

EARLSDON METHODIST CHURCH

Policy on

Safeguarding Children and Young People



Albany Road, Earlsdon
Coventry

October 2004

Safeguarding Children and Young People

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document has been compiled using the guidelines issued by the Home Office and the Methodist Church and is based on the policy document of Coventry Methodist Central Hall.

Safe From Harm

The Home Office Code of Practice.

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/harm.html>

Safeguarding

The Methodist Church Publication

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/information/safeguarding.htm>

Policy for Safeguarding Children and Young People

Coventry Methodist Central Hall

HISTORY

Issue 1	05/10/2003	Derived from the Coventry Methodist Central Hall, Policy for Safeguarding Children and Young People. (September 2001).
Issue 2	18/10/2004	Section 5 updated due to change of Superintendent Minister.

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Safeguarding Children and Young People

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

With everything that is happening world wide it is important that everyone takes the necessary steps to protect the children and young people who are entrusted into their care.

Under the UK's Children's Act 1989 we all have a responsibility for the well being of children. How can the church take up this responsibility? Let us start by asking two questions:

1. Who are we seeking to protect?

First and foremost the children in our care, second people working with children and third the organisation.

2. From whom are we seeking to protect the children?

Anyone who would abuse. This includes the attentions of paedophiles (a paedophile is someone who is sexually attracted to children). Paedophiles are not normally opportunist and will go to the extent of taking several years to gain a position of trust within an organisation, and, from this established position, abuse. With this in mind, a child protection policy is the best form of protection we can offer our young people. A paedophile who is looking to target a church will think again where there is a pro-active policy and action taken on every allegation.

Every church should, therefore, have stated guidelines for the operation of all ministries and projects where young people are involved and a policy dealing with any allegations of abuse. If church leaders are not pro-active in their efforts to protect children in this way then they are negligent in their duty. Some church leaders see their responsibility only in terms of reacting in certain ways once a situation has occurred, this is like closing the stable door after the horse has bolted. Only here we are not talking of livestock but people's lives that can be damaged in the most hideous ways imaginable. We need to move the emphasis away from abuse and towards protection. The aim is to prevent abuse happening, rather than only getting involved once the damage has been done.

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Safe from Harm

The Home Office Code of Practice

Safe from Harm was prepared to provide voluntary organisations with guidelines for safeguarding the welfare of children and young people in their care.

It applies to all workers in voluntary organisations, including the churches, whether they are paid or volunteers.

It encourages the development of good policies and practice to prevent the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children and young people while they are in their care.

At the same time it protects those who work with children and young people from unfounded accusations or from behaving in ways that may be well intentioned but inadvisable.

The Home Office guidelines are a challenge to every church:

- to shoulder responsibilities in caring for children and young people and those who work with them.
- to be committed to good practice in work with children and young people.
- to recognise that safeguarding the young is the responsibility of everyone, not just those who work with children and young people.
- to be prepared to work in different ways, where necessary, seeing this as a new opportunity for service and mission.

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"Safe from Harm" Home Office Code of Practice, 1993

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THE CHURCH COUNCIL'S

Policy Statement

The Church Council fully supports the current policy and practice of the Methodist Church as it seeks to protect children and young people in its care. The guidelines in the Home office code of practice are seen as a challenge for the church to shoulder its responsibilities in caring for children and young people and those who care for them. In particular:

- As the people of Earlsdon 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.
- It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children and young people.
- It is the duty of each person working with children and young people to prevent abuse and to report any abuse discovered, disclosed or suspected.

The Policy will be reviewed annually in September and will be amended as necessary to account for improvements and changes based on experience and on advice from Methodist Church House.

Signed:
For and on behalf of the Church Council

Date.

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SECTION 2: THE HOME OFFICE GUIDELINES

(Adapted as necessary to suit our church)

Guideline 1

Adopt a policy statement on safeguarding the welfare of children.

This is the responsibility of the church council and is included in SECTION 1.

Guideline 2

Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children may occur.

Please see SECTION 3 - "Children at risk".

Guideline 3

Introduce a system whereby children may talk with an independent person.

Please see SECTION 3 - "Children at risk",

Guideline 4

Apply agreed procedures for children to all paid staff and volunteers.

All new helpers and leaders will be expected to show that they have knowledge of the procedures agreed by the church council.

Guideline 5

Give all paid staff and volunteers clear roles.

All leaders and helpers will be expected to work within the roles agreed to in their job description. The leader or helper and the church council will both retain copies of the job description.

Guideline 6

Use supervision as a means of protecting children.

Leaders should regularly review with the helpers, ways and means of implementing these guidelines.

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Guideline 7

Treat all would-be paid staff and volunteers as job applicants for any position involving contact with children.

All leaders and helpers will be expected to complete the approved application form before an interview is conducted. The secretary of the church council should retain a copy.

Guideline 8

Gain at least one reference from a person who has experience of the applicant's paid work or volunteering with children.

All applicants will be expected to provide a personal referee before an appointment is made. Confidentiality must be treated as an important issue.

Guideline 9

Explore all applicants' experience of working or contact with children in an interview before appointment.

A person nominated by the church council will interview all applicants.

Guideline 10

Find out whether an applicant has any conviction for criminal offences against children.

All situations that involve work with children and young people are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This means that all convictions that relate to children and young people, however old, must be declared. Information about other convictions must also be given, as these may be relevant to the suitability of the person.

Guideline 11

Make paid and volunteer appointments conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period.

Applicants for paid or volunteer work with children or young people must have the appointment confirmed by the church council and then begin a probationary period, which shall normally be for twelve months, but may be extended or reduced at the discretion of the church council.

The Methodist Church Standing order 660 states:

- (1) Persons offering, or being invited; to serve as workers with children and young people shall be accepted as candidates by the church council.*
- (2) They shall enter upon a probationary period; which shall normally be for twelve months, but which may be extended or reduced as required*

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Guideline 12

Issue guidelines on how to deal with disclosure or discovery of abuse.

Please see SECTION 3 -"Children at risk"

Guideline 13

Train paid staff and volunteers, their supervisors and policy makers in the prevention of child abuse.

All workers with children whether paid or volunteers shall agree to undertake training as preparation for the service applicable to the work they wish to do.

Methodist Standing order 660 says of these workers:

They shall agree to undertake preparation for service applicable to the work they wish to do.

Kaleidoscope is the recommended training material for use with children's workers.

Spectrum is the recommended training material for use with youth workers.

Training in safeguarding from abuse is an integral part of these training programmes.

Suitable training and awareness raising should be provided for all those who at any time come into contact with children and young people. This includes lay workers, community workers, caretakers and the like.

It is insufficient to give workers guidelines without equipping them with the skills and understanding to carry them out.

Please do not see "protect the children " as a threat to existing work, rather it is a way of making even more effective the care and love which inspires both the work and the workers.

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SECTION 3: CHILDREN AT RISK (CHILD ABUSE)

1 Purpose of Document:

The purpose of this document is to inform those working with children that some children do get abused, and to advise them of the procedure to be carried out if abuse is disclosed to them, or if they suspect abuse. This will assist us in providing a secure environment for children.

First and most important -whether it is your first contact with suspected child abuse or not:

- Ensure the welfare of the child.
- Talk to someone.

Should you encounter any situation involving a child which gives you cause for concern; make a written note of the conversation, observation, dates, times, names, etc. Pass on this information immediately to your Minister.

Do not be afraid to be wrong.

2 What is a child?

Strictly any person under the age of 16 or any person with a disability up to the age of 18 years but The Methodist Church, in the interests of good practice in work with children and young people, applies its policy to under 18' s.

3 What is abuse?

- Physical abuse - includes hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning, biting, administering poisonous substances, suffocating/drowning, excessive force
- Neglect - a failure to meet basic essential needs of a child, or if a child is left unsupervised at a young age.
- Emotional abuse - children harmed by constant lack of love and affection, or threats, verbal attacks, taunting or shouting.
- Sexual abuse - involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children or adolescents, in sexual activity that they do not fully comprehend, or to which they are unable to give informed consent, or which violate the social taboos of family roles.

(A child may suffer more than one category of abuse)

4 Who abuses children?

- Very rarely a stranger.
- Often someone close to a child, e.g. parent, carer, baby-sitter, sibling, relative or friend of the family.
- Sometimes, someone in authority such as a teacher, youth leader, children's worker, or, very sadly, a church worker/leader.
- Sometimes, paedophiles and others who set out to join organisations (including churches) to obtain access to children.

5 How might we recognise abuse?

Warning signs:

These are only a guide; they are not necessarily proof of abuse. They may be:

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging.
- Nervousness/watchfulness.
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration.
- Changed or inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults.
- Attention seeking behaviour.
- Persistent tiredness.
- Running away/stealing/lying.

Other areas where leaders should be vigilant are:

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them, or where differing explanations have been received.
- Injuries that occur to the body in places that are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- Injuries and illnesses that have not received medical attention.
- Instances where children are kept away from the group or school inappropriately.
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming.
- Any signs of neglect, under nourishment or inadequate care.
- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse.

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- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters, and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age inappropriate sexual play.
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing.
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults.
- Inappropriate bed sharing arrangements at home.
- Severe sleep disturbance with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotation.

One or more warning signs may be evident.

Many symptoms of distress in a child can point to abuse, but there are other explanations too. This (together with conflicting medical opinion) has sometimes been the reason for falsely accusing parents of sexual abuse. **It is important that the above signs are not taken as indicating that abuse has taken place, but that the possibility should be considered far more so than in the past. They should make us stop and think - not jump to conclusions inappropriately!**

6 What to do if abuse is suspected.

We have a responsibility: The children's Act 1989 was brought out as a means to promote and protect the welfare of all children, and within the working together framework states that:

"The community as a whole has a responsibility for the well-being of children. This means that all citizens should remain alert to circumstances in which children may be harmed. Individuals can assist the statutory authorities by bringing cases to their attention. Relatives, friends and neighbours of children are particularly well placed to do so, but they must know what to do if they are concerned; in addition to providing support for the family and child, which may include help caring for the child. They must also be confident, because of the difficult and sensitive nature of the situation, that any information they provide will be treated in a confidential way and used only to protect the interests of the child. They should know too that early action on their part is often the best way of helping a family stay together as well as protecting their child".

The local Social Services note the following in their preamble when dealing with voluntary social work agencies involved in childcare.

- Voluntary agency staff involved with families and children are likely to receive referrals/information/allegations or witness concerns suggestive of the need for a child protection investigation under section 47 of the 1989 Children's Act. **It is the responsibility of the voluntary agency to refer concerns to the Social Services department.**
- The role of the voluntary agency in these circumstances, except in the case of medical emergency, is essentially to collect and clarify the precise details of the allegation, and provide information to the Social Services department, whose task it is to investigate under section 47 of the 1989 Children's Act.

The role of the voluntary agency is not an investigative one.

7 Responding to abuse

If a child has a physical injury or symptom of neglect:

Contact your Minister immediately.

- Speak with the parent and suggest medical help/attention is sought for the child. The doctor will then initiate further action, if necessary. Alternatively, encourage the parent to seek help from the Social Services Department.
- If a parent is unwilling to seek help, then offer to go with them. If they still fail to act you may need to seek help yourself, i.e. via Social Services.
- Where emergency medical attention is necessary then this should, of course, be sought immediately, informing the doctor of any suspicions you may have.

If there are allegations of sexual abuse:

- Contact your Minister immediately or contact Social Service or the Police direct for advice. Do not speak to the parent (or anyone else) if there is a possibility that they could be involved. The fact that you may feel the child's story is unlikely must not prevent appropriate action being taken. *For example, a child may say that he/she has been abused by an older young person. In reality, the perpetrator could be a parent or close relative, but naming another person may be the only way in which this child can seek help.*
- It is the responsibility of the church worker to pass on the possibility of abuse to the Social Services Department. The role of the church is essentially collecting and clarifying the precise details of the allegation and providing the information to the Social Services Department, whose task it is to investigate the allegation.

Further guidance in responding to abuse:

Whilst the church worker will normally consult with their Minister before reporting incidents/suspicions of child abuse to the Social Services Department, the absence of the Minister should not delay referral to the Social Services Department. Exceptionally, should there be any disagreement between the worker and Minister as to the appropriateness of such a referral, the church worker nevertheless retains the right as a member of the public to report serious matters to the Social Services Department.

All children's workers should be aware that any allegations or suspicions are covered by pastoral confidentiality, and that therefore church members have no rights to this information. The sharing of information is therefore limited to a "Need to Know" basis. This will protect the interests of all the parties concerned.

N.B. - Church leaders will often experience difficulty in making appropriate judgements. Professionals (e.g. Family doctors) are advised that they should discuss their suspicions with a specialist colleague first, with a view to then informing the statutory agencies.

8 Third party/anonymous referrals/allegations:

Families not known to the church:

- In cases where allegations are made by a third party, the role of the church worker is to elicit as much information as possible from the referrer. Unless the person wishes to remain anonymous this should include the referrer's details (name, address, telephone number) and as much factual detail as possible about the child and family concerned (names of family members, address, name /date of birth of subject child, ethnic origin, etc.). Information as to the cause of concern/nature of injuries/observations should be included.
- The church worker must inform the referrer that information relating to any child at risk, will be shared with their church leader and may result in referral to the Social Services Department, and in this event the Social Services Department may wish to interview the referrer (if known) as part of the child protection investigation.
- The church worker will then report the above information to the church leader and the latter will then seek the advice from the PCCA and then if there are sufficient concerns to make a referral to the Social Service Department.

Families known to the church:

- In cases where families are known to the church where the church suspects from either direct observation, third party, from the child or from a parent/carer, that the child is/has suffered **sexual abuse**, the matter must be reported immediately to the Minister with a view to referral to Social Services Department or direct to the authorities if the church leaders are implicated.
- Should a child allege sexual abuse, the parents should not under any circumstances be informed. Where a parent/carer alleges sexual abuse by another person, the parent/carer should be advised not to inform the alleged perpetrator. Should the church worker by direct observation suspect sexual abuse, they should discuss this immediately with the church leader, with a view to discussion with Social Services as to how the matter will be dealt with.
- In cases of **physical or emotional abuse or neglect** where the church worker, by observation considers that such concerns exist, the church worker should suggest to a parent that they should seek medical help. Approaching the doctor is less threatening and its then up to the medical practitioner to decide whether there is a question of abuse that needs to be referred to Social Services. If a parent is reluctant, then the worker could consider going with them or, if they fail to co-operate, then the matter should be immediately discussed with the Minister, who will refer to Social Services Department if appropriate. Normally in these circumstances a church worker will inform the parent of his/her duty to refer such concerns to the Social Services Department and the probability of interview by social worker and/or police officer. Of course, in cases of serious injury the church worker should summon medical help immediately.

9 How should we react if a child tells us he/she has been abused?

Children's workers are in a unique position and your relationship with children cannot be underestimated. Your group may be providing a safe haven, and perhaps the only place where a child feels comfortable and able to talk to adults. It is therefore possible that a child may approach you to talk about abuse.

The following guidance may be of help:

General points:

- Accept what the child says.
- Keep calm; do not appear to be shocked.
- Look at the child directly.
- Be honest.
- Let them know that you will need to tell someone else - don't promise confidentiality.
- Even when a child has broken a rule they are not to blame for the abuse.
- Be aware the child may have been threatened.
- Make notes as soon as possible, writing down exactly what the child said, including the child's name, age, address, relevant family information, and details of the situation and the activity that preceded disclosure
- Never push for information or question the child.

Helpful things to say:

- I believe you.
- I am glad you have told me.
- It's not your fault.
- I will try to help you.

Avoid saying:

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it.
- Are you sure this is true.

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- Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- Never make false promises.
- Never make statements such as "I'm shocked, don't tell anyone else"

Concluding:

- Again reassure the child they were right to tell you and that you believe them.
- Let the child know what you are going to do next, and that you will let them know what happens.
- Immediately refer to your Minister.

Even if abuse is no longer happening it is still important to report the matter, as the adult may be abusing other children. Also it may be that the child will need guidance and help in overcoming the effects of the abuse, plus the police may wish to prosecute.

10 Practicalities for mutual protection of leaders and children involved in children's work.

Guidance

- Avoid being on your own with any child. This may mean groups working in one large room, or adjoining rooms.
- Never take a child home on your own - preferably have another helper with you, or else ensure that the last two children are dropped off together .

(Remember an allegation could also be made against you!)

- Be wise in your physical contact with children.
- Be wise with your relationship with the children - do not be over friendly with some at the expense of others. No favourites.
- Male helpers need to be particularly careful in what they say, and in being around forward young females. Female helpers similarly need to be careful with forward young male children.
- Never smack, hit or physically discipline a child except by "holding" which may be used if there is an immediate danger of personal injury to the child or another person.
- If you feel that a child may have a "crush" on you, pray about it and talk to your Minister for advice and guidance.
- In order to help children, we need to develop healthy relationships by listening to them and respecting them.

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- We must be mindful of the safety of the children at all times, and in all circumstances, with special attention when moving young people between the Church and Church Hall.
- Whenever possible have two adults present with a group, particularly when it is the only activity taking place on the church premises and do not take a group off the premises with fewer than two adults.
- Where confidentiality is important (e.g. counselling a young person) ensure that others know that the interview is taking place and that someone else is around in the building.

Prayer works and helps in each and every circumstance.

Boundaries

- The level of personal care (e.g. toileting) appropriate and related to the age of the child - accepting that some children have special needs.
- Guidance on touch. For example, physical contact between adults and children can be quite healthy and to be encouraged in public places, discouraged in circumstances where an adult/child on their own.
- Workers should treat all children/young people with dignity and respect in attitude, language used and actions.
- Respect the privacy of children; avoid questionable activity (e.g. rough/sexually provocative games or comments).
- If you invite a child to your home, ensure another adult is present and the parent is aware.
- If transporting a child on his or her own, then it is better that the young person sits in the back seat.

Feedback

- It should be accepted that anyone seeing another worker acting in a way that could be misinterpreted should be able to speak to the individual or the Minister about the concern.
- Regular workers to review procedures to ensure common approach, sharing concerns and identifying other matters that may need clarification and guidance.
- Encourage reporting back to such a meeting when departure from guidelines becomes necessary - this provides protection to the individual and draws the leadership's attention to shortcomings and problem areas.
- Keep brief records of issues/decisions discussed at workers meetings.

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Helping children to protect themselves by:

- Teaching safety generally/strangers/good and bad secrets and touches, etc.
- Help children develop common sense rules.
- Talk about suspicions or situations where they feel uncomfortable.
- Examine the way in which we present Christian truths, e.g. children obeying parents. This can be a real problem for a child who is being abused - are we telling the child to accept the abuse? Tell children that if they feel uncomfortable or that something may be wrong, they can always check things out with another adult.

11 Confidentiality

No children's worker is permitted to divulge any information concerning a child, or his/her family or anything a child may tell them to anyone other than the designated people previously mentioned. This is in order to protect the interests of the child. This confidentiality is a continuing requirement at all times and is required when workers are "off duty" or no longer involved in the work.

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SECTION 4: DISCIPLINE IN CHILDREN'S WORK

1 What is discipline?

Discipline is the education of a person's character.

It includes nurturing, training, instruction, chastisement, verbal rebuke, teaching and encouragement.

2 Why discipline?

It brings security, produces character, prepares for life, is evidence of love and is God's heart. Hebrews 12:6 and Proverbs 22:6.

3 Do's and don'ts of discipline in children's work:

- We need to be insistent, consistent and persistent.
- **NEVER** smack, or hit a child.
- Discipline out of love **NEVER** anger. (It is better to let a matter pass than discipline in anger - you may say something you regret, and that damage cannot be repaired).
- Do not shout in anger or put down a child.
- Lay down ground rules e.g., no swearing, racism, or calling each other names, a respect for property.
- Keep the ground rules simple and clear, and make sure the children understand what procedure will be taken if they are not kept.
- Talk to a child away from the 'group', not publicly. (Explain what they have done wrong, encourage remorse and leave them on a positive note).
- Never reject a child, just the behaviour. (Encourage the child that you want them, but you are not willing to accept the behaviour).
- Each child is unique, special and individual, and each child needs a different method of being dealt with. We therefore need to ask ourselves:
 1. Why is the child behaving like that?
 2. Ask God for wisdom, discernment and understanding.
 3. What is the best method for disciplining and encouraging that child?
 4. What encourages and builds children up?

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5. Work on each individual child's positives, do not compare them to each other.
6. Work on relationships.
7. Be a good role model and set a good example. (Don't expect children to do what you don't do and vice-versa).
8. Take care to give quieter and well-behaved children attention and don't allow some children to take all your time and energy.
9. Don't say something you don't mean, and do stick to what you say. (Otherwise we are implying negative teaching to the children). (Think before you speak).
10. Pray for the children and with the children.

4 Some practical ideas for bad-behaviour discipline:

- Change voice tone.
- Separate children who have a tendency to be disruptive when together. (These children are often friends, don't separate them straight away, give them a chance, perhaps warn them and only separate if they are disruptive).
- Have the child sit right in front of you.
- Get a helper to sit next to the child.
- Pay no attention to them.
- Be proactive and encourage helpers to be proactive and not wait to be told to deal with a situation.
- Take the child aside and talk to them, challenging them to change, whilst encouraging them on their strengths.
- If a child's behaviour is constantly disruptive the matter should be referred to the Junior Church Superintendent who will take appropriate action and keep the Minister informed.
- Encourage good behaviour.
- Remember each child is individual and unique. We need God's wisdom and love to encourage each one to reach their potential and to recognise their needs.
- Pray before you meet.

SECTION 5: CONTACTS

Minister	Rev. Andrew de Ville	024 7641 9325
Superintendent Minister	Rev. David Hunter	024 7640 2404
Childline	Freepost 1111 London N1 0BR	0800 1111
Children's Legal Centre	Advice line for anyone	01206 873820
The Methodist Church	25 Marylebone Road London NW1 5JR	020 7486 5502
NSPCC Helpline	Advice	0800 800 5000
Social Services Office	Ask for child protection	024 7683 3478
	Emergency out of hours	024 7683 2222
NCH Action for Children	General enquiries	0121 355 4615
PCCA Child Care	PO Box 133 Swanley Kent BR8 7UQ	01322 667207
Police (ask for child protection officer)	General enquiries	0845 113 5000
	Emergency	999