



# THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

## Safeguarding Procedures

For children and young people



2012



# MESSAGE OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND FOREWORD

The gospel of Mark 10:13 – 14 is a source of encouragement in this regard:

“People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them ... When Jesus saw this ... He said ‘Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these.’”

May this be at the centre of each local church!

Peace and Grace!

Ziphozihle D. Siwa  
Presiding Bishop

*The attitude of Jesus was to include children in His Kingdom; the Church recognises that children are able to make a response in faith appropriate to their age and grow in faith by participating in worship. The children can make a valid contribution to the life of the Church and should be with their parents in the central act of worship. It is in the best interest of all of us to affirm and make children welcome and to enjoy a greater sense of community in our Church.*

Laws and Discipline 1.23.6

Thus as Methodist people committed to the Methodist Rule of Life, we accept the responsibility of ‘doing no harm, avoiding evil of every kind,’ but rather ‘doing good by being merciful after one’s own power ... to the bodies of people, [especially children], as well as to their souls’ as far as possible putting children and youth at the centre of our Church and Christian family.

Every Methodist should be an evangelist and indeed, in spirit, a missionary for all children.

Conference recognises that the work undertaken with children by Societies, Circuits and Districts is of great value in bringing children to Christ.

Conference believes that in furtherance of our vision for the local churches to become more youth and child centred and in acceptance of the imperative that as Christians we are charged to love and care for each other, especially the most vulnerable and those at risk, it is important that our child care practice as a Church mirrors and develops good practice in safeguarding of children.

Accordingly, Conference receives the draft safeguarding policy prepared Connexionally and directs that consultation shall be effected within each District, Circuit and Society, with the intention that a Safeguarding policy shall be available to be approved by Conference 2013.

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**The Methodist Church of Southern Africa**

*A Christ healed Africa for the healing of nations*

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

To proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ for healing and  
transformation

## **OUR VISION**

*For the local churches to become more youth and child  
centred*

As Christians we are charged to love and care for each other,  
especially the most vulnerable and those at risk.

**“A CHRIST HEALED AFRICA FOR  
THE HEALING OF NATIONS”**

# **PRINCIPLES**

- **IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN**
- **SAFEGUARD AND PROMOTE THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN**
- **PROTECT ALL CHILDREN FROM HARM**
- **ESTABLISHMENT OF SAFE, CARING, RESPECTFUL, CHURCHES AND MINISTRIES.**
- **ENSURE RESPONSE WITHOUT DELAY**
- **MEET COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS TO ATTAIN HOLISTIC HUMAN DIGNITY**

### **3. INTRODUCTION, AIMS AND KEY CONCEPTS**

This is the first time that the church and the people called Methodists of Southern Africa have embarked consciously on a joint effort to ensure that the “Best interest of the Child” is the most important course for joint action.

The church is suggesting the following course of action as a basic guideline:

#### **3.1 WHAT ARE THE REALITIES WE FACE AS CHURCHES?**

There are currently no formal guidelines to assist Clergy and Laity to determine what the best course of action is for assisting children abused, neglected, exploited or affected by any form of abuse.

Many Clergy and Laity are not aware of the various sources of national legislation, which compel or encourage them to report.

At Connexional and District level no formal policy exists to aid Clergy and Laity in ensuring that children receive the services that they require following a disclosure of abuse. Support services from the church do not always support the activities of the state.

There is also often a lack of co-ordinated Child Protection Services which often frustrates Clergy and Laity who are committed to help. This can cause Clergy and Laity to be incorrectly reluctant to use the minimal service available, even though in some cases there is a statutory duty to do so.

The Child Protection field is in a constant state of change. The Church struggles to remain up to date on developments via the various CBO and governmental forums which recognise and encourage the participation of Faith Based Organisations in child protection.

Advocating for the rights of children and the role of the Church in this regard is under developed in this regard. There is an under developed recognition of the advocacy role of the Church to lodge complaints to the relevant service providers in their immediate area. Lack of action for advocating for the rights of children is our failure as a church.

## 3.2 THEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding children is our obligation as a church.

### 3.2.1 God creates every unique person as a child with dignity.

We all begin life as children, created in the image of God. Children are born fully human, with identity and purpose. The journey of childhood is part of God's plan. All people reflect God's image through living in loving community with him and one another. Children most fully express their God-given dignity in glorifying Him.

***God intends** that no one prevent a child's life from fulfilling His purpose. Respecting the image of God in every child demands a Christ-like response to nurture them throughout childhood.*

Genesis 1:26-31; 2:18-25 (creation); Psalm 8; Psalm 139  
Matthew 18:1-10 ("millstone," welcoming children)  
Matthew 21:15-16

### 3.2.2 Children need parental love in a broken world.

God's design is for each child to be born, vulnerable and dependent, to loving parents within the covenant of marriage. God's desire is for each child to grow in this secure, caring environment. In a fallen world, people and relationships can be damaged. When parents struggle to fulfil their intended role, others must provide dedicated care for them and their children.

***God intends** for all children to be raised by at least one loving, committed adult.*

Psalm 68:5-6 (Father to the fatherless); Proverbs 17:6; Matthew 1; Luke 2 (Nativity story); Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20.

### 3.2.3 God gives children as a gift to welcome and nurture.

It is a privilege to join with children in celebrating their uniqueness, embracing childhood as formative for the whole person. Family, friends, church and the local community are responsible for creating an environment that promotes children's well-being.

***God intends** for children to thrive in stable and loving relationships.*

Genesis 21:17-20; 30:17-20 ;Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 1 Samuel 1:20, 2:18-21, 26; Psalm 127:3-5,128:1-6; Proverbs 22:6; Isaiah 40:11.

### **3.2.4 Society has a God-given responsibility for the well-being of children and families.**

All children and families live in society and are dependent on institutions for healthcare, shelter, access to social services, safe drinking water, information and safety. The church must collaborate with these institutions for the common good, and if they fail, the church must speak and act with and on behalf of the vulnerable.

***God intends children to flourish in a just society.***

Deuteronomy 10:18; Psalm 89:14-15; Proverbs 28:5  
Isaiah 10:1-3; Isaiah 58:6-14; Lamentations 2:19

### **3.2.5 Children are a promise of hope for every generation.**

Each generation has a unique contribution in God's purposes for human history. Children have been shaped by the history of their community, are living fully in the present moment, and will reshape their community for the future.

***God intends that each generation will extend faith and fullness of life to the next. God intends that this generation grasp the centrality of children to his purposes for our time.***

Genesis 22:17-18; Genesis 48:15-49:28 (Jacob's blessings and curses);  
Deuteronomy 11:18-21 (teaching children) ; Esther 4:14  
Matthew 1 (genealogies)

### **3.2.6 God welcomes children fully into the family of faith.**

Children are essential to the life and ministry of the church, bringing spiritual gifts and abilities and fulfilling definite roles. The church needs to be a place where children may dynamically connect with God and engage in meaningful participation; disciplined, equipped and empowered for life and ministry. As members of the family of God, children are to be cared for as sons and daughters and are part of the admonition to love and serve one another.

***God intends for churches to provide children with opportunities to know him and fulfil their calling in the body of Christ.***

Deuteronomy 31:12-13; Psalm 8:2a; Matthew 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48; Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17.

### **3.2.7 Children are essential to the mission of God.**

God desires every child in every generation across the world to know Him and make Him known. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus calls the whole Church to reconcile relationships: with God, with family, with community and with society.

***God intends** that His Church be a witness in every community of His transforming power, so that His purpose for every child can be accomplished.*

Genesis 12:2-4; 2 Kings 22:1-2; Matthew 22:37-39; Luke 10:25-37  
Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-18, 20; Luke 4:16-20; John 20:21  
(Celebrating Children Workshop Module 1)

## **3.3 SOCIETAL CONTEXT SOUTHERN AFRICA**

There has been a growing awareness of child protection in Southern Africa and that harm to children can occur in many different contexts including home, church, schools etc. This growing awareness is demonstrated in the inclusion of Children's Rights in the Constitution, and the adoption of the Convention of the Rights of the Child which culminated in the development of the South African Children's Charter. Many Southern African countries followed suit and presently all countries are now also signatories to the African Children's Charter, and have responsible ministries within their countries dealing with children's issues and children's safety.

The legislation has high ideals for improving child protection and safeguarding for all children: however it lacks infrastructure, people, some skills and basic resources to reassure the least of our citizens that we actually have their best interest at heart collectively.

Therefore, if safeguarding is everybody's business, it is required of us all to be disturbed by the lack of equal information to the citizens who need to help in keeping our children safe, as well as being disturbed by the lack of resources and personnel to adequately serve the vulnerable children often failed by the system and a lack of political will.

If it takes a village to raise a child, surely it also takes the whole church to raise well-adjusted and balanced children as God intended. This is our God given obligation; it is and will always be our prophetic voice.

### **3.4 DESCRIPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS:**

**Child:**

Refers to any person under the age of 18 years.

**Parent/caregiver:**

Mother, and or father, grandmother; any person including a parent or guardian who cares for a child either as a single issue or a longer term.

**Safeguarding:**

This is work that aims to achieve the 5 basic outcomes which are key to the child in later life and include:

- Safety;
  - Stay safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence, and sexual exploitation
  - From accidental injury and death
  - From physical and emotional harm
  - From discrimination, anti-social behaviour or bullying in and out of school
  - Stay secure and stable under adequate care
- Healthy
  - Physically
  - Mentally
  - Emotionally and socially
  - Sexually
  - Lead a healthy life style
  - Abstain from toxic substances such as drugs, alcohol etc.
  - Have access to adequate health care; clean water and nutrition.
- Achieve and enjoy
  - School
  - Higher national education standards
  - Personal and social development and recreation
  - Creativity
- Positive Contribution
  - Engage in positive decision making
  - Support community and environmental sustainability
  - Engage in socially acceptable behaviour
  - Support inclusivity

- Develop self-confidence
- Deal with significant changes and challenges positively
- Economic Wellbeing
  - Have access to further education opportunities
  - Engage in training and productive employment
  - Live in sustainable communities in decent homes
  - Access efficient and reliable transport
  - Participate in enterprising behaviour

**Child Abuse:**

Is the mistreatment of a child under the age of 18 years, by a parent/caregiver, someone living in their home or someone who is a care-worker or has access to children. Child abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual, spiritual/cultural or psychological.

**Neglect:**

Happens when a parent/caregiver fails to provide adequate supervision, food, clothing, shelter, or other basics for a child, even access to medication and education.

**Child Protection:**

It is the responsibility of all adults who take seriously the best interest of all our children by ensuring their safety. It includes prevention of harm, early intervention, and removal from harmful situations, including the reduction of the harmful consequences of previous abuse.

**Street children:**

Any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by adults. These may be abandoned or separated children or they may be children who return to their families of origin each day or frequently.

## **4. TYPES, SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HARM**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION:**

It is unlikely that any one of these in isolation can lead one to believe that there has been abuse as one needs to look at the whole context of the child. However, the following list will be of assistance in coming to a view. You should remember that you can always seek advice from the local church leader, social services office or the Childcare Desk.

### **4.2 TYPES AND SIGNS OF ABUSE**

#### **4.2.1 PHYSICAL ABUSE:**

May involve hitting, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may be caused when a parent or caregiver fabricates the symptoms or deliberately induced illness in a child.

#### **PHYSICAL SIGNS**

- Bruising, especially trunk, upper arm, shoulders, neck or finger tip bruising
- Burns/scalds, especially cigarette
- Human bite marks
- Fractures, especially spiral
- Swelling and lack of normal use of limbs
- Significant injury with lack of/inconsistent explanation
- Untreated injuries

#### **PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE:**

- Unusually fearful with adults
- Unnaturally compliant to parents/caregivers
- Refusal to discuss injuries/fear of medical help
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Aggression towards others
- Wears cover up clothing

## 4.2.2 SEXUAL ABUSE:

Involves forcing or enticing/grooming 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 causing a child to engage in masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside the clothing with an adult/older child) This may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or being involved in the production of, sexual images in inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (include via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

### PHYSICAL SIGNS

- Damage to genitalia, anus or mouth
- Sexually transmitted disease or infections
- Unexpected pregnancy especially in young/disabled girls
- Soreness to genitalia area, anus or mouth
- Unexplained recurrent urinary tract infections, discharges or abdominal pain.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS OF SEXUAL ABUSE:

- Sexual knowledge inappropriate for age
- Sexualised behaviour in young children
- Sexually provocative behaviour/promiscuity
- Hinting at sexual activity
- Sudden changes in personality
- Lack of concentration, restlessness
- Socially withdrawn
- Overly complaint behaviour
- Poor trusts in significant adults
- Regressive behaviour, onset of wetting and bed wetting – day or night
- Suicide attempts, self- mutilation, self- disgust
- Eating disorders, hysteria attacks

### **4.2.3 PHYSICAL NEGLECT**

This often creeps up in terms of increasing gradually over a period of time. Difficulties can arise when people become accepting or being manipulated to accept levels of neglect, or cease to notice increasing neglect.

#### **PHYSICAL SIGNS**

- Poor personal hygiene
- Poor state of clothing
- Emaciation, potbelly, short stature
- Poor skin tone or hair growth, including reddish scanty hair
- Untreated medical problems
- Failure to thrive with no medical reason
- Failure to meet developmental milestones
- Indicators of malnutrition
- Loitering or children unsupervised in the community/home

#### **PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS OF NEGLECT:**

- Constant hunger
- Constant tiredness
- Frequent lateness/non attendance at school
- Destructive tendencies
- Low Self-esteem
- Neurotic behaviour
- No social relationships
- Running away
- Compulsive stealing/scavenging
- Multiple accidents/accidental injuries

### **4.2.4 EMOTIONAL ABUSE:**

This is “low warmth, high criticism” style of parenting.

#### **PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS**

- Physical, mental and emotional delay
- Acceptance of punishments, which appear excessive
- Over reaction to mistakes
- Continual self-deprecations
- Sudden speech disorders

- Fear of new situations
- Anxiety
- Neurotic behaviour (such as rocking, hair twisting, thumb sucking)
- Self-mutilation and suicidal actions
- Fear of parents/caregiver being contacted
- Extremes of passivity or aggression or irritability
- Drug/substances abuse
- Running away
- Trembling
- Inability to make eye contact
- Blank eyed look/frozen watchfulness

#### **4.2.5 SPIRITUAL/CULTURAL/TRADITIONAL ABUSE**

This is the inappropriate use of religious, traditional or cultural practice or beliefs. This can include abuse of power which involves manipulation or coercing someone into action in which they do not wish to be involved. It could amount to someone thinking, saying, doing things or allowing actions to be done to them without respecting an individual's right to choose or the individual's best interest.

#### **PHYSICAL SIGNS**

- Rope marks due to being tied up, and other physical abuse signs.
- Isolation from other people or social activities
- Child feels persuaded that they are possessed or specially gifted
- Failure to receive medical care or to accept any medical solution for problem.
- Child is starved
- Sexual abuse signs resulting from ritual connotation.

#### **PHYSICAL SIGNS OF MUTILATION**

- A cultural procedure whereby parts of the body are removed for ritual practices which is illegal in Southern Africa
- Girls/boys abducted and an increase in missing children
- Death and body dumped
- Gynaecological problems and often strange/unusual genital smells.

#### **4.2.6 FAMILY VIOLENCE:**

Any incidents of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional) between members of a family group regardless of their gender. In a violent household, children are more likely to suffer other forms of abuse. Family violence affects all the members of the family.

##### **PHYSICAL SIGNS**

- Physical abuse of all forms

##### **PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE**

- Psychological and emotional abuse of all forms
- Manipulation
- Children are greatly distressed
- Children suffer serious anxiety and are stressed
- Telling untruths

#### **4.2.7 EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN**

Child exploitation refers to the use of children for someone else's advantage, gratification or profit, often resulting in unjust, cruel and harmful treatment of the child. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development.

It covers situations of manipulation, misuse, victimisation, oppression or ill treatment.

There are two main forms of child exploitation that are recognised:

Sexual exploitation: (see above)

Economic exploitation: the use of a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes but is not limited to child labour. Economic exploitation implies a certain gain or profit through the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. This material interest has an impact on the economy of a certain unit; be it the state, the community or the family.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Child domestic work
- Child soldiers
- Recruitment and involvement of children in armed conflict
- The use of children in criminal activities including the sale and distribution of narcotics
- The involvement of children in any harmful or hazardous work
- Forced migration
- Trafficking
- Children of school age not attending school
- Young children, apparently unsupervised, collecting money at robots, etc. (an adult can often be seen in the background, but not offering care to the children)
- Street children
- Children with injuries
- Children behaving much younger than their apparent chronological age
- Children being used as an 'aide' to an adult's begging and therefore uncared for, unstimulated, and subject to inappropriate weather conditions for long periods.

## 5. IMPLEMENTATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following is the Protocol already accepted by MCSA and informs our practice:

### 5.1 MCSA Protocol

This MCSA PROTOCOL calls the people called Methodists to know how to manage child abuse and neglect in the Connexion throughout Southern Africa.

According to government there is the aim *“to protect children from all forms of abuse and neglect through accessible, integrated and co-ordinated services focusing on primary, secondary and tertiary prevention, intervention and rehabilitation based on a multidisciplinary and inter sectoral approach, taking into account the particular context of each South African child.”* According to God’s intention we are all responsible to ensure that we do justice and service to all children.

We are called for the:

- Ultimate protection of children and their well-being
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities of all role-players in the Local Church
- Improvement of essential skills through training for this function at circuits and local church levels.
- Align local church policies and procedure to ensure that all children and the church leadership are protected.

This protocol seeks to clearly define the roles that Ministers/Laity are expected to fulfil in cases concerning child protection

### 5.2 ROLES:

- We are all responsible for the safety and well-being of children.
- We all should know how to respond to allegations or suspicion of all forms of abuse.
- We all should proactively contribute to the safety measures of the environment we serve because abuse happens anywhere, in any community, in any social standing.

- We should ensure that all those occupying the church premises adhere to an acceptable safeguarding policy including referral systems.
- We should all have the same knowledge on how to report any form of abuse (Form 22) as well as a church incident register.
- There must be a good relationship between the church and local child protection community organisations.
- Have a list of designated child protection structures, organizations, social service and police service in your local area.
- All Clergy and Laity, programme staff and volunteers/visitors who have access to children in the church premises should be subjected to the necessary screening/ or supervision procedures.
- Where children go on trips, the group who are travelling must be accompanied by appropriate adults.
- All must be know the safety procedures in the event of fires and/or accidents when on premises.
- Ensure that an evacuation plan is practised regularly with all, including the children.

## **5.3 MANAGEMENT OF ACUTE/EMERGENCY CASES OF CHILD ABUSE<sup>1</sup>**

### **WHAT IS AN ACUTE CASE?**

An acute case is any case that has occurred within the last 72 hours  
 Any case of abuse; physical or sexual assault occurring within the last 72 hours is a medical emergency.

## **5.4 PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE CHURCH/INSTITUTIONS**

There are up to 10 steps one must take:

The Clergy and laity must watch for any inappropriate behaviours in other, adults or older children.

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<sup>1</sup> Internal and External Child Abuse Management Flow-charts

5.4.1 Inform the Superintendent Minister unless the Superintendent Minister is implicated, in which case inform the District Bishop.

5.4.2 Report all types of abuse within the 72 hours of disclosure.

- Ask the child who they would like to contact, and inform the parent immediately, if the parent is not the offender or is not colluding with the offender.
- Establish who the child would like to support them at the hospital.
- Take the child to hospital immediately, in case of emergency.
- If the parents or caregivers are involved in the abuse inform the Minister, or Bishop and inform SAPS, go to step 4.

5.4.3 Inform the parent/caregiver of the disclosure and ask whether the parent can take the child for medical attention. If the parent cannot or you cannot get in contact with the parent go to step 4. If the parent is going to fetch the child ensure that a referral letter is ready when the parent arrives to transport their child. Go to step 9.

5.4.4 Contact the nearest SAPS detective unit.

5.4.5 The Superintendent Minister should inform the Pastoral Council and District Bishop's Office/Head of the Institution.

- The child has a right to limited confidentiality and as a result only relevant team members must be informed.
- Show in your own life how to say no.
- Talk with other adults about difficult issues
- Speak up when you see any inappropriate behaviours.
- Set and respect family boundaries.
- Stay attuned to your children's use of technology.
- **(A register of cases as well as a file of forms of reported cases must be kept in the Incident Book.)**

**Practice:**

**Record in detail what is said and who has said it to you.**

**Be receptive with both adults and children in your church about life and difficult issues in their lives.**

**Use proper names of Body parts to adults and universal names for children, especially those names that are traditionally acceptable language for young children.**

**Be clear about children and adults about the difference between OK touch and touch that is not OK.**

**Make it clear that children will be respected and supported when they request privacy or say “no”.**

**Children must have permission to tell anyone they trust if they feel scared.**

**See Flow Charts Child Protection and reporting Structures in Appendix 12.3.**

## **5.5 A guide to District, Circuit and Local policies and practice**

The MCSA has a firm commitment to safeguarding children and will support Districts and Circuits in developing their policies and practice in this area. In doing so, it is expected that care of children will be improved, especially in the area of those children who have been harmed, and that awareness will be raised of the issues which affect so many people, children and adults.

All those who work with children will be systematically recruited and cared for by way of training and checks and those who have harmed children in the past will be cared for appropriately, that they may reach their full potential.

### **5.5.1 Districts**

It is recommended that each District appoints a District Safeguarding Officer as a member of the District Children’s Mission Ministry Group. That person may be ordained or lay and will have experience and expertise in the area of safeguarding children. It is anticipated that such a person be available to assist Circuits and Societies in developing their policy and practice.

Districts will also develop a District Policy and a model policy can be found in Appendix 12.4.1.

Districts are likely to be the important point of reference in terms of training and will resource and ensure that there are sufficient numbers of

trainers resourced to provide training to the Circuits and Societies. The Districts will work in conjunction with Connexion to ensure that training of trainers is effectively undertaken.

Districts are likely to have a significant responsibility in dealing with safeguarding incidents reported by Societies and Circuits and it is important that these should be dealt with quickly. Processes need to be put in place to ensure that there is no delay in considering and dealing with such issues and that safeguarding any children and adults who may be involved, including rapid consideration of precautionary suspension as appropriate.

### **5.5.2 Circuits**

It is recommended that Circuits develop their policy in the area of safeguarding and a model policy can be found at Appendix 12.4.2.

In order to support the work of the Societies, the Circuit will facilitate and resource training in basic safeguarding awareness for all children's workers and for Society and Circuit Leaders and Ministers with the support and assistance of the District Safeguarding Officer. A report on the progress of this area should be given to the Quarterly Meeting at least on an annual basis.

Circuits need to develop practice in dealing with safeguarding incidents within Circuits and Societies that avoid any delay and to develop processes of liaison with the District Safeguarding Officer for this purpose.

Circuits may wish to appoint a Circuit Safeguarding Coordinator to support this work. Such a person should have previous experience in the area of safeguarding and should liaise with the District Safeguarding Officer. This will be a triannual appointment of the Quarterly Meeting.

### **5.5.3 Societies**

Some Societies will not currently be undertaking children's work. However, it is likely that there will be children on the premises from time to time and these children have the right to be safeguarded whilst in the care of the church. Safeguarding is everybody's business and all members of Societies will be likely to have contact with children in other capacities when they are not in church. It is our vision that the church will offer the highest standards to all children with whom its members come into contact, whether inside the church or in other aspects of life. It is therefore important, even within the context of a Society without

children's work at this time, that the issue of safeguarding is retained as a significant matter.

Accordingly, a policy should be developed and a model policy can be found at Appendix 12.4.3. Training should also be undertaken in relation to basic safeguarding awareness to promote an aware culture for Leaders and Ministers. This should be undertaken in liaison with the Circuit and the District Safeguarding Officer.

Societies which undertake work with children (including work with children which is off site) need to develop a policy and retain this matter as an agenda item on the Church Council, at least annually. A model policy can be found at Appendix 12.4.4. The appointment (including statutory checks) and training of workers with children needs to be carefully monitored and recorded and all records need to be safely stored by the Minister. Those records also need to be handed on to an incoming Minister.

Training in basic safeguarding awareness needs to be delivered to all those who work with children, together with Leaders and Ministers and this will be undertaken in liaison with the Circuit Safeguarding Coordinator and the District Safeguarding Officer, with the aim that by 1 January 2015 all workers, Leaders and Ministers will be trained or, if newly appointed, will be trained within twelve months.

Processes need to be established so that any safeguarding incident is dealt with rapidly and there are no delays. This includes dealing with the issue of precautionary suspension of workers and considering the issue with the relevant person of the precautionary suspension of any Minister involved. It is the responsibility of the Minister and Leaders to ensure the proper referral of any safeguarding incident which occurs in the Society.

Many of the projects working with children deal with highly vulnerable children and some of the projects work in premises away from the church building. It is important that the people in those projects are supported in prayer and care and are supervised well in their often difficult work.

## **5.6 Points for implementation**

### **5.6.1 Policies**

A safeguarding policy with appropriate additional Codes of Practice to deal with specific issues (e.g. social media) should be adopted by Societies, Circuits and Districts.

### **5.6.2 Procedures**

It is important that the Society, Circuit and District as well as the Connexion have clear procedures and guidance for safeguarding and that this is well known to all workers and leaders. Leaders are in a position of trust in relation to the church and to children and need to be clear about these procedures and guidance.

### **5.6.3 Assessment**

Work with children should be assessed, considered and planned to ensure that any risks for the safety and safeguarding of children are considered. It is not helpful to the safeguarding of children to institute unplanned work with children as this is likely to be difficult to sustain into the future and likely to lead to unexpected difficulties. This assessment should include the safety and appropriateness of the building to be used for the purpose intended and any other buildings or areas used.

### **5.6.4 Buildings and Premises**

Meeting places should be at an appropriate temperature. They should be safe in terms of electricity etc. and should be uncluttered. Fire prevention measures should be safe, effective, accessible and maintained. Toilets and washing facilities need to be available and maintained hygienically. Food should be stored safely. Emergency procedures should be known and practised and a First Aid kit should be available (with at least one worker first aid trained, who will also have the responsibility of checking the contents of the kit on a monthly basis). An accident book should be kept with the kit and should be used on each incident. The outside of the building should be safely maintained.

### **5.6.5 Registration**

Some activities will need to be registered with the Municipality before 2015, although such activities are deemed registered until that date. It is sensible to begin the process of registration well before 2015 in order to ensure this is in place by the due date. The forms required to be completed can be found on the website <http://www.polity.org.za/article/childrens-act-382005-general-regulations-regarding-children-gazette-no-33076-regulation-261-2010-04-15> and, to some extent, will be found useful in checking that good practice is being undertaken within the activity and its management. Assistance in this matter can be obtained from the Child Care Desk at the Connexional Office.

### **5.6.6 Safer Recruitment**

This is a key matter for safeguarding children. Recruitment and employment support is outlined in the next part of this handbook, and applies to both paid and voluntary workers. It is important that all workers have clear role outlines/job descriptions and are supported by ongoing training. Supervision and training promotes the safeguarding of children.

### **5.6.7 Code of Good Practice**

It is desirable that all those who work with children or carry responsibilities as Leaders or Ministers have access to a Code of Good Practice. A model code is available at Appendix 12.6 and is also available from Connexion as a separate booklet. It is good practice to have copies of this booklet distributed to each worker with children and to each Leader and Minister as a minimum. Each worker, Leader and Minister should familiarise themselves with the contents and be prepared to challenge unacceptable behaviour in others.

### **5.6.8 Independent Person**

It is helpful for children and adults on occasion to be able to speak of their concerns with an independent person. It may be that a child/adult who has been harmed does not trust the church, or indeed has been told by those by who have harmed him/her that the church will not listen to them. Accordingly a prominent display of a number such as that of Childline both gives the message that the church has nothing to hide and is committed to safeguarding and provides the ability for a child/adult to speak with someone who is independent.

### **5.6.9 Staffing levels**

Consideration needs to be given to the right level of staffing. There needs to be enough adults to ensure the safety of the children and this should bear in mind that a member of staff may unexpectedly be unavailable e.g. if a child has an accident. No worker should be alone with children and when separate activities are taking place, these should be in the same room or where the activity can be clearly seen. Where a child needs to have a 1:1 conversation, again this should take place where the child and adult can be seen e.g. in a corner of the room where the activity is taking place or in another room with the door open.

Recommended staffing levels are as follows:

Children 0-2	staffing level 1:3
Children 2-3	staffing level 1:4
Children 3-8	staffing level 1:8

Children over 8 staffing level 1:8 for the first 8 children and one additional worker for every further 12 children

However the nature of the activity will also inform the staffing level. If there are both genders of children, there should also be both genders of worker and there should never be less than two workers present.

#### **5.6.10 Transport**

Transport used for children should be safe. There need to be processes to check that church vehicles are safe and that the children can be transported safely. This includes children not travelling in open vehicles, which is illegal. The same processes need to be applied to the use of private vehicles on behalf of the church, together with ensuring that the driver is safe for the transport of the children (e.g. s/he does not have convictions which are unsafe for children, such as driving under the influence of alcohol). Children should not be transported by an adult alone and care should be taken that, at the very least, there is always more than one child in the vehicle. This can be achieved, for example, by ensuring that the last children to be dropped off are siblings.

#### **5.6.11 Money and belongings**

There should be a policy which reflects practice in terms of what happens both with children's money and belongings and what happens with the activity's money. When workers handle money and belongings (whether those of the activity or those of the children), there should be two workers present and all monies received should be confirmed by duplicated receipt. One copy of the receipt goes to the person who handed over the money and the other copy is held in the activity's accounting records.

#### **5.6.12 Consent/Indemnity and registration forms**

Children who are involved in activities with the church should have received their parents/caregivers' consent. This should be dealt with in writing and should refer to the activity specifically, together with timings for the activity and a clear description of what the activity will involve. The consent form should also confirm that the leaders of the activity may give consent to medical treatment in an emergency if the parent/caregiver cannot be contacted. A contact number should be clearly written on the consent form.

Each child involved in activities/organisations with the church should also have a registration form held by the leaders and accessible during the activities. This form should clearly state the child's full name and the names of the parents or caregivers. The child's date of birth and ID

number together with his/her address should be included. The form should detail any medical conditions or allergies and any necessary medication. The contact details for the parents/caregivers should be included and agreement that consent to medical treatment may be given by the workers if the parents/caregivers cannot be contacted in an emergency. The registration form should outline the general activities of the organisation and should be signed by the parent/caregiver, with the parent/caregiver giving details of those adults who may collect the child.

#### **5.6.13 Mixed age and gender activities**

Some of the activities of the church involve children of both genders and several ages. It should be borne in mind that children can harm each other by bullying, physical harm and by sexual harm. It is probably the case that some 35% of sexual harm of children is done by other children. However, children develop caring skills by participating in the care of younger children. It is important therefore to consider the safety of the activity from this perspective. Children should always be supervised by adults and should never have sole care of other children.

#### **5.6.14 Record keeping**

It is important that records relating to the care of children, including records relating to workers, should be kept safely and confidentially. Consideration needs to be given by Societies in particular as to how this will be achieved. Records also need to be appropriately accessible and need to be transferred to the next person in post. This is particularly important when records are kept by the Minister.

Confidentiality of records is important. However, records should be available to those who need to know their contents. In terms of guidance as to disclosure of records, advice should be sought from Connexion.

#### **5.6.15 Hire or use of the premises by others**

Some church buildings will be used by external organisations. Appendix 12.5.4 offers a form which can be incorporated into a letting agreement. The church should ensure that the organisation concerned confirms the policy of MCSA in relation to safeguarding and will comply with this, adopting either the Society policy or holding its own similar policy. This applies whether this is a regular event or a single use. It may be that Leaders may wish to assist the hiring organisation in certain circumstances to meet appropriate levels of care. This may include inviting such organisations to participate in training events or even providing extra personnel to assist.

## **6. SAFER PRACTICE**

### **6.1 Recruiting Safely**

This process should apply to all roles in the MCSA which involve working with children and young people who may be vulnerable. This includes those who are paid and those who volunteer their time and resources.

It should be carefully noted that the safety of children depends on safe recruiting and practice and not simply on criminal record checks and this practice supports that proposition. However, it should be noted that all those who work regularly with children should complete and return Form 30, confirming that they are not entered on Part B of the CPR. This means all those who are in contact with children more than once a week, or who supervise workers who are in such contact.

### **6.2 Safer recruitment practice**

- Step 1** Ensure that you have an up-to-date recruitment and selection policy that describes the process and roles before you begin.
- Step 2** Ensure that your organisation has a safeguarding policy and that a statement about the organisation's commitment to safeguarding is included in all recruitment and selection materials.
- Step 3** Ensure that you have an up-to-date job description and person specification for the role(s) you wish to recruit to, that have been agreed with the recruiting manager. Where the recruitment is for a volunteer, the job description should be a role outline (see Appendix 12.5.1).
- Step 4** Ensure that you have an appropriate advertisement prepared that contains all necessary information about the role, timetable for recruitment and your commitment to safeguarding.
- Step 5** Ensure that you have compiled a suitable candidate information pack containing all the required information about the organisation, role, recruitment timetable, safeguarding policy/statement, application form.
- Step 6** Ensure that each application received is scrutinised in a systematic way by the shortlisting panel in order to agree your shortlist before sending invitations to interview.

- Step 7** Ensure that all appropriate checks have been undertaken on your shortlisted candidates, including references. (See model reference request Appendix 12.5.5). Confirm identity and relevant certificates of qualifications/ course attendance, by documentation. In addition check 'right to work in the relevant country' status when appropriate. Notice of Clearance should be attached if possible.
- Step 8** Ensure that all shortlisted candidates receive the same letter of invitation to interview, supplying them with all necessary information.
- Step 9** Ensure that a face-to-face interview is conducted for ALL shortlisted candidates based on an objective assessment of the candidate's ability to meet the person specification and job description.
- Step 10** Ensure that all specific questions designed to gain required information about each candidate's suitability have been asked, including those needed to address any gaps in information supplied in the application form.
- Step 11** Ensure that you are able to make a confident selection of a preferred candidate based upon their demonstration of suitability for the role.
- Step 12** Ensure that your preferred candidate is informed in writing that the offer of employment (including volunteer positions) is conditional on receiving satisfactory information from all necessary checks.

## **6.3 Safer Employment Practice**

### **6.3.1 Keeping a record**

Each church should have a record of the following people:

All staff who are appointed to work on behalf of the Church and Church Council, including all volunteers, whether they are members of the Church or not.

All volunteers or paid staff who are appointed by another church but may help out or work on a joint project.

Any staff, where possible, who are employed by a contractor regularly working on site; for example, when there is building work or a special project taking more than a few days.

All others who have been chosen to work in regular contact with children. This will cover volunteers, trustees who also work as volunteers within the establishment, and people brought in to provide additional care or support on a sessional basis but who are not staff members, e.g. activities coordinators, sport or other coaches, music or drama workers.

The dates of the CPR disclosures of all workers and a 'bring forward' system which ensures that those disclosures are renewed.

### **6.3.2 Induction and probation**

Regardless of role or previous experience of working with children, churches should plan an induction (and probation) programme for all newly appointed employees and volunteers. The purpose of induction and probation is to:

- Provide training and information about the organisation's policies and procedures.
- Support individuals in a way that is appropriate for the role for which they have been engaged.
- Confirm the conduct expected of staff within the establishment.
- Provide opportunities for a new member of staff or volunteer to discuss any issues or concerns about their role or responsibilities and for these to be addressed.
- Give an opportunity for the supervisor/Minister to raise any concerns and ensure they are addressed before the appointment is confirmed.

### **6.3.3 Roles and responsibilities**

Selection procedures alone are not the only aspects of safer recruitment. In order for an organisation to be safer, employees and volunteers need to understand their roles and responsibilities. They need to be trained and equipped, supported and enabled to fulfil the responsibilities

expected of them. There should be regular, planned reviews of the role and responsibilities.

#### **6.3.4 Training, Support and Supervision**

Essential principles in safer recruitment concern the care taken not only in recruitment, but in the training, support and supervision of staff at all levels. This can happen in a variety of ways for different roles. Safeguarding should be considered at each supervision meeting. It will directly impact upon the safety of the children for whom staff care. It will contribute directly towards developing a safe culture for everyone in our church communities. In house training for all staff should be a regular feature, including specific debriefing after a safeguarding incident.

#### **6.3.5 Formal processes**

Safer recruitment policies include the careful introduction and implementation of complaints and grievance procedures for all those who work in an organisation. In addition, everyone should know how to raise concerns about safety, through clear lines of communication and support for 'whistle blowing' where necessary.

#### **6.3.6 The process for checking criminal records**

The worker will complete Form 30 and send this to the body indicated. This will be returned to the individual within 21 days and the worker must show the original of this to their manager/Minister within the next seven days. The manager/Minister must use a diary system to ensure that this is kept in mind, as well as ensuring a 'bring forward' system for renewals.

The manager/Minister must develop a system for safe storage of disclosures within the records of the worker. The disclosures should be kept for at least 70 years, and the contents of this disclosure should not be communicated except to those who have a need to know this information.

#### **6.3.7 Volunteers**

Volunteers (unpaid) make up a huge part of the children's workforce and are seen by children as safe and trustworthy adults. They should be valued and supported. Churches actively seeking volunteers, and considering candidates about whom it knows little, should adopt the same recruitment measures as it would for paid staff.

Where an organisation approaches a person, or is approached by someone, who is well known to them to take on a particular voluntary role, a shorter procedure may be adopted. This includes, as a minimum, gaining recent references, checking to make sure others in the community have no concerns and can make a positive recommendation, conducting an informal interview to be clear about the person's suitability and ensuring Form 30 is available. It is in the best interests of the individual to have such a Notice of Clearance and is essential for this role.

The volunteer agreement sets out important information concerning what is expected of them in the role and to whom they report. It should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

Development planning, including identifying any training needed, should take place with the assistance of this form. This should be retained by the appointing body; the applicant/volunteer should also keep a copy.

If there is a change in role, this should be reflected in this document.

### **6.3.8 'Once-off' Visitors or Helpers**

Where a volunteer's role will be a one-off, such as accompanying staff and children on a day outing or helping at an event (e.g. a holiday club), these measures would be unnecessary provided that the person is known to the organisation and is always supervised. However, it is good practice to ensure that visitors sign in and out and are escorted whilst on the premises by a worker.

### **6.3.9 Overseas applicants and candidates**

For overseas candidates who have not previously lived in Southern Africa and also Southern African candidates who have lived abroad for significant periods, the recruiting manager should make an additional check by obtaining a certificate of good conduct/police record from the relevant embassy or police force, where that is available, as well as obtaining Form 30.

Where an applicant is from, or has lived in, a country where criminal record checks cannot be made for child protection purposes, or is a refugee with leave to remain in Southern Africa and has no means of obtaining relevant information, the manager should take extra care in taking up references and carrying out other background checks. For

example, additional references should be sought and references followed up by phone as well as letter.

### **6.3.10 Contractors, agency staff or other sources of recruitment**

If volunteers are to be recruited by another organisation, e.g. for a joint or ecumenical event, a District or Connexional event, suitable assurances should be obtained from the 'home' church or organisation which first recruited them that the person has been recruited and vetted in line with this Guidance and that they were recruited and vetted for similar work. A copy of the Notice of Clearance should be seen.

The same enquiries should be made of any contractor the church uses to provide services that give rise to their staff having contact with children, including vetting procedures and relevant information found arising from these procedures.

### **6.3.11 Direct involvement of children or young people who may be vulnerable**

Those under 16 must not be in roles where they take responsibility for children of any age. They should always have adult supervision when engaged in a caring task for a child.

Young people over the age of 16 will need to go through the usual recruiting process if they are to become involved in work with younger children. This should be adapted to take account of their age but should not be compromised.

### **6.3.12 Students on placement**

When offering student placements for professional or vocational training where there is a practice placement element, the recruitment and safeguarding procedures of the placing agency must be checked. The student must always be appropriately supervised in the placement location. The placing agency should confirm in writing that it retains responsibility over the student.

### **6.3.13 Ordained presbyters and deacons and candidates for ordained ministry**

It is the policy of the Methodist Church to require Form 30 (or equivalent document) to be disclosed on all successful candidates before they enter

training. This applies to all appointments being made for both deacons and presbyters.

References for candidates will always be taken up, including one from a previous recent employment.

### **6.3.14 Schools**

Schools are subject to separate regulations and guidance, as directed by the Government's Department of Education.

Note the forms held in the Appendix at 12.5 to this policy. These are an important part of the safeguarding procedure and of safer recruiting.

**Appendix 12.5.2 – Minister, Local Preacher, Church Leader declaration**

**Appendix 12.5.3 – Key holder declaration**

**Appendix 12.5.4 – A model declaration form for users and hirers of Methodist premises**

Note also the reference request template letter held in the appendices to this document

## 7. RESPONDING WELL

A disclosure may come from a child or from an adult about a child. It may also come from an adult about abuse which happened in the past. It may be a matter which is noted by workers with the child concerned.

In terms of each of these situations it is important that the following is clear:

1. When a child/adult makes a disclosure, the recipient should not press for additional detail. Questions should be open and should not lead towards certain answers. So a short conversation with a child may simply be to say to the child 'John, you have a bruise on your leg. How did that happen? But not 'John you have a bruise on your leg. Who did that to you?', but equally, the child/adult should not feel under pressure to tell their story quickly. It is not the job of the person receiving the disclosure to be clear that there is abuse, but that there is concern about abuse. The investigation of this concern is the job of social services and the police.
2. The child/adult should be assured that s/he is being treated seriously, and s/he is not to blame for this, but that confidentiality cannot be promised, neither can the Church cease to deal with a matter reported to it, because the child/adult or family requests this. If there is concern that a child has been harmed or neglected then social services or the police must be notified. It should be remembered that for Ministers and child care workers it is unlawful not to tell Social Services/SAPS. If the disclosure comes from an adult about abuse which happened in the past, there remains the same duty to inform Social Services/SAPS. The law does not disregard more historical abuse from the duty imposed.
3. An appropriate explanation should be given to the person making the disclosure as to what is going to happen next and what your next actions will be.
4. Recording should be undertaken in writing. The recording should be as clear and legible as possible. It should use the words used by the person who made the disclosure and should be recorded by the person who received the disclosure. The recording should be timed, dated and signed. It should then be kept safely and should be retained, even if there is found to be no cause for concern.

5. This matter should be passed to the Minister and to Social Services/SAPS immediately. If the Minister is not available (or is implicated), the Superintendent Minister must be notified. Information should not be given to anyone who does not need to know. The recipient will wish to consult the Minister about informing the parents/caregivers of the child and may also need to consult the police/social services if this may have an impact on an investigation or if the parents/caregivers are implicated. The referral to the police/social services should be undertaken on Form 22 if possible, with as much detail as possible. In particular the names, ages and dates of birth of the relevant individuals should be supplied and the whereabouts of the child at the time of making the referral. It is helpful if the name of the child's school can be given, together with other professionals involved and the child's preferred language. However, the referral should not be delayed because some information is not available, or because you do not have access to Form 22.
6. The recipient and the Minister should not speak with the media about this as the child is entitled to confidentiality. All approaches from the media should be referred to the Connexional Communications Unit.
7. During the process of an investigation, which may take some considerable number of months, there is likely to be heightened pastoral need in the Church. The Minister and Leaders will need to have a conversation at an early stage with the District safeguarding Officer (or Bishop if a District Safeguarding Officer is not appointed) about how this need will be met. This is because there will be a great deal of pastoral need – more than can be met by the Minister and Leaders potentially – and some of the pastoral need will be exclusive, because there may be a need to avoid conversations which could contaminate Social Services/SAPS investigations and in certain issues it will be difficult to maintain the confidence of the individuals if pastoral care is being offered to a number of the individuals involved. Guidance should be sought on this from the police or social services or from the District Safeguarding Officer/Bishop as appropriate.

## 8. MANAGING SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS ABOUT A CHURCH WORKER OR ABOUT A CHILD

This is the process to be followed if the alleged perpetrator is a child or is a minister/church leader/staff member at a Church facility for children or young people. The allegation may not necessarily refer to an incident which took place on Church premises.

It is important to ensure that recording of the incident is as clear as possible. Such recording should take place as quickly as possible after the incident and should use the words actually used in the incident by the child or anyone else concerned. The recording should be in writing and should be signed, timed and dated. It should be preserved safely.

If this incident comprises a matter which is or reasonably could be regarded as child abuse or neglect, then it *must* be referred to the police or social services. In most such circumstances the minister or any child care professional has a **legal duty** to make such a referral. It does not make a difference to this duty whether the alleged perpetrator is a child or an adult.

In all such incidents, there are major pastoral implications. These should be carefully planned as soon as possible with the Minister and Leaders. Firstly there is likely to be heightened pastoral need – the victim and his/her family, the alleged perpetrator and his/her family, the organisation including its staff and participants, the wider church including the Leaders and those who have been harmed themselves as children for whom this will revive painful memories, and the Leaders and Minister him/herself. Secondly, there are some pastoral needs which are mutually incompatible because they involve conflicts and because they may involve a need to avoid communication with both people to avoid contamination of a police/social services investigation (guidance should be sought on this matter). The Minister and Leaders therefore need to meet as a matter of urgency to plan how the pastoral need is to be met.

### 8.1 Where the alleged perpetrator is an adult

1. The Superintendent Minister should be immediately informed of such an incident (unless of course s/he is the alleged perpetrator – in which case the Bishop should be informed). If the Superintendent Minister is not available, then the Bishop should be immediately informed.

2. The relevant person should immediately consider whether the alleged perpetrator should be suspended. Suspension is a non judgemental act and does not imply guilt. It is designed to ensure the safety of all those who are involved and to allow a proper investigation of the incident. It would in fact be normal in such circumstances to suspend the individual. The issue of suspension needs to be considered by the relevant person as a matter of urgency in order to protect all those who are involved. Guidance may be sought from a relevant Connexional officer, and, if received, should normally be followed.
3. It will probably be necessary to await the conclusion of the Social Services/SAPS investigation. They are the investigating bodies in such circumstances. Upon receipt of this conclusion, consideration will need to be given to the disciplinary process and to safeguarding procedures. It is often the case that wider safeguarding lessons can be learned from such incidents.
4. If the person concerned is dismissed and/or subject of criminal proceedings, then the Minister should ensure that the CPR is notified in writing in terms of the administrators of the CPR considering whether the person's name should be included on Part B of the CPR.

## **8.2 Where the alleged perpetrator is a child**

1. The child's parents or caregivers should be notified of any incident, unless they are implicated, in which case Social Services/SAPS guidance should be sought before the parents or caregivers are notified.
2. In all dealings with such incidents, it should be remembered that this is a child and may be as much a victim as the person harmed.
3. Pastoral needs should be specifically addressed. In addition to the complexities of meeting pastoral need in safeguarding incidents generally, the needs of child victims and perpetrators are complex. It may well be that the Minister will have to take external professional advice and consult with Social Services/SAPS.
4. If the child is under ten years, then Social Services should be notified of the incident. If the child is over ten years, then SAPS should be notified. (in any event there is likely to be a legal duty on the Minister

and any child care professionals to notify Social Services/SAPS of the incident).

5. It will be necessary to consider the child's position within the organisation. This may be a complex piece of decision making. The following should be taken into consideration:
  - Is the victim part of the organisation? If so:
    - What will be the impact on the victim of the continuing involvement of the child?
    - Will the continuing involvement of the child be likely to have an impact on the potential for a criminal or Social Services investigation to be successfully concluded (if this is an issue – advice should be sought from Social Services/SAPS)?
  - If the victim is not part of the organisation, can the child be kept safe within the organisation and if so, what additional safeguards should be put in place? This decision may need to take community feeling into account.
  - If the victim is not part of the investigation, can the other children be kept safe within the organisation and can the confidence of parents/caregivers be retained? Again additional safeguards may need to be put in place.
  - Would it be more sensible for the child to move to a parallel organisation for the meantime. This may have the advantage of the child not being 'tainted' within the organisation. However, the new organisation should know the circumstances and make appropriate safeguarding arrangements and the child should not feel as though s/he is being punished by this action.
  - In any case, who else needs to know about this e.g. other organisations and statutory bodies?
6. Await outcome of Social Services/SAPS investigation.
7. Reconsider position of the child and others within the church. Reconsider also the wider safeguarding lessons which may be learned from this incident.

## 9. CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

Southern Africa has the strongest economies on the continent. Most foreigners from troubled African countries flock to the area to escape poverty, war, forced conscriptions, deprivation and famine. This is particularly true of some of Southern Africa's neighbouring countries. Some adults are left stranded by robbers and in some cases young children abandoned by their foster caregivers, who are trafficked over the border, often for reasons of sexual or economic exploitation, have no means of returning to their country.

However, it should be noted that these children may include those who have been internally displaced from areas within Southern Africa and who may become identifiable as 'street children'.

The unaccompanied minors and separated children are in extreme situations and at risk of exploitation as:

- Domestic slaves
- Commercial and sexual exploitation
- Limited access to basic needs such as shelter, sanitation, health care, education, support to independent living and skills for this, food, clothing and household goods
- Detention, deportation/removal and police harassment which forces them to lead underground lives due to lack of documentation
- Officials who have a poor understanding of the status of refugees in Southern Africa.
- Migrant labour children stranded due to the death of parents working in mines.
- Heightened risk of harm, health issues and neglect from a risky lifestyle
- Heightened risk of substance abuse, which also increases risk of accident

Furthermore, discrimination and xenophobia impedes the children's access to services. Some churches are performing an invaluable ministry in attempting to meet these needs. Where a church has such a ministry, it is important that issues of safeguarding are carefully considered, taking into account the vulnerability and the short and longer term needs of these children. It is especially important that these very vulnerable children should receive a planned and managed service to ensure their needs are met as well as they can be. This is part of safeguarding for this group of children.

Children in this situation are children who are bereaved and have lost people they care about, together with their home and habits of living. They have also lost educational opportunity and have often lost hope for their future and trust in adults. They are children who have needs for development of relationship for their immediate and long term needs. They are children who need to have attention given to their race, religion, language and culture in order that they will retain and develop a holistic sense of identity for themselves as young adults. Some of this is complex work. Later in their childhood, they also need to have in place the stepping stones to adulthood, including a secure future in which they know where their future will be placed.

The law makes clear that Social Services owe a high duty of care to these children and that decisions for these children, as for all children, should be made in their best interests. This raises two questions for churches. What is the requirement on the Church to advocacy in this area and particularly with children they know to ensure service provision? What does the Church do, when an overstretched state is unable to meet its high duty?

It is a serious issue which affects this group of children particularly, but also all children for whom a significant part of their care is provided by or through the Church (significant either in terms of amount or type of care). It is important that the Church does not take over the role of government, although Connexional discussions need to be ongoing in terms of reminding and encouraging the State to fulfil its duty. Nevertheless, the best interests of the child is of central importance and will not become second to a point of principal or politics.

What the churches have done to date is to mitigate the situation of the Children on the move (and other children with whom the Church is involved) by supporting them with educational opportunities. Church organisation in local circuits gives support to children by providing them with food, shelter and clothing, which is often in itself a challenging area of work. However the greatest challenge is supporting the children and their caregivers is to access documentation so that the children can get their basic services; such as healthcare, nutrition, education and a safe place to stay. For those involved in this sort of work, a useful website for documents is [www.dha.gov.za](http://www.dha.gov.za)

It is important that a church working with children in this situation maintains careful records and maintains a careful and continuing relationship with the child's social worker, recognising the need for and taking professional guidance as appropriate, as well as recognising that

its own workers may need more specialised training to deal with these issues.

It is also important that this work is planned by churches. It is part of safeguarding to ensure that the task envisaged can be carried out well and safely and that it can be resourced in a planned way. It is not in the best interests of these vulnerable children to commence a project which ceases abruptly and in an unplanned way. Nor is it in their interests to make provision which is not predictable and reliable, meeting their needs consistently and as completely as possible and engaging with other agencies in an appropriate way. These issues should therefore be a central part of the planning process to make such provision available for children. Assistance can be obtained in this process and in applications for relevant funding from the Child Care desk, Connexionally. Assistance can also be obtained for access to training, etc.

## 10. CARE OF SURVIVORS

Abuse of children is a common experience. Research in other countries shows that by the age of 16, one in six children will have experienced sexual abuse. This means that many of those who approach our churches in whatever context are survivors of sexual or other abuse, although they may not have told anybody of this.

A church may be seen by a survivor of abuse as a safe place to be and it is important therefore that we live up to this vision. A good step on this road is the increased importance given to the issue of safeguarding which honours the experience of survivors and makes a clear statement that any form of abuse is wrong.

Many survivors within the church or who approach the church really want to be heard. This can be a difficult journey, as survivors may need to tell and retell their story; they may be angry and they may raise important theological issues such as forgiveness, the role and nature of God and the interpretation of some Biblical stories. These discussions need to take place in a private space and a calm atmosphere, where the person can be taken seriously, even if another person needs to be present. It is important to recognise the pain in these stories; to give time and not to force issues such as forgiveness. To do so can re-abuse the survivor, who must come to forgiveness in their own time. It is important to recognise when pastoral care becomes a need for professional counselling (and to recognise the pain in listening to these stories). It may be that help can be obtained in groups with other survivors. The following points should be recognised clearly:

- The abuse was not their fault
- They have not committed a sin
- They have no need to feel guilty
- God loves them unconditionally
- That they are not 'different' but part of God's people

In a wider context it is important to make our churches a safe place in terms of the way we worship and conduct ourselves. Some words and hymns have a painful resonance for those who have been abused and some concepts (such as fatherhood) are very difficult. On the other hand, songs of freedom (such as those used against apartheid) may have really useful ideas within them for survivors.

Many survivors in the church will not tell us of their past experience and therefore we must work to ensure that our work, worship and activities are safe for all.

## 11. THOSE WHO POSE A RISK

The purpose of providing good practice for ministering to and providing pastoral care for those who pose a risk is to enable them to worship and be part of the church community more safely.

This process is intended to assist in working with those who have a conviction for offences against children, for support and stability will help those who have offended to change their behaviour.

A covenant of care should be established within the church prior to the person's release from prison or prior to them being re established as full members of the church.

1. Establish a small group of people who are prepared to work with the individual. This should be chaired by the Minister and should include people who have experience in child care as well as members of the leadership of the church
2. Conduct an assessment of the building and its activities in terms of the risk these pose for safeguarding eg are there a number of small rooms which are not easily overseen? Are there a number of activities where children are unsupervised for a period of time such as collection and delivery to the activities? Ensure that extra events, such as circuit or ecumenical services or events are taken account of.
3. Write a covenant which meets these risks in terms of ensuring that either the risks are altered or the individual is absent or accompanied during such periods. If it is not possible for this to be managed safely, then it may be necessary to identify another church for the individual.
4. Meet as a group with the individual and discuss the covenant. The covenant should reflect careful listening to all those involved including the individual him/herself, although the Group may decline to accept points made by the individual in the interests of all those concerned. Ensure it is signed by the Minister and the individual and that each has a copy. The Minister should keep a copy securely and ensure this is passed on to the next Minister.
5. Review meetings should be organised at the end of each meeting. Initially, these will need to take place frequently (maybe monthly), but these may reduce to six monthly if the covenant is going well.

## 12. LIST OF RESOURCES

Your Minister's name and telephone number .....

District Safeguarding Officer name .....

telephone number .....

Your district/local municipality/metropolitan name.....

telephone no. ....

### Botswana

Childline Botswana 3 900 900

### Namibia

Childline Namibia 116 (toll free)

[www.childhelplinenamibia.org](http://www.childhelplinenamibia.org)

### South Africa

Childline 080 005 5555

Child Welfare South Africa 011 494 2884

NPA 012 845 6000

South African Police 10 111

Crime Stop 086 001 0111

Provincial departments of Social development

Gauteng 011 355 7843

KwaZulu-Natal 022 264 2089

Northern Cape 053 874 9100

Western Cape 021 483 4153

North West 018 388 2021

Limpopo 015 293 6000

Mpumalanga 013 766 3120

Free State 051 409 0590

Eastern Cape 040 608 5810

Thuthuzela care centres:

<http://www.shukumisa.org.za/index.php/thuthuzela-care-centres-list/>

**MCSA** website: [www.methodist.org.za](http://www.methodist.org.za)

## 13. REFERENCES

### MCSA

Laws and Discipline  
Child Care policy 2011  
Conference Resolutions 2011

### Methodist Church in Britain

Safeguarding Children and Young People 2010

### Church of England

Responding well to those who have been sexually abused  
Policy and Guidance for the Church of England 2011

### Republic of South Africa

Children's Act 38 of 2005 (short guide)  
Strategy and Guidelines for children living and working in the streets

### Relevant Statutes

Constitution of South Africa 1996  
South African Schools Act 1996  
Domestic Violence Act 1998  
Children's Act 2005  
Child Justice Act 2008

### Some useful websites

[www.actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)  
[www.dsd.gov.za](http://www.dsd.gov.za)  
[www.methodist.org.za](http://www.methodist.org.za)  
[www.SAPS.gov.za/children/childrens\\_rights\\_pamphlet](http://www.SAPS.gov.za/children/childrens_rights_pamphlet)  
[www.SAPS.gov.za/children/child\\_abuse.htm](http://www.SAPS.gov.za/children/child_abuse.htm)  
[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)