

**Working with Children and Young People**

**– a safeguarding guide for group leaders and volunteers**

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**Introduction**

This booklet brings together various guidance documents aimed at people providing activities for children and young people.

All the information can be found in the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church in Britain (June 2023)



**Code of Safer Working Practices with Children and Young People**

**Introduction**

The code outlines the conduct that is expected of anyone undertaking duties with children and young people within the Methodist Church. The content of this code forms part of the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church which are therefore required practice. The code applies to volunteers, paid staff, clergy, students on work placement, members and non-members working in a Methodist context. By complying with this code, you will help the Church to protect children from abuse and mistreatment and minimise the likelihood of unfounded allegations against those who are involved in youth work.

If you become aware of any breaches of this code within the Methodist Church, you must report them to your group leader, safeguarding officer or minister in pastoral charge as soon as possible.

**Promoting Safer Practice**

Safer working practices is critical to good safeguarding. The Church has developed procedures informed by legislation and government guidance. As such, we aim to:

* carefully select and train all those with responsibility within the Church in line with safer recruitment principles
* ensure that any church activities are organised in such a way to avoid the risk of harm to everyone participating
* promote safe spaces that are inclusive and welcoming.

**Appropriate conduct**

Church officers will respect **all** children, young people and adults and promote their well-being. The Church will create and maintain environments that:

* are safer for all
* promote well-being
* prevent abuse
* create nurturing, caring conditions within the Church for children, young people and adults.

It will work to continue to strengthen and review these environments. This will be done by training, support, communication, learning and quality assurance processes.

The Church will challenge any abuse of power within church communities by ensuring church officers adhere to safe working practice, and are supported in challenging bullying and abusive behaviour. It will ensure that children, young people and adults will be listened to, supported and will know that they will receive care.

You should:

* be aware of and understand the local safeguarding policy
* treat all children and young people fairly and without prejudice, discrimination or favouritism
* respect differences in gender, sexual orientation, culture, race, ethnicity, disability and faith and challenge behaviour that demonstrates discrimination and/or prejudice
* ensure that your own language, tone of voice and body language is respectful
* always aim to work with or within sight and hearing of another adult
* ensure that another adult is informed if a child needs to be taken to the toilet (toilet breaks should be organised for young children)
* ensure that children and young people know who they can talk to or contact if they need to speak to someone about a personal concern and encourage them to speak out if they feel uncomfortable or concerned. They should be made aware of organisations that can provide support.
* respond warmly to a child who needs comforting but this should not involve physical comfort e.g. cuddles.
* advise children, young people and their parent/carers/guardians in advance if any activity requires physical contact and provide an opportunity to opt out or agree alternative activities.
* administer any necessary first aid with others around
* obtain consent for any photographs/videos to be taken, shown or displayed via any medium. *(This should be from the parent, carer or guardian and the young person if 12 years or over. Images should not be taken or stored on personal devices).*
* record any incidents that concern you or make you feel uncomfortable and give the information to your group leader in the first instance. Although you must also contact the church, circuit or district safeguarding officer immediately if you believe you have acted in a way which others may have interpreted as inappropriate or if a child has acted inappropriately towards you. Records must be signed and dated.
* always share concerns about a child or the behaviour of another worker with your group leader and/or the safeguarding officer.

You should not:

* initiate physical contact and if this is initiated by the child, do not pull away abruptly but do so gently so physical contact is for the minimum amount of time
* invade a child’s privacy whilst they are washing or using the toilet
* play rough physical or sexually provocative games
* use any form of physical punishment
* be sexually suggestive in the presence of or to a child, even as a joke
* touch a child inappropriately or forcefully
* scapegoat, ridicule, reject or ignore a child, group or adult
* allow abusive peer activities (e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying)
* show favouritism to any one child or group
* allow a child or young person to involve you in excessive attention-seeking that is clearly physical or sexual in nature
* give lifts to children or young people on their own or on your own
* smoke any substance, vape or consume alcohol in the presence of children or when responsible for them
* provide personal contact details to a child or young person such as mobile number, email or social media contact
* share sleeping accommodation with children
* arrange social occasions (this includes online activity) with children or invite them to your home outside organised group occasions (other than with the consent of parent, carers or guardians and where at least one other adult is present)
* allow unknown adults access to children (visitors should always be accompanied by a known person)
* allow strangers and those who are not authorised to give children lifts.

Appropriate dress

You should dress appropriately when working with children and not wear anything revealing or that is not practical for carrying out the tasks as part of your role.

Receiving gifts

There may be occasions when children give you gifts. It is polite to accept a gift but your group leader should be informed. If you receive any gift of significant value, e.g. more than £15.00, you should talk with your group leader about whether it is appropriate to accept it. As a general rule, expensive gifts should not be accepted. For further guidance on procedures for safer working practices when managing activities for children, please refer to Appendix 2.

**Safer Working Practices when Managing Children’s Activities**

**Staffing levels**

It is the responsibility of the group leader to consider individual circumstances and arrange sufficient supervision to ensure the safety and effective management of all activities.

The following issues must be considered when determining appropriate numbers of helpers:

* the gender of the group – if mixed, then staff members should also be mixed, where possible
* the duration of the activity
* the competence and experience of the staff providing oversight and support
* the age of the group – staff should have the appropriate skills for the age they are working with
* children with additional support needs, such as physical disabilities, behavioural or mental health problems – extra staff may be necessary
* the size and layout of the room or outdoor area and any particular issues that may be relevant to that location.
* young people attending who are being encouraged to develop their leadership skills through helping. ***They*** should always be overseen by an appointed worker who will be responsible for ensuring that good practice and safeguarding procedures are followed and the work they are doing is appropriate to both their age and understanding. Only those over 18 can be counted as part of the staff to child ratio.
* first aid cover
* the nature of the activity, what this involves and what tasks there will be for children
* There should be a minimum of two adults present at any activity (it is recommended that there be at least one male and one female) in line with the ratios below. Staff ratios should also be based on a risk assessment e.g. increased ratios for outdoor or activities.

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**Unaccompanied Children**

The Methodist Church welcomes those of all ages and is keen to appeal to children and young people.

It is advisable that children under the age of 11 years should be taken to and collected from church or a church activity. If a child is over 11 years of age, it remains the responsibility of their parent/carer to ensure they are cared for, arrive and leave church safely.

Action on arrival of an unaccompanied child

On occasion, a child may be sent to church on their own without prior arrangement or decide to attend an activity themselves. Where possible, the following step should be taken by a party who has been cleared to work with children in regulated activity.

The following actions should be taken if an unaccompanied child arrives on church premises:

1. Make them welcome and reassure them that they are not at fault.
2. Confirm their name(s) and try to find out who the parent/carer is and their contact details.
3. If the child says anything that suggests there may be a safeguarding issue, the district safeguarding officer should be contacted for guidance.
4. If there are no safeguarding concerns that involve the parent/carer, contact them and discuss the following topics:

* Confirm the child’s location and that they are safe.
* Provide details of the party who is looking after them and the activity the child has come to attend.
* Get permission for the child to remain.
* Provide a consent form and request that they complete it as soon as possible.
* Obtain contact information for the child’s next of kin and details of allergies or other health conditions.
* Ensure that the parent/carer is made aware of the time the activity finishes and encourage them to collect their child at this time. Highlight the normal dropping off and pick up points for the activity.

**Children not collected from an activity**

Church leaders should not be expected to be responsible for, or transport, children unless this has been arranged and agreed beforehand. The required provisions around the transportation of children must be followed if this becomes necessary (see 6.10.7). Where a child is not collected from an activity without prior agreement, the following steps should be taken:

* The parent or carer should be contacted to confirm whether it is safe for them to go home unescorted.
* If both the parent/carer and activity leader deem it is safe for them to go alone, the child should be given details of the activity. The parents/carers should be invited to discuss future arrangements.
* In the event the parent/carer cannot be contacted, follow the above steps 1-3. The police should be called and the child reported as missing from home. If there are safeguarding concerns explain these to the police. Keep trying to contact the parent/carer unless the police advise you otherwise.
* Two church leaders should always remain with a child in these circumstances if it is not possible to contact parent/carer.

***Please note:*** If there is a risk that the child may run away before a parent/carer or social care staff arrive then do not share with child that parent/carer has been called. Make a note of their physical appearance including what they are wearing in case they run away and the police have to search for them. Also, consider moving to a place in the building that is less open so they cannot easily abscond, and try to think of something to occupy them in the meantime. If the child leaves the building or premises, it is not advisable to follow the child as this can make their behaviour more unpredictable and therefore dangerous e.g. with traffic etc. in their attempt to get away. Church staff should not leave until all children have departed.

**Involving other agencies**

In certain situations, there may be a need to involve other agencies. If a child were very young, it would not be appropriate for them to attend church or any activities on their own. This would be regarded as neglect on the part of their parent or carer. If a child is already at church or the activity and the parent/carer is insistent that their child can attend and return home on their own and you do not feel that this is appropriate you should contact your DSO. They will give you advice on what to do next. If you are unable to get in touch with your DSO, and the situation cannot wait, children’s social care should be contacted for advice. Firstly, however you should let the parent/carer know of your intention to get in touch with children’s social care. This will help to maintain a positive working relationship with the family and may encourage the parent/carer to collect their child.

There may be occasions when a child tells you something that means they may be at risk of harm/further harm and you need to respond immediately. For example, if a child has a visible bruise or injury and tells you a parent/carer caused this, or if they disclose another form of abuse. In these circumstances, you should contact your DSO immediately for advice and support. Should you be unable to contact your DSO, or if the situation requires urgent action, contact children’s social care. They operate an out of hours’ service. If you are unable to get in touch with them, phone the police who will be able to give you guidance. Always make sure you inform your DSO.

**Children under 11 who regularly attend on their own without prior arrangement**

If there do not appear to be any safeguarding issues and the child is routinely attending church on their own, parents/carers should be contacted so a discussion can take place. The reasons for their lone attendance should be discussed and any safety implications. Other options for escorting them should be explored.

If it is not possible to avoid lone attendance, a risk assessment should be undertaken in conjunction with parents/carers and the DSO to consider whether this can be supported in the local church. The following areas should be considered:

* how the child would get to and from church
* their level of maturity
* the child’s wishes and feelings
* the views of parents/carers
* the availability of staff or volunteers who are cleared to undertake regulated activity to escort the child
* any risks that may arise from lone attendance and how they might be minimise d
* consideration of any persons who might present a risk on site e.g. those with relevant safeguarding contracts.

Where the outcome of the assessment suggests that the organisers of the activity can support lone attendance, arrangements should be agreed and recorded. Parents/carers should provide written consent for these arrangements. If the outcome suggests that lone attendance cannot be supported, other alternatives in the locality should be considered.

**Mixed-age activities**

Care should be taken to ensure that children in mixed-age activities such as choirs, music and drama groups are supervised. DBS/PVG checks are not required for adults in those groups who do not have specific responsibility for children. Separate changing facilities should be provided when needed for adults and children and different genders. Children should be supervised only by those authorised to do so.

**Safe environment**

In a prominent place where children and young people can see it, the ChildLine telephone number (0800 1111) and, for parents, the Family Lives number (0808 800 2222) should be on display. Undertake a risk assessment for each activity and in greater detail for an unusual activity or when away from the usual location.

Insurance, first aid kits and fire precautions should be checked and a health and safety check should be completed regularly with reference to the following minimum standards.

When evaluating a venue, the following should be considered:

* The meeting place should be warm, well lit and well ventilated. It should be kept clean and free of clutter.
* Fire exits should be checked regularly and clearly marked. The fire exits should not be blocked or obstructed.
* Electric socket covers must never be used as they present a safety hazard. UK sockets are supplied to the rigorous safety standards of BS 1363 but safety covers are unregulated and can cause permanent socket damage including:
* socket contact damage - results in overheating and possible fire -
* socket shutter damage - the shutters will not be able to protect children
* some socket covers make it possible to poke pins and paper clips into the live parts
* broken plastic pins stuck in the earth hole - prevents shutters from closing
* wrong size pins can make covers easy to remove, some even pop out by themselves
* children like to play with socket covers - plugging in upside down opens the shutter and exposes live contacts.
* Toilets and hand basins with hygienic drying facilities should be easily available.
* Appropriate space and equipment should be available for any intended activity.
* If food is regularly prepared on the premises, the facilities will need to be checked by the Environmental Health Office and a Food Handling and Hygiene Certificate acquired.
* Children’s packed lunches should be kept refrigerated.
* Drinks should be available.
* Groups must have access to a phone in order to call for help if necessary.
* Adults must be aware of the fire procedures.
* Unaccompanied children or adults deemed vulnerable should be discouraged from walking along dark and badly lit paths in or outside of the premises.
* Suitable provision for first aid must be available.

**Special and additional needs**

If a child or adult has special/additional needs, welcome them to the group. Try to make the premises, toilets and access suitable for their needs. Ask the parents/carers how best to meet the person’s needs. If premises are being redesigned or refurbished, take the opportunity to anticipate the possible special needs of future children and adults.

Disability legislation requires organisations to take reasonable steps to meet the needs of disabled people, and this includes children.

Children and young people who self-harm or who have mental health needs

Some children and young people self-harm to help them express their emotions. Others may express thoughts of self-harm or suicidal intent. If any child or young person expresses thoughts of suicide, advice should be sought immediately. The group leader should be informed, and discussions should take place about the need to inform parents/carers and involve other services. If the situation is not urgent, consideration should still be given to contacting parents/carers and referring to appropriate agencies who can offer support.

Vulnerable Children and Young People

Some children and young people are more vulnerable than others to being victims or child sexual exploitation, human trafficking and modern-day slavery. If it is suspected that a child or young person is affected by any of these issues, the group leader should be informed, and further advice sought from the DSO and statutory authorities.

Whistleblowing

Concerns about safer practice and behaviour should always be raised as soon as possible. If any member, volunteer or employee feels that any adult is or has behaved inappropriately towards a child, they should speak to a group leader of an activity in the first instance or a church, circuit or district safeguarding officer or statutory services.

See link to the Methodist Whistleblowing Policy: Discipleship & Ministries document (methodist.org.uk)

Drug and Alcohol Use

Drugs and alcohol are strictly forbidden while participating in Methodist activities for young people. This applies to staff, volunteers, visitors, children and young people. If drug or alcohol use is suspected, the group leader and DSO must be informed, and a discussion should take place about informing parents/carers. Consideration should be given to the need to inform the police and for a referral to appropriate support services.

**Additional guidelines for group leaders who work with children and young people**

The provision of a service whether that is small or large or involving paid employees or volunteers, the provider must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of those using the service. At the very least, the group leader should:

* ensure that health and safety requirements are understood and adhered to (*e.g. the suitability of the setting for the activity planned, where the first aid kit is and who are the trained first-aiders, where the fire exits are)*
* undertake risk assessments, take appropriate action, and record it
* keep the register (*where required*) and consent forms up to date (*including emergency contact details for participants*)
* liaise with safeguarding officer over good practice for safeguarding
* inform the safeguarding officer of any specific safeguarding concerns that arise (the safeguarding officer will liaise with the DSO)
* liaise with the Church Council/Circuit Meeting
* ensure that relevant privacy notices have been supplied where data is being processed.

Activity risk assessments

While the Church recognises that it is not possible to avoid all risk when working with vulnerable groups, it is possible to try and minimise those risks. This can be achieved through careful planning and preparation and by providing a written record of the thought processes and action taken. Activity risk assessments should be undertaken before any activity takes place, approved by the event leader/minister and retained securely in case they need to be seen at a later date (e.g. as a result of an accident taking place).

Activity risk assessments should include, but is not limited to:

* the nature of the activity
* the location
* transport needed and associated issues (e.g. insurance)
* staffing levels/gender
* experience of staff
* ages of the group attending, abilities, special needs
* medical and health needs of the group/individuals within it
* emergency planning
* identified risks
* action(s) needed to address the risk and by whom.

Safeguarding children and young people online

The internet is constantly evolving and changing, and the Methodist Church recognises the benefits it brings of promoting opportunities for children and young people to engage in the life of the Church in a way that can be inclusive of all regardless of background and/or ability. However, the internet has also been the source of harm to children and young people and others vulnerable to harm and exploitation therefore, every care should be taken to minimise the risks it presents.

Those working with children and young people are strongly advised to follow the guidance set out below:

* When posting activity ideas for children or young people, ensure they comply with good safeguarding practice.
* Ensure that parents or carers are aware of what their children or young people are doing and have given their written permission in advance.
* Children and young people should be regularly informed and reminded of safe internet use and accessing social media. They must be encouraged to access websites such as NSPCC or ChildLine or talk to an adult if they have any concerns or fears.
* Warn children and young people about the dangers of giving out personal details on the internet.
* When demonstrations are being given, plan beforehand to ensure that all websites visited have material that is appropriate for the age group taking part.
* Use child-friendly search engines when asking children and young people to undertake their own searches on the internet.
* Where children and young people are encouraged to undertake subsequent searches on the internet at home, they must only do so with the knowledge of their parent or carer.
* Encourage children and young people to obtain parental consent if they wish to develop internet friends into face-to-face friendships. Even then, they should always be accompanied on any first meeting.

**Digital images and the use of photographs/recordings online**

Photography and video footage are important ways of recording Methodist activity and illustrating important moments in people’s lives and the life of our Church. However, we must respect the rights of everyone to choose whether or not to be photographed or recorded. As a guide to good practice, please see the list below:

Do not use children’s names in photograph captions. If a child is named, do not use the image without written permission as images accompanied by personal information, such as the name of a child could be used to learn more about a child before grooming them for abuse.

Only use images of children in suitable clothing to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. Some activities, for example swimming and drama, present a much greater risk of potential misuse.

For professional photographers or the press invited to an event, state in writing what you expect from them in relation to child protection.

Do not allow photographers unsupervised access to children or approve photography sessions outside the event or at a child’s home.

Consent for use of images

While the Church recognises that many sixteen to seventeen years-olds have significant responsibility for key decisions in their lives, in most circumstances, parents have a legal responsibility for their children up to the age of eighteen. If, after assessment of the young person’s individual circumstances, a decision is made that it may not be appropriate for consent to be obtained by their parents, this should be discussed with a safeguarding officer. There may also be circumstances known to the legal parent or guardian relating to the use of images of which the young person is unaware. Therefore, if a decision is taken that a consent form is not required, parents must still be informed of the consent given by the young person in relation to photographs and images. This approach is in line with current NSPCC guidance.

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**Definitions of Key Terms when Safeguarding Children**

Child

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 their status or entitlements to services or protection. *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.*

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children

* Defined for the purposes of this guidance as:
* protecting children from maltreatment
* preventing impairment of children’s health or development
* ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
* taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances. *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*

Child protection

Activity undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm. *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*

Harm and significant harm

‘Harm’ means ill-treatment or impairment of health and development. ‘Significant harm’ is the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of the children and is based on comparing the child’s health and development to that which could be reasonably expected of a child of a similar age. *Children Act 1989 and 2004; the Adoption and Children Act 2002*

**Definitions of abuse**

Physical abuse

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*

Emotional abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child so as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or ‘making fun’ of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children, including interactions that are beyond a child’s developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone. *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*

Sexual abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Child criminal exploitation is commonly associated with county lines criminal activity. It often (but not exclusively) involves adult gang members taking advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into criminal Page | 51 activity such as drug-related crime. The victim may have been groomed into criminality therefore, they may appear to have given consent to be involved, but it can still be the victim of exploitation. Like sexual exploitation, CCE does not always take place in person and can occur through the use of technology. Criminal exploitation of children also includes children engaged in forced labour or to commit theft.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

The term Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) refers to traumatic events that occur in childhood and/or adolescence. As with other forms of abuse, ACEs can be a single event or, occur repeatedly over a period of time creating prolonged threats to the safety and wellbeing of a child’s physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and mental health needs.

Examples of ACEs include:

* Physical, sexual, emotional abuse
* Neglect
* Living with someone who is alcohol / drugs dependent
* Witnessing domestic abuse
* Living with someone with serious mental illness
* Losing a parent through divorce, death or abandonment

The impact of experiencing ACEs can have a detrimental effect on the future physical and mental health of a child, and become a barrier to a healthy adult life. Research shows that it increases the risk of mental ill-health, violence in adult relationships and post-traumatic stress to name a few. Therefore, it is vital to support those who come forward who disclose ACEs.

Domestic abuse

The government definition describes domestic violence and abuse as: ‘Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.’ It also states that this includes (but is not limited to) sexual, psychological, physical, financial and emotional abuse; ‘honour’ based violence; female genital mutilation (FGM); and, forced marriage.

Controlling behaviour subjugates the victim by taking away their access to support and resources (often their own) resulting in a lack of independence and an over-regulation of their day-to-day lives often eroding their capacity to make any decisions in respect of themselves. Coercion refers to deliberate acts of assault and threatening behaviour that humiliates and intimidates the victim often in agreeing to things they have do not wish to engage or comply with. It is important to be clear that domestic abuse can affect anyone regardless of sexuality, gender or age.

Spiritual abuse

Coercion and control of one individual by another in a spiritual context. The target experiences spiritual abuse as a deeply personal attack. This may include manipulation and exploitation, enforced accountability, censorship of decision-making, requirements for secrecy and silence, pressure to conform, misuse of Scripture or the pulpit to control behaviour, requirement of obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that the abuser has a ‘divine’ position, isolation from others, especially those external to the abusive context. *Lisa Oakley and Kathryn Kimmond, 2014, Journal of Adult Protection*

Abuse using social media

Online abuse and any type of abuse that happens on the web including, social media, smart/Android mobile phones, tablets, online gaming among others. Children and young people may experience cyber bullying, grooming, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or emotional abuse online. Even if there is no physical contact, abuse can still take place whether that is by someone a child/young person knows or, by a stranger who may have attempted to befriend them virtually. *Online abuse | NSPCC*

Child trafficking

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in human beings”. *Council of Europe, ratified by the UK Government in 2008 (See also Human Trafficking)*

Possible indicators of abuse – children

Identifying abuse is not easy, and the indicators given here are examples only. Some of the indicators can occur in more than one type of abuse and it must be borne in mind that there can sometimes be other non-abusive explanations. However, they may alert you to the need to be aware of the possibility of abuse, to be observant and to record any concerns. If in doubt, you should always seek advice from a safeguarding professional.

Physical

* bruising in unusual places, patterns or shapes
* burns and scalds, especially in significant shapes (e.g. iron or cigarette end)
* adult human bite marks
* serious injury where there is a lack of, or an inconsistent explanation
* untreated injuries
* unusual fractures.

Children may be:

* unusually fearful with adults
* unnaturally compliant with their parents/ carers
* wearing clothes that cover up their arms and legs
* reluctant to talk about or refuse to discuss any injuries, or fearful of medical help
* aggressive towards others.

Emotional

Children may:

* present with extreme behaviours
* be overactive or withdrawn
* demonstrate anxiety e.g. rocking, hair-twisting or thumb sucking
* lack confidence or self-worth
* lack concentration
* self-harm
* engage in substance misuse
* have frequent periods of going missing / running away
* reluctance to go home
* have sleep / eating disorders
* have difficulty trusting adults or, very anxious
* have poor school attendance
* social isolation
* aggressive towards others

Neglect

Indicators may include:

* poor personal hygiene and presentation e.g. unkempt clothing unclean and ill-fitting
* untreated medical needs / conditions
* failure to thrive
* children who are constantly hungry and frequently tired
* poor concentration
* developmental delay
* frequent accidents and/or accidental
* low self-esteem
* injuries
* social isolation
* eating disorders
* poor skin tone and hair tone
* begging and stealing

Sexual abuse

* Changes in behaviour – a child may start being aggressive, withdrawn, clingy, have difficulties sleeping or start wetting the bed.
* Avoiding the abuser – the child may dislike or seem afraid of a particular person and try to avoid spending time alone with them.
* Sexually inappropriate behaviour – or sexually explicit language.
* Physical problems – health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas or sexually transmitted infections, or pregnancy.
* Problems at school – an abused child may have difficulty concentrating and learning and their grades may start to drop.
* Giving clues – children may also drop hints and clues that the abuse is happening without revealing it outright.

**Important telephone numbers**

Local agencies – *this information is available from your Church Safeguarding Officer*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Police (all non-emergency enquiries) |  |
| Local police Child/Family Protection Unit |  |
| Local council Children’s Services/Social Care |  |
| Local Emergency Social Work Team |  |
| Local general hospital |  |

Support and Advice Organisations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ChildLine | 0800 1111 |
| Family Lives (helpline for parents) | 0808 800 2222 |
| YoungMinds (parents helpline, mental health) | 0808 802 5544 |
| Hopeline (suicide support for young people) | 0800 068 4141 |
| FRANK (drug and alcohol support) | 0300 123 6600 |

Telephone Numbers for Staff

District Contacts

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| District Safeguarding Officer | 07483 362 735 |
| LN Regional Coordinator (Training) | Rachel McCallam 07799 900478 |

Church and circuit contacts (please write in your local numbers):

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Role** | **Phone** |
|  | Superintendent Minister |  |
|  | Minister |  |
|  | Circuit Safeguarding  Officer (Children) |  |
|  | Church Safeguarding  Officer (Children) |  |

*Notes from the District Safeguarding Officer*

Hello!

Thank you for reading this quick guide. Further help and support is widely

available if you would like to know more or require clarification:

**Church level** – the name and contact number of your Church Safeguarding Officer is above. They should be your specific contact person if you have any questions about safeguarding at a local level.

**Circuit level** – the name and number of the Circuit Safeguarding Officer is also above. They provide support and oversight for local churches and implementing safeguarding and ensure that activities with children and adults, both within the circuit and local churches, are provided according to good practice and safeguarding procedures.

**District level** – my name and number is also above. I am responsible for advising and following through safeguarding concerns within the district.

**Connexional level** – Every 12 months the Connexion produce a comprehensive guide to all things of a safeguarding nature – this guide is called Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church in Britain. You can access this document by going to the Methodist Church website or by clinking [here](http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/30182/safeguarding_policy_and_procedures_for_the_methodist_church_in-britain_july_2023.pdf).

Thank you for giving your time and energy to supporting our children and young people 😊

Alison Hill

12.8.2023