**Plymouth Methodist Central Hall**

**Safeguarding**

**Policy and Guidance Procedures**

**Policy Statement**

As the people of Plymouth Methodist Central Hall we are concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God’s purpose for their lives, the life of the community and the life of the world. We seek to safeguard all members of this church community, irrespective of whether they are Church members, adherents or visitors, and irrespective of their age. It is the responsibility of each of us to prevent the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of all people on our premises or involved in any of our activities.

**Principles**

We are committed to:

* The care and nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with all children, young people and adults
* The safeguarding and protection of children, young people and all adults who may be vulnerable

We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with safer recruitment principles, including the use of the Disclosure and Barring Scheme, registration and interviewing of all new workers who will have direct contact with young people or vulnerable adults.

We will respond without delay to every complaint made, that an adult, child or young person may have been harmed, cooperating with the police and local authority in any investigation.

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

We will challenge any abuse of power by anyone in a position of trust.

We will offer pastoral care and support, including supervision, and referral to the appropriate authorities, to any member of our church community known to have offended against a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

**To whom does this policy apply?**

It is possible to be lulled into a false sense of security believing that those who work in the church will never be guilty of abuse because they are part of the Christian community.

Of course, the church must take all possible steps to avoid contact between known abusers and those at risk. It is not; however, wise to assume that all others are automatically safe given particular circumstances, temptations and the risk of malicious accusation.

For this reason, all the procedures which are set in place and described in this booklet to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults should apply to all those working in close contact with them. This includes, for example, Ministers and those who may be in close proximity but involved in another task. This is not the same as treating each person as though they were under suspicion. It is more a matter of taking sensible measures to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults, which are then observed by everyone.

**Procedures specifically for children and young people:**

**Limiting the opportunity for abuse to occur, to a minimum**.

We believe that the number of people who seek to harm children is very small; nevertheless, we see the need to make sure that all organisations and people using the church premises take appropriate steps to reduce the likelihood of abuse occurring to an absolute minimum. With that intention the following recommendations are made:

* On Central Hall premises no adult shall be left alone with a single child or young person. Activities should be observed by others, for example, by leaving a door open.
* Off Central Hall premises no church worker should meet a child or young person without a parent or other adult being present.
* On church premises always have at least two adults present with any group of children or young people.
* Under no circumstances ever take a group of children or young people off the premises with fewer than two adults.
* Do not undertake tasks alone which might result in an accident which would require a second person to give help.
* When transporting children or young people by car or minibus arrange, as far as possible, to have more than one passenger per vehicle. Where this is not possible, the remaining passenger should sit in a rear seat, parent’s permission having first been obtained.
* Avoid working with an unknown group or individual unless someone is within calling distance.
* Encourage members of the Mission to visit the activity.
* Arrange that others can see into any room where an activity is being held, keeping doors and curtains open.
* Invite parents to sit in on activities
* Whenever possible have a number of groups in the premises at the same time.

**Providing an opportunity for children and young people, to contact an independent person if they have any concerns.**

A poster advertising the services of ‘Childline’ together with the telephone number is displayed in a prominent position on the notice board between the Main Church and the Assembly Hall. We recommend that each organisation working with children and young people makes this organisation and telephone number freely available to its members.

**Procedures regarding: visitors and contractors on church premises regarding children and young people**.

The vast majority of visitors to the premises come for genuine reasons but it is, however, not safe to assume that all are automatically safe to be with children or young people. The following procedures, therefore will apply to all visitors and contractors.

1. Adults collecting children from any organisation should be known to the leaders of that organisation and the release of the children and young people to such adults is the responsibility of those leaders.
2. Unknown visitors seeking a named individual on the premises should be escorted to that person. If the person is not on the premises the person being sought should be telephoned from the front office or public telephone, in the company of the visitor and a time of meeting arranged. The visitor should then be escorted from the premises or into a public place, e.g. the crush hall, where they are able to wait.
3. It can be beneficial to the visitor, and is part of this church's caring role, to discover sensitively if there is any more fundamental spiritual reason for him/her seeking help from the church. It is worth bearing in mind how we would wish to be treated if the roles were reversed. If it appears, from conversation, that there is a pastoral concern try to satisfy the stated need of the person and suggest that he/she may wish to contact the Minister. Inform the Minister as soon as possible.
4. Strangers seeking money, food, shelter etc. should be treated with dignity and sensitivity. Often this area of pastoral need demands particular experience, so try and refer the visitor in need to a Minister or Deacon. If they are not available at that time, try and suggest a time when it would be convenient to contact them. Try to avoid giving money to strangers. Ensure that someone is with the visitor whenever they are on our premises.

**Roles and responsibilities of all workers:**

Abuse of children and young people is most easily concealed where there is confusion amongst adults about their roles and responsibilities. Paid church employees will have job descriptions which indicate clearly their responsibilities for the protection of children and young people.

Leaders of children’s and young people's groups, whether privately or church organised, should have a clear understanding of their own responsibilities and the responsibilities of others who work with them. This should be clearly laid out in the volunteer agreement by the group leader (Form A part 2). All new workers with children and young people have a set procedure to follow. They are will be expected to complete Safeguarding Form A parts 1 and 2. Part 1 is the registration form and includes space for names and addresses of referees, part 2 is the volunteer agreement which should be set out by the group leader and signed by the new volunteer. Records of interviews, forms, CRB issues dates and numbers are kept in the youth office. DBS is completed for all new workers and checked for those who already have one..

**Probationary periods for new workers:**

It is a requirement of the Methodist Church that all workers with children and young people should be properly trained and serve a probationary period. Standing Order 600 states

(i) Persons offering, or being invited, to serve as workers with children and young people shall be accepted as candidates......by the Church Council.

(ii) They shall enter upon a probationary period, which shall normally be twelve months, but which may be extended or reduced as required.

If a person is volunteering for a short-term task, such as helper in a holiday club, they should be supervised as if they were undertaking a probationary period.

**Recognising abuse:**

The four main areas of abuse - physical, sexual, emotional and neglect - may come to the notice of a person in a number of different ways:

**Disclosure by the child or young person**: If a child or young person wants to talk about abuse -

* Listen, do not question. Never push for information
* accept what the child or young person says, keeping calm and looking at them directly
* Reassure the child or young person that they are right to tell you and that you take them seriously
* Even when a child or young person has broken a rule they are not to blame
* Be aware that the child or young person may have been threatened
* Let them know that you need to tell someone else. **Do not promise them confidentiality**
* Let the child or young person know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens. Make notes as soon as reasonably practical, writing down exactly what was said, where possible using the child’s own words. Record dates and times of events, when you were told about them and when you made the record. Sign your notes. Always keep a copy yourself.

Remember that you are not the investigating agency and that the child or young person may need to talk later to a specialist. Any probing may interfere with further investigations and make the child or young person repeat painful information.

**Helpful things to say**

Use phrases like those below to reassure the child or young person and to encourage them to trust you -

I believe you

I am glad you told me

It is OK to tell

You are brave to tell me

It’s not your fault

I will try to help

**Try to avoid**

Phrases like those below should not be used in talking to a child or young person -

What? Why? How? When? Where? Who?

Are you sure?

I can’t believe it!

This is really serious

Don’t tell anyone

I am shocked

**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 the person that they are right to tell you
* Let them know that you need to tell someone else. Do not promise confidentiality
* Let the person know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens
* Make notes as soon as possible, writing down exactly what was said, where possible using the person’s own words. Record dates and times of the events, when you were told about them and when you made the record. Sign the notes and keep a copy yourself.

**Observation of unexplained injury or changes in behaviour:**

Some children and young people may display one or more of the following signs. They may have an innocent explanation but they can also be the key to identifying potential abuse.

* Bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if these are on parts of the body not normally injured in accidents
* Changes in behaviour, such as a child becoming very quiet or withdrawn
* Aggressive behaviour, particularly with friends, severe tantrums, or lack of attachment to parents
* Loss of weight, which can be sudden or gradual and is not linked to illness
* inadequate and inappropriate clothing
* Sexually explicit games which are inappropriate to the child’s age
* The child only seems happy with you
* The child is kept away from social activities and has few friends
* Lack of attachment or lack of trust towards parents and other members of the family
* Having strange secrets
* Persistent self-comforting behaviour, such as rocking
* Over eating or loss of appetite
* Disturbed sleep, nightmares and bed-wetting
* Suicidal feelings
* Overly compliant behavior

**Taking Action if you suspect abuse:**

* Do not delay
* Consult with the person to whom you are responsible for your work with children or young people
* Consult the safe guarding team leader who should consult the minister.
* Contact the statutory services responsible for child protection in your area if immediate action needs to be taken and it cannot wait.

Such action, even if it later proves to be mistaken or unnecessary, is justifiable if based on concern for the child.

**What happens next?**

* The Superintendent Minister will ensure adequate pastoral support for all concerned.

**The Social Services will:**

* Consider what you have told them, together with any other information already held or received.
* Assess the strength of the allegation.
* Investigate if they suspect a child or young person is suffering from harm. Often they will do this with the Police.

**This will involve:**

* Visiting the child or young person’s home
* Contacting other agencies who might have information on the child or young person, or the family.
* Holding a child protection conference where all the professionals can share their observations and to which parents may be invited.
* Inform the police if they suspect an offence has been committed. This could lead to criminal proceedings.
* Taking action, where necessary, to protect the child or young person.

**Offering Support:**

In any church where a case of abuse has been disclosed or suspected there will be people needing different kinds of support. Some will require professional help. Some may need a sympathetic, listening ear.

**The abused person:**

* The abused person may feel a loss of safety, a loss of trust, a loss of power, a loss of self-esteem, guilt, shame, anger, blame, confusion about sexual behaviour, that no one will believe him/her again.
* It is important that the abused child or young person does not feel rejected by the church community. Often, following a disclosure, there will be insufficient evidence to take any criminal proceedings. Full support for the child or young person can then begin straight away.

**The abuser:**

* The abuser may be part of the same church community as the child or young person who has been abused. Reactions of others in the community can vary greatly. There may be great hostility. There may be an attempt to be understanding. There may be those who feel that the abuser has been unfairly accused.
* Whatever the reaction, the abuser needs pastoral support as well. This should not be offered by the person who is caring for the abused child or young person.
* Great care must be taken to ensure that nothing is done which might interfere with the judicial process. The person accused of abuse needs to know where it is possible to turn for legal advice

Alternatively, discussion of the issues surrounding the safety of children and young people can revive their memories and cause them to speak out. Even though their disclosure may have no direct implications for the church community they will need sensitive understanding and pastoral support.

Pastoral support is not just the prerogative of the Minister and the Pastoral Visitors. It can be offered by anyone with a ‘listening ear’, through the friendship and openness of children and young people as well as adults. When information is shared with someone in the church community it needs to be handled with great sensitivity and discretion. If our concern for those who have suffered abuse is real we will be anxious not to betray the trust which they place in us.

**Confidentiality:**

The 1993 Report to the Methodist Conference 'Confidentiality and Pastoral Care’, recognised that the area of child abuse is one in which it is inevitable that the normal rules applying to confidentiality should be waived in the best interests of the abused child or young person.

However, a balance must be obtained between those who have a need to know the facts of situations as they are perceived and those who wish to know to satisfy their curiosity. It is vital to maintain an environment of trust and respect, avoiding a situation where half-truths and rumour abound.

If an abused person or an abuser begins to disclose their experience,

they must be warned immediately that absolute confidentiality

cannot be maintained - there are some secrets which must be shared.

These guidance procedures are offered to safeguard all the children and young people with whom we have contact. If followed they will also protect those who work with them and who may inadvertently place themselves in a vulnerable position. Physical, sexual and emotional abuse can wreck the lives of those who have suffered from it. Malicious accusations can also wreck the lives of those against whom they are directed.

**Procedures and information specifically for vulnerable adults:**

**Definition of Vulnerable Adult:**

A vulnerable adult is a person who is aged 18 years or older and:

* Is in residential accommodation.
* Is in sheltered housing
* Receives domiciliary care.
* Is receiving any form of health care
* Is detained in lawful custody.
* Is in contact with probation services ie receiving help or supervision.
* Receives a welfare service of a prescribed description
* Receives any service or participates in any activity provided specifically for persons who have particular needs, due to age, any form of disability a physical or mental problem, which will be prescribed together with two other issues which are not relevant in this.
* Receives direct payments.
* Requires assistance in the conduct of his or her own affairs
* Is experiencing impact of an event in life such as a bereavement ,the action of others or change in living situation

**Rights and Responsibilities**

**Responsibilities of PMCH**

* To ensure paid and voluntary staff are aware of the adult protection policy and are adequately trained
* To notify the appropriate agencies if abuse is identified or suspected
* To support and where possible secure the safety of individuals and ensure that all referrals to services have full information in relation to identified risk and vulnerability
* To ensure all staff and volunteers who work with vulnerable adults have a CRB/DBS check
* Information will only be shared on a need to know basis

**Responsibility of PMCH staff and volunteers:**

* To be familiar with the adult protection policy and procedures
* To take appropriate action in line with the policies of PMCH and the national Methodist vulnerable adults policy
* To promote good practice

**Support for those who report abuse:**

All those making a complaint or allegations or expressing concern, whether they are staff volunteers carers or members of the church should be reassured that

* They will be taken seriously
* Their comments will usually be treated confidentially, but their concerns may be shared if they or others are at significant risk
* If felt necessary they will be given immediate protection from the risk of reprisals or intimidation

**The Vulnerable Adult has the right:**

* To be made aware of the policy
* To have alleged incidents recognized and taken seriously
* To receive fair and respectful treatment throughout
* To be involved in any process as appropriate
* To receive information about the outcome

**People who might abuse:**

Potentially anyone could be an abuser of a vulnerable adult. Abuse will sometimes be deliberate but it may also be an unintended consequence of ignorance or lack of awareness or alternatively arise from frustration or lack of support. The following is a check list of some of the possible people who commit or may commit abuse but is not an exhaustive list:

* Health and social workers/nursing staff
* Relatives
* Workers in places of worship
* Neighbours
* Other vulnerable adults
* Confidence tricksters
* Relatives who are the main carer

**Taking Action**

If you suspect abuse

* Do not delay
* Consult with the person to whom you are responsible for your work with vulnerable adults
* Consult the minister
* **In cases of emergency or where there is need for urgent action, the Local Authority Adult Services should be informed**

**Confidentiality:**

Confidentiality is not to be confused with secrecy. It means that a person’s personal business is not discussed with others except with their permission.

However it is not always possible to give assurances of total confidentiality

* If an abused person or an abuser begins to disclose their experiences they must be warned immediately that absolute confidentiality cannot be maintained-there are some secrets which must be shared
* Information should only be shared on a need to know basis

**Good Practice**

**Recruitment**

* Risk assessment of role, as agreed by the safeguarding team, for the need of a DBS.
* Completion of application form
* Check references
* All staff and volunteers have a duty to declare any existing or subsequent convictions-failure to do so will be regarded as gross misconduct possibly resulting in dismissal.

**Training:**

All staff must undertake modular training appropriate to the level of their post according to that laid down by the district/national guidelines

**Record keeping:**

There should be a written record of any concerns, which should be factual and avoid rumour or opinion. This confidential information will be kept in a locked drawer by the appropriate person, and will be kept as long as it is deemed necessary, in line with Data Protection principles.

**Definitions of Abuse - see** Appendix

**Contact Details**

The person to whom you are responsible

Your minister

District Safeguarding Team and Officer

District Safeguarding Helpline 01392 214239

Plymouth Adult Social Care-01752 306900 Monday-Friday 8.30am-5pm

Out of Hours 01752 346984

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**Appendix**

Vulnerable Adults can be abused in a number of ways:

**Physical Harm** is ill treatment which may or may not cause physical injury. It includes hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, forcing, inappropriate restraint, withholding or misuse of medication, squeezing, biting, suffocating, drowning or killing. Whilst the use of medication or restraint may be appropriate in some circumstances, the point is that if the use is beyond being reasonable or outside of any prescription, or is excessive and disproportionate to what is required in the circumstances then this is abuse.

**Psychological/Emotional Abuse** is the use of threats or fear to negate the vulnerable adult’s independent wishes. It includes lack of privacy or choice, denial of dignity, deprivation of social contact or the creation of deliberate isolation. People can be made to feel worthless, there can be withholding of love or affection, threatening behaviour, humiliation, blaming, controlling, pressuring, coercion, or ignoring the person.

**Financial or legal abuse** is the wilful extortion or manipulation of a vulnerable adult’s legal or civil rights, including the misappropriation of monies or goods. This includes not only the more obvious cases of theft, embezzlement and fraud, but also the abuse of influence, power or friendship to persuade a person to make gifts, or change their will

**Neglect** is any behaviour by one person that seriously impairs another. This may include failure to intervene in situations where there is danger to a vulnerable adult or others, particularly where the person lacks the mental capacity to assess risk.

Neglect may also include not giving personal care, deliberate withholding of aids(this includes hearing aids),withholding food, drink, light and clothing, restricting access to medical services, denial of social, religious or cultural contacts, denial of contact with the family, leaving alone unsupervised.

**Sexual Abuse** includes both contact and non contact behaviour that is abusive. To be deemed to be abusive, the behaviour has to be done without the consent of the other party. This includes the making of sexual remarks and suggestions, introduction to indecent material, indecent exposure, teasing, indecent assault, touch, and sexual intercourse, being forced to touch another person in a sexual manner.

**Spiritual abuse** linked with emotional/institutional abuse spiritual abuse could be defined as an abuse of power, often done in the name of God or religion, which involves manipulating or coercing someone into thinking, saying or doing things without respecting their right to choose for themselves. Some indicators of spiritual abuse might be a leader who is intimidating and imposes his/her will on other people, perhaps threatening dire consequences or the wrath of God if disobeyed. He or she may say that God has revealed certain things to them and so they know what is right. Those under their leadership are fearful to challenge or disagree, believing they will lose the leaders’ (or more seriously) acceptance and approval Other forms of spiritual abuse include the denial to vulnerable people of the right to faith or the opportunity to grow in the knowledge and love of God.

**Discriminatory Abuse** is the inappropriate treatment of a vulnerable adult because of their age, gender, race, religion, cultural background, sexuality, disability etc. Discriminatory abuse exists when values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies opportunity to some groups or individuals. Discriminatory abuse links to all other forms of abuse. It may include unequal treatment, inappropriate use of language-racist remarks, bullying or other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment, humiliating behaviour, comments about disability, verbal abuse, and deliberate exclusion.

**Institutional Abuse** is the mistreatment or abuse of a vulnerable adult by a regime or individuals within an institution. It can be through repeated acts of poor or inadequate care and neglect or poor professional practice. The inappropriate care of a vulnerable adult in an institutional situation(hospital, residential home, nursing home or in the community) Factors include authoritarian or rigid management, lack of leadership or supervision, poor care standards, rigid routines, inadequate staffing, lack of privacy, poor practice in the provision of intimate care and staff not taking account of individuals’ needs culture, religion or ethnicity

**Domestic Abuse**

Domestic violence is any threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are or have been in a relationship or between family members. It can affect anybody, regardless of their gender or sexuality.

The violence can be psychological, physical sexual or emotional. It can include honour based violence, female genital mutation, and forced marriage.

Whatever form it takes, domestic violence is rarely a one-off incident. Usually it’s a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour through which an abuser seeks power over their family members or partner.

Domestic violence occurs across all of society, regardless of age, gender , race, sexuality, wealth or geography. Women are more likely than men to be victims, but men can be victims too. Children are also affected-they can be traumatized by what they have seen, and there is a strong connection between domestic violence and child abuse.

**Forced Marriage**

Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

Forced marriage is a form of child/domestic violence against women and therefore should be part of child and adult protection procedures.

These guidelines apply to men facing forced marriage-and men should be given the same assistance and respect when they seek help.