

These Best Practice Guidelines are intended to supplement and clarify the Guidance in the Methodist Church Safeguarding Handbooks and does not override any guidance or instructions within them.

LEGAL MATTERS

It is the law that anybody who withholds information which could have prevented abuse of a vulnerable person taking place commits an offence.

Safeguarding is not like other 'corporate' offences in that liability is on the individuals and not on the organisation or company.

It is illegal to ask somebody to submit to DBS checking if the role that they volunteer for does not warrant it. It is never appropriate to approach statutory bodies for information in respect of a child (ie under 18) although they can be asked to do a Self-declaration. It is bad practice to seek a self-declaration for any child under 16, However local information and that gained by the Safeguarder and Minister can be taken into consideration.

Under 18s cannot be given responsibilities that would otherwise fall on a DBS checked adult. For personal development children can help out in children's groups, holiday clubs etc but only under supervision. Children must never carry out toilet duties or be left alone supervising younger children.

DBS CHECKING

Church Council Members

Voting members of the Church Council are also trustees of the Church and by implication are trustees of a charity that engaged with Regulated Activities. Therefore voting members are eligible for DBS checking. The guidelines states that there should be minimum of three including the Safeguarding Officer and a Steward. However it is vital the Church Council Members have a full understanding and take responsibility for the Safeguarding within the Church. It should therefore be expected that all will participate in DBS checking.

It will be anticipated that all Church Council Members should have a DBS check unless there are specific reasons, agreed by the Church Council, why they should not be.

Pastoral Visitors

The position on DBS checking of Pastoral Visitors is somewhat blurred. If their list contains anybody who is unable to fully protect themselves or needs assistance at any time with financial, hygiene, health or transport then a DBS check must be done – otherwise it does. With the new definition of 'Adults who may at some time in their lives be vulnerable' the issue is clouded even more. If we force Pastoral Visitors to have a DBS when they are not required to have one we may lose valuable and caring people. It is also criminal offence and breaches human rights legislation.

Personal Declarations and the Foundation Course must be done by everybody. A way forward is to encourage Pastoral Visitors to have a DBS check. If they are unwilling then the Safeguarder will have to check (ongoing) if anyone on their list is in the 'vulnerable' category and transfer them to a different list. An alternative approach is to have a Lead Group of Pastoral Visitors who are DBS checked and can assist when required.

VERIFYING OFFICERS

Verifying Officers are appointed by the Church Councils as are Safeguarding Officers. **The Verifier may be the Minister, the Safeguarding Officer or any other person appointed by the Church Council.**

ADULT to CHILDREN RATIOS

The recommended minimum staffing levels for children's groups are given below:

More help may be required if children are being taken out, are undertaking physical activities or if circumstances require it.

0 – 2 yrs 1 person for every 3 children 1 : 3

2 – 3 yrs 1 person for every 4 children 1 : 4

3 – 8 yrs 1 person for every 8 children 1 : 8

Over 8 yrs 1 person for the first 8 children then 1 extra person for every extra 12 children.

- **Each group should have at least 2 adults and it is recommended that there should be at least one male and one female.**
- **If small groups are in the same room or adjoining rooms with open access between them then it is possible to have only one adult per group, dependent on the nature of the activity. The Safeguarding Officer must be consulted.**
- **Young people who are being encouraged to develop their leadership skills through helping, 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.**

Toilet Policy

Leaders to be aware when children need to go to the toilet.

Leaders to encourage children that the best time to go to the toilet is during games in the Wesley Hall – as one corridor with doors direct to each toilet. Also craft times are useful with the Lifeworks toilet. With a leader standing outside the toilets in the corridor.

Otherwise to follow the below guidance.

4-5 year olds: A supervisor should take a small group of children and check that an adult is not in the toilet when the child goes in. No adult should enter a toilet cubicle with a child – if this is necessary then a second person with a DBS would need to supervise. Toilet duty should be done by someone of the same gender. The supervisor should wait by the double doors. Encourage children to not lock the cubicle doors.

6-7 year olds: A supervisor should take a small group of children and check that an adult is not in the toilet when the child goes in. No adult should enter a toilet cubicle with a child – if this is necessary

then a second person with a DBS would need to supervise. Toilet duty should be done by someone of the same gender. The supervisor should wait by the double doors.

8-10 year olds: Leaders to be aware when children have gone to the toilet and ensure they return promptly.

11-18 year olds: Leaders to be aware when children have gone to the toilet and ensure they return promptly

TAKING CHILDREN OUT

PRE-EVENT PROCESS

When taking children out on trips a full risk assessment must be made and attention paid to Transporting Children (see below). Emergency contacts and procedures must also be made to ensure the continued safety of all in the event of an incident.

A full risk assessment must be carried out and verified by the Safeguarding Officer. The name and parent contact number details for all children must be left with a Home Contact whose responsibility is to liaise between organiser and parents in the event of an incident. [This ensures that the leaders can be fully occupied in dealing with the incident knowing that communication between them and parents are being handled calmly, efficiently without impacting on the incident itself]. All safeguarding requirements as for on-site supervision REMAIN IN PLACE.

See additional Best Practice document 'Taking Children Off Site'

MEDIA – Still and Moving

Every parent, **and child**, has to give permission for photographs to be taken **before** the shutter clicks. Parents can only take pictures of their own children for their personal use. If other children are in the picture ie nativity tableaux, the pictures must not be put on social media. Any parent not wishing their child to be part of a photo-tableau should see that they are withdrawn before pictures are taken.

TRANSPORTING CHILDREN IN CARS/MINIBUSSES

There are very specific regulations about transporting children in cars on behalf of a Church organisation.

There must always be a minimum of two adults in the vehicle, one must be CRB checked. The driver MUST NOT have more the 6 penalty points on their licence or convicted of a serious road traffic offence in the previous TWO years. If a mini-bus is used the second adult MUST sit in the middle of the bus with the children.

THERE IS AN EXCEPTION. If due to an emergency it is necessary to transport a child home or to hospital and there would be insufficient leaders to supervisors the remaining children, then the driver CAN transport the child alone providing the child is seated in the rear seat of the car. The parent(s) MUST be informed as soon as possible.

ARCHIVING

ALL safeguarding documentation must be kept indefinitely. This includes copies of Forms, Log books, reports, registers, employment records, Covenant(s) of Care and any other personal letters/emails that form part of 'concerns'.

It is expected that each Church will have a locked cupboard or Safe accessible only to the Minister and Safeguarder where all archive copies of forms and other relevant Safeguarding documents are stored. Sensitive documents held on personal computers MUST have hard copies in the Archive and must be protected with encryption using password protection on each document. Personal reports from the DBS system are the private confidential property of the volunteer AND MUST NOT BE HELD by the Church. Where these are found in files they should be returned or shredded if the volunteer has left the church and there is no forwarding address.

TRAINING

It is essential for all volunteers in the Church to have the same level of understand as to what constitutes abuse for both Children and Adults who may be Vulnerable, how to detect it and what to do in the event of evidencing something that should be noted. For that reason Conference has stated that all volunteers must complete the course. Clearly, common sense must prevail and the Church does not expect a 90 year old lady serving the teas or the aged and infirmed casual volunteers to attend.

All volunteers and employees in the Methodist Church must attend the Creating Safer Places Foundation Course within their first year of volunteering. Update training must be undertaken at five year intervals.