**SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy for Christ Church Halton LEP

This policy was agreed at a Church Council held on 12 October 2023

The Methodist Church and United Reformed Church, along with the whole Christian community, believes each person has a value and dignity which comes directly from God’s creation in God’s own image and likeness. Christians see this as fulfilled by God’s re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things, this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and to protect them from harm.

Christ Church Halton LEP is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults and affirms that the needs of children or of people when they are vulnerable and at risk are paramount.

Christ Church Halton LEP recognises that it has a particular care for all who are vulnerable whether by disabilities or by reduction in capacities or by their situation. It is recognised that this increased vulnerability may be temporary or permanent and may be visible or invisible, but that it does not diminish our humanity and seeks to affirm the gifts and graces of all God’s people.

This policy addresses the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It is intended to be a dynamic policy. It is intended to support the Church in being a safe supportive and caring community for children, young people, vulnerable adults, for survivors of abuse, for communities and for those affected by abuse.

Christ Church Halton LEP fully agrees with the statement reiterated in *Creating Safer Space* 2007:

*As the people of the Methodist Church we are concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God’s purpose for everyone. We seek to safeguard all members of the church community of all ages.*

Christ Church Halton LEP recognises the serious issue of the abuse of children and vulnerable adults and recognises that this may take the form of physical, emotional, sexual, financial, spiritual, discriminatory, domestic or institutional abuse or neglect, abuse using social media or human trafficking (slavery). It acknowledges the effects these may have on people and their development, including spiritual and religious development. It accepts its responsibility for ensuring that all people are safe in its care and that their dignity and right to be heard is maintained. It accepts its responsibility to support, listen to and work for healing with survivors, offenders, communities and those who care about them. It takes seriously the issues of promotion of welfare so that each of us can reach our full potential in God’s grace.

Christ Church Halton LEP commits itself to:

1. Carefully **SELECT AND TRAIN** all those with any responsibility within the church, including the use of criminal records checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

2. **RESPOND** without delay to every safeguarding concern, which suggests that a child, young person or adult may have been harmed, working in partnership with the police and social services in any investigation.

3. **CHALLENGE** any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.

4. **WORK** with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care.

5. Ensure the **IMPLEMENTATION** of Connexional Safeguarding Policy; government legislation and guidance and safe practice in the URC Synod, circuit and in the churches.

6. Working with the Church Safeguarding Officer, to support **RISK ASSESSMENT** of those who present a safeguarding risk within a church environment. We will ensure appropriate pastoral care is offered and measures are taken to address identified risks including referral to statutory agencies, suspension and the use of safeguarding contracts.

7. The **PROVISION** of support, advice and training for lay and ordained people that will ensure people are clear and confident about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults who may be vulnerable.

8. **AFFIRM** and give thanks for those who work with children and vulnerable adults and also acknowledge the shared responsibility of all of us for safeguarding vulnerable adults who are on our premises.

9. **CONSIDER** the safeguarding principles, policies and processes of the United Reformed Church, its LEP partner church, in dealing with safeguarding concerns and issues, and inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer of any issues.

10. Work to **IMPLEMENT** Methodist Church Safer Recruitment procedures, where appropriate, over the coming 12 months.

**Church Council**

It is the responsibility of the Church Council to appoint a Church Safeguarding Officer and there should be no gaps in this crucial provision. It is not appropriate for the Ministers to fill any gap, because of the potential conflict of roles. The role will usually be undertaken on a voluntary basis although expenses should be met..

Christ Church LEP Church Council appoints Andy Birkett as Church Safeguarding Rep, and supports him in his role, which is to:

• provide support and advice to the Ministers and the Stewards in fulfilling their roles with regard to safeguarding.

• ensure that a suitable, signed church safeguarding policy is available at all times in the church, along with names of current safeguarding officers, national helplines and other suitable information. This must be renewed annually.

• record all safeguarding issues that are reported to the church safeguarding officer, according to Methodist safeguarding policy.

• promote appropriate routes for reporting of concerns

• identify and inform those who are required to attend safeguarding training and maintain records of attendance. Work with the Circuit Safeguarding Officer and Church Safeguarding Officer to arrange training.

• attend training and meetings relating to the role work in partnership with others including stewards and user groups to promote good safeguarding practice on church premises. This may include gaining written confirmation that hirers of church premises are aware of the church safeguarding policy or are using an appropriate policy of their own.

• check that safeguarding is included as an agenda item at all Church Council meetings and report to the Church Council annually.

• inform all those with responsibility for recruitment, whether paid or voluntary, of their obligation to follow safer recruitment procedures.

• advise the Circuit Safeguarding Officer and/or Church Safeguarding Officer of any issues with compliance with safeguarding training, policy or safer recruitment requirements and respond promptly to any request from them about audit of safeguarding activities.

**a) Purpose**

The purposes of this safeguarding policy are to ensure procedures are in place and people are clear about roles and responsibilities for children, young people and vulnerable adults in our care and using our premises. It is to be read in conjunction with the *Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church* (2017).

**b) Good practice**

We believe that good practice means:

i) All people are treated with respect and dignity.

ii) Those who act on behalf of the Church should not meet or work alone with a child or vulnerable adult where the activity cannot be seen unless this is necessary for pastoral reasons, in which case a written note of this will be made and kept noting date, time and place of visit.

iii) The church premises will be assessed by the church safeguarding officer with the property steward and/or their representatives at least annually for safety for children and vulnerable adults and the risk assessment report will be given annually to the Church Council in written form. This will include fire safety procedures. The Church Council will consider the extent to which the premises and equipment are suitable or should be made more suitable.

iv) Promotion of safeguarding is recognised to include undertaking those tasks which enable all God’s people to reach their full potential. The Church Council will actively consider the extent to which it is succeeding in this area.

These things are to safeguard those working with children, young people and those adults who may be vulnerable.

**c) Pastoral visitors**

In terms of safeguarding, pastoral visitors will be supported in their role with the provision of basic safeguarding training upon appointment. A criminal records check will be carried out prior to appointment as a pastoral visitor, if required based on the activities they will be expected to carry out.

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

A leaflet outlining good practice and systems will be produced and given to everyone who works with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This leaflet will be reviewed annually. Church Council may produce its own material or use appropriate connexional leaflets (eg the *Quick Reference Guide* or *Code of Safer Working Practice*).

**e) Ecumenical events**

Where ecumenical events happen on Christ Church premises, safeguarding is the responsibility of this Church Council.

**f) Other groups on church premises**

Where the building is hired for outside use, the Church Safeguarding Officer should be informed. The Church Safeguarding Officer will keep the records and take advice as appropriate from the Circuit Safeguarding Officer.

**g) Complaints procedure**

There is a formal complaints procedure within the Methodist Church, which allows concerns to be raised about actions or behaviour by a member or officer of the Church. In addition, employed staff will be subject to relevant contractual procedures. All complaints will be responded to with care, diligence and impartiality.

A complaint should be addressed to the Superintendent Ministers, Revd Tanya Short and Revd George Bailey. If a complaint is made to another person it should be referred to the superintendents. Meetings will be arranged with the person making the complaint and, usually, the person against whom the complaint has been made, in an attempt to resolve it. If the complaint is against the superintendent, it should be sent to the District Chair, the Revd Kerry Tankard c/o Touchstone, 4 Easby Road, Bradford, BD7 1QX.

Safeguarding officers must be informed of any complaint or issue relating to the potential abuse of children, young people or adults who may be vulnerable. They will support prompt action to respond to the circumstances of any safeguarding concern, whether or not any party involved wishes to make a formal complaint through the Methodist Church.

**h) Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Church Council. The date of the next review is:

12 October 2024

**i) Key concepts and definitions**

Definition of Key Terms

i) A child is anyone who has not yet reached their eighteenth birthday.

ii) Vulnerable Adults: Any adult aged 18 or over who, due to disability, mental function, age or illness or traumatic circumstances, may not be able to take care or protect themselves.

iii) Safeguarding and protecting children or vulnerable adults from maltreatment; preventing impairment of their health and ensuring safe and effective care.

iv) Adult/child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect children/specific adults who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm, including neglect.

v) Abuse and neglect may occur in a family, a community or an institution. It may be perpetrated by a person or persons known to the child, young person or vulnerable adult or by strangers; by an adult or by a child. It may be an infliction of harm or a failure to prevent harm.

vi) Worker: anyone working with children or vulnerable adults in the name of Christ Church Halton LEP, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity

Dated 12 October 2023

Signed ................................................................................Chair of Church Council