and professional at all times. Be responsive. When you gain insight, share it where appropriate.
- Be integrated. Wherever possible, align online participation with other communications.
- Be a good representative of the Methodist Church. Remember that you are an ambassador for Christ, the Church and your part of it. Disclose your position as a member or officer of the Church, making it clear when speaking personally. Let *Galatians 5:22-26* guide your behaviour.
- Be respectful: respect confidentiality. Respect the views of others even where you disagree.

Practice

- You should participate online in the same way as you would with other public forums. You take responsibility for the things you do, say or write.
- Never share personal details like home address and phone numbers except with someone you know and trust, and if you decide to do so then use a private message. Be aware an address can be disclosed in many ways for example via photos or a GPS position as well as in written form.
- Always remember that participating online results in your comments being permanently available and open to being republished in other media. Once something is posted to a blog or other internet site, it should be assumed to be still available even if it is later deleted from the original site.
- Stay within the legal framework and be aware that safeguarding, libel, slander, copyright and data protection laws apply, as well as the *Constitutional Practice and Discipline (CPD) of the Methodist Church*.
- When telling a story about anyone, ask yourself “**Is this my story to tell?**”
- Be aware that this may attract media interest in you as an individual, so proceed with care whether you are participating in an official or a personal capacity. If you have any doubts, take advice, but remember that you are responsible for your online activities.

Advice for video conferencing (eg Zoom)

Video conferencing has become a new way for members of the Church to meet. The video conferencing platform Zoom is used frequently and is referred to here. The advice will be applicable to other similar services:

- All Zoom/online meetings should be password protected; the link to a meeting and the password should never be placed in an open area (eg on a Facebook page).
- Meeting links should only be shared with those who are known to the Church via email addresses that we recognise. Best practice is that the email addresses should be linked to a person whose full contact details are in *ChurchSuite* so that we can contact them if there is an issue.
- The “Waiting room” function in Zoom should always be used so that the host controls entry to the meeting.

There are additional and **important** considerations if **children** are included in a Zoom meeting:

- Children (ie anyone under 18) invited to a Zoom meeting **MUST** have a full contact record in ChurchSuite. Apart from anything, this is so that we can contact parents/carers in the event of an incident.
- We *must* have parental/carer consent to invite the child to a Zoom meeting.
- The parent/carer must be made aware of the Zoom meeting – when it is due to happen and who the leaders are. (*ChurchSuite* makes contact with parents/carers straightforward.)
- The meeting must be initiated from an @tmc.me.uk email address and not from a personal email address.
- There must be at least two adult leaders present throughout the Zoom meeting.
- Only those with a direct invite should be admitted to the meeting.
- Screen sharing should be restricted to leaders.

8. If abuse is disclosed to me what do I do?

Children and young people

If a child or young person wants to talk about abuse. (*For definitions see Section 1*)

- Listen. Do not question or push for information.
- Accept what they say, keeping calm and looking at them.
- Reassure them that they are right to tell you and that you are taking them seriously.
- Be aware that they may have been threatened.
- Let them know that you will need to tell other people. **Do NOT promise them confidentiality.**
- Let them know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens. **If you consider that the child would be in danger if they returned home you must contact your Safeguarder or minister or go directly to the Police, Social services or the Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).**
- Make notes, as soon as possible, of exactly what was said, where possible using the child's own words. Include dates and times of events, when you were told and sign and date the notes. Keep a copy for yourself. The notes should be passed to the Safeguarder.
- **Remember you are not an investigating agency. Do NOT probe further.** The child or young person may need later to talk to a specialist and further questioning by you may interfere with the investigation.
- **Only tell others who need to know.**

Vulnerable adults

Much of the above applies also to vulnerable adults. However there also has to be consideration of the **Capacity** of the adult to make a decision for themselves.

- If an adult has that capacity and there is no risk of harm to others he/she may decide whether or not a referral is made to the police or adult services.
- If an adult has capacity and there is risk of harm to others then the matter should be referred to adult services or the police.

- If an adult does **not** have capacity to make their own decisions then the matter should be referred to adult services or the police unless it is a non-urgent matter that needs a strategy to be developed at church level.
- *In all cases the minister and safeguarder should be notified in order to set up monitoring and support.*
- **Only tell others who need to know.**

Receiving information from a third party

If anyone wants to give you information about alleged abuse:

- Listen rather than question
- Accept what the person says and stay calm
- Ask them to make a note of what they have observed
- Reassure them that they are right to tell you.
- Let them know that you will need to tell other people. **Do NOT promise them confidentiality.**
- Let them know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.

Make notes, as soon as possible, of exactly what was said, where possible using the person's own words. Include dates and times of events, when you were told and sign and date the notes. Keep a copy for yourself. The notes should be passed to the Safeguarder.

9. Taking action

If I suspect abuse or it has been disclosed to me

- Act at once. Do not delay.
- Consult the person to whom you are responsible for your work with children and young people, the Minister or the Safeguarder.
- Make notes as above.
- With the help of the minister or Safeguarder contact the District Safeguarding Co-ordinator and the appropriate authorities.
- **Remember you are not the investigator.** *Do not discuss the matter with those involved or others who do not need to know.*

What happens next?

If a complaint has been made we have a duty to report it to the appropriate authorities.

- In the case of children and young people that is the Multi-agency safeguarding hub (**MASH**) or in urgent cases to the **Police Child Protection line 101**.
- In the case of vulnerable adults it is to **Devon Adult Services**.

The telephone numbers for these organisations are at the front of these guidelines.

The authorities will consider what you have told them along with any other information held. They will assess the strength of the allegation and work with the police if they suspect an offence

has been committed. They will take action where necessary to protect the child or vulnerable adult.

10. Offering support

In any church where a case of abuse occurs there will be people needing different kinds of support.

The abused person may feel a loss of safety, trust or self-esteem. They may feel guilt, anger, shame or blame. It is important they do not feel rejected by the church community and need pastoral support. Often, following a disclosure, there is insufficient evidence for criminal proceedings. Full support can then begin straight away.

The abuser may be part of the same church community as the abused. Reactions will vary from great hostility to a feeling that the abuser has been unfairly accused. There needs to be pastoral support here as well but not by the person caring for the abused person. Great care must be taken to ensure nothing is done which might interfere with the judicial process.

Others in the Church community and beyond are also affected including friends and family of both the abused and the abuser. Issues are not always clear cut. Sometimes abuse has taken place within the wider community and has repercussions in the church. District advice should be sought by the Minister.

Convicted Offenders may wish to attend a church. Anyone on the sex offenders register is required to enter into a **Safeguarding Contract** with the church which will involve limitations and monitoring in the best interests of both congregation and offender. This Contract must be drawn up in consultation with the District Safeguarding Officer.

Cont...

11. Confidentiality

Abuse of children and vulnerable adults is the one area where the normal rules of confidentiality cannot apply. **If an abused person or an abuser begins to disclose their experiences they must be warned at once that absolute confidentiality cannot be maintained - there are some secrets which must be shared.**

Dr David Benzie
September 2021

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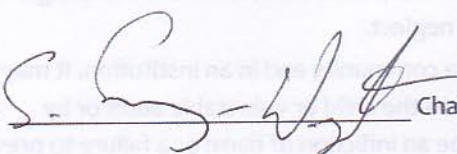
Meetings will be arranged with the person making the complaint and, usually, the person against whom the complaint has been made, in an attempt to resolve it. If the complaint is against the superintendent, it should be sent to the District Chair, the Revd. Graham Thompson.

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.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Full Church Meeting at its autumn meeting.

Dated 20th Oct 2021.

Signed  Chair of Full Church Meeting