

# Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

## St Mark's Shared Church, Bordon

This policy was agreed at the Ecumenical Church Council held on **12th September 2024**

St Mark's Shared 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.

St Mark's Shared Church is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and vulnerable adults and affirms that the needs of children or of people when they are vulnerable are paramount.

St Mark's Shared Church recognises that none of us is invulnerable but that there is a particular care for those 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 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.

St Mark's Shared 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.*

St Mark's Shared 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 issues of

promotion of welfare so that each of us can reach our full potential in God's grace.

St Mark's Shared 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, Procedures and Guidance; 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.

### **Ecumenical Church Council**

It is the responsibility of each Church Council to appoint a Church Safeguarding Officer 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.

Ultimate responsibility for safeguarding within the church lies with the Church Council.

St Mark's Shared Church appoints Emma Fyfield as Church Safeguarding Officer (for Children and Adults) and supports them in their role which is to:

- provide support and advice to the minister and the elders in fulfilling their roles with regard to safeguarding.
- ensure that a suitable, signed church safeguarding policy is displayed at all times in the church on a safeguarding noticeboard, 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 policy and practice and promote the requirement

for others to do the same.

- Identify and inform those who are required to attend safeguarding training and maintain records of attendance. Work with the circuit safeguarding officer, DSO and the Diocese to arrange training.
- attend training and meetings relating to the role.
- work in partnership with the church secretary, Elders and user groups to promote good safeguarding practice on church premises. This will 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 ECC meetings and report to the ECC at least annually.
- inform all those with responsibility for recruitment, whether paid or voluntary, of their obligation to follow safer recruitment procedures.
- advise the circuit safeguarding officer, DSO, Diocesan 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.

**a) Purpose**

The purposes of this safeguarding policy are to check 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. It is to be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church (2019).

**b) Good Practice**

We believe good practice means that:

- 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 an Elder at least annually for safety for children and vulnerable adults and a written risk assessment report will be given annually to the ECC. This will include fire safety procedures. The ECC 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 are appropriate. A record to be kept in the church file for each driver/car.
- v) Activity risk assessments will be undertaken before each activity takes place, to minimise the risk to those involved. Approval will be obtained from the event leader/minister. A signed written record of the risk assessment will be retained securely in the vestry.
- vi) Use of the internet must always be carried out following the guidelines laid down in the St Mark's Church Cyber Security Policy.
- vii) Promotion of safeguarding is recognised to include undertaking those tasks which enable all God's people to reach their full potential. The ECC 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 or Anglican Church as appropriate. 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**

Pastoral Visitors will be supported in their role with the provision of basic safeguarding training upon appointment. A DBS will also be undertaken prior to appointment.

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

An information sheet will be produced and reviewed annually to be given to each worker with children, young people and vulnerable adults outlining good practice and systems. The information sheet, 'Safeguarding Good Practice at St Marks Church', will be reviewed annually.

f) **Ecumenical events**

Where ecumenical events happen on church premises, safeguarding is the responsibility of the ECC.

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 Incumbent and the church secretary. If the activity is unusual or considered to be high risk the church safeguarding officer will contact the circuit, Diocesan or Wessex Synod 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 St Marks Hiring Agreement will be given a copy of the church safeguarding policy and the appropriate information. The church 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**

There are formal complaints procedure within the Methodist, Anglican and URC churches which allows issues 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. The provisions of Part 11 of the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church will be followed, or other denominational guidance if appropriate.

A complaint may be addressed to the Superintendent Minister (Rev. David Muskett and/or the Incumbent. If a complaint is made to another person, it should be passed to either of the above named. Meetings will be arranged with the person making the complaint and usually, the person against whom the complaint is made, in an attempt to resolve the complaint.

If the complaint is against the Superintendent or the Incumbent, then it should be sent to the District Chair (Dr Andrew de Ville) and the Archdeacon of Surrey (Ven. Paul Davies) If needed, advice should be sought from Jane Fisher (the District Safeguarding Officer) or Lynda Donaldson (the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer) or Sharon Barr (the Wessex Synod Safeguarding officer)

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.

j) **Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the ECC. The date of the next review is **September 2025**

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, owing to disability, mental function, age, illness or traumatic circumstances, may not be able to take care of 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.

Approved Chair of ECC Iain Robertson.....

This Policy has been read agreed and approved by all members of St Mark's Ecumenical Church Council on 12th September 2024