Eastcote Methodist Church
October 2026

Code of Safer Working Practice with Children and Young People (Methodist Church updated June 2023)

This policy was agreed at a Church Council held on **15th October 2026**

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

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

Terminology used in this code:

the word 'child' refers to *anyone* under the age of 18.
the term 'group leader' is used to refer to the person with overall responsibility for a group or activity, who is answerable to the Church Council/Circuit Meeting.
For guidance and good practice support resources and free downloadable forms for work with children, visit:
https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/ministries/children-youth-family-ministry/the-well-learning-hub-equipping-and-supporting-workers/

Required practice for anyone working with children and young people

You should:

- be aware of and understand the local safeguarding policy
- treat all children and young people fairly and without prejudice, discrimination or favouritism
- respect differences in gender, sexual orientation, culture, race, ethnicity, disability and faith and challenge behaviour that demonstrates discrimination, prejudice
- ensure that your own language, tone of voice and body language is respectful
- always aim to work with or within sight and hearing of another adult
- ensure that another adult is informed if a child needs to be taken to the toilet (toilet breaks should be organised for young children)
- ensure that children and young people know who they can talk to or contact if they need to speak to someone about a personal concern and encourage them to speak out if they feel uncomfortable or concerned. They should be made aware of organisations that can provide support.
- respond warmly to a child who needs comforting but this should not involve physical comfort e.g. cuddles.
- advise children, young people and their parent/carers/guardians in advance if any activity requires physical contact and provide an opportunity to opt out or agree alternative activities.
- administer any necessary first aid with others around
- obtain consent for any photographs/videos to be taken, shown or displayed via any medium. This should be from the parent, carer or guardian and the young person if 12

years or over. Images should not be taken or stored on personal devices.
- record any incidents that concern you or make you feel uncomfortable and give the information to your group leader in the first instance. Although you must also contact the church, circuit or district safeguarding officer immediately if you believe you have acted in a way which others may have interpreted as inappropriate or if a child has acted inappropriately towards you. Records must be signed and dated.
- always share concerns about a child or the behaviour of another worker with your group leader and/or the safeguarding officer.

You should not:

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

Dress

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

Gifts

There may be occasions when children give you gifts. It is polite to accept a gift but your group leader should be informed. If you receive any gift of significant value e.g. more than £15.00, you should talk with your group leader about whether it is appropriate to accept it. As a general rule, expensive gifts should not be accepted.

Responding to child protection concerns

Do not try to deal with any child protection concern on your own. Always tell your group leader and/or safeguarding officer. Agree between you who will take what action and when.

If you are not sure if abuse of a child is involved, or if you have concerns about a child and you need someone to talk things over with, then again you should contact your group leader or church, circuit or district safeguarding officer. The local authority Children's Services Duty/Referral team are also a source of advice and support 24 hours a day.

Always make notes about a possible child protection incident or disclosure as accurately as possible, as soon as possible. These should cover what has happened, in what context, and anything that seems particularly significant. Quote the child's words exactly where possible. Take a note from the group records the child's full name, age/date of birth, address, telephone number and GP. Remember to sign your notes and add your name, role, date of incident and date of the recording.

Ensure that all notes are kept in a safe and secure place.

If a child asks to talk in confidence do not promise confidentiality – you have a duty to refer a child/young person who is at risk to the statutory agencies. Always explain that you may have to get other people to help to make sure they are safe.

- Try to stay calm and not appear shocked.
- Listen to the child attentively.
- Allow the child to talk but do not press for information or ask leading questions.
- Tell the child that they are not to blame for anything that has happened.
- Reassure the child that they were right to tell.
- Let the child know that other people will have to be told and why.
- Try to explain what will happen next in a way the child can understand.
- Reassure the child that they will continue to receive support when a referral has been made.

Immediate risk

- If you encounter a child in a situation where they are in imminent danger, you should act immediately to secure the safety of the child. Seek the assistance of the police and then make a referral to local authority Children's Services.
- If a child needs emergency medical attention, this should be sought immediately and directly from the emergency services. Parents/carers, if available, should be kept fully informed.

What to do if you suspect a child is at risk or has been abused

- Agree with your group leader or safeguarding officer, who will make the referral.
- Make an immediate telephone referral to the local authority Children's Services. Make it clear from the first point of contact that you are making a child protection referral.
- Describe the event or disclosure and give information about the child and family, eg the child's name, date of birth, address, telephone number and GP.
- Follow up your telephone call with a completed referral form (sometimes available on the local authority website) or letter. If there is no acknowledgement within 48 hours, contact them again until you receive a response.
- Remember that the child and family should, wherever possible, be informed about and consent to the referral unless this would put the welfare of the child or another person at further risk. If you have serious concerns, the absence of consent should not prevent a referral. The duty social worker will give you advice on this if necessary.
- Be prepared to have further discussions with the social work team or the police investigation team.
- Say if you do not want your details disclosed to the family.
- For out of hours referrals, call the emergency social work team or where urgent, the police.
- You may need support for yourself when dealing with a safeguarding incident, so do speak to someone about this but remember to maintain appropriate confidentiality.

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

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

Vulnerable Children and Young People

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

Additional guidelines for group leaders

In addition to the above the group leader should:

- ensure that health and safety requirements are adhered to
- undertake risk assessments, take appropriate action in response to any identified risks or situations and keep records of any circumstances of concern
- keep the register and consent forms up to date
- Be aware, at all times, of what is taking place and who is present
- create space for children to talk – either formally or informally
- liaise with the safeguarding officer over good practice for safeguarding
- always inform the safeguarding officer of any specific safeguarding concerns that arise (the safeguarding officer will liaise with the DSO)
- liaise with the Church Council/Circuit Meeting.

Good practice guidelines for church-sponsored activities for children and young people

Special needs

Welcome children and young people with special needs to the group. Try to make the premises, toilets and access suitable for people with disabilities. Ask the parent/carer and the child or young person about how best to meet their needs, and do not see this as the responsibility only of the child's parent/carer. Monitor how the child /young person is managing and review this, if necessary, with the parent/carer and child/young person. If premises are being designed or refurbished, take the opportunity to anticipate the possible special needs of future children and adults; advice is available. Disability and *e*quality legislation requires organisations to take reasonable steps to meet the needs of disabled people and this includes children.

Consent

Consent to participate in activities needs to be from a parent or person with parental responsibility. In addition to this, where consent to take, store or use images is sought, any young person who is 12 years or older should be asked for their consent, in addition to the person with parental responsibility. You should record who has given consent for any specific activity and retain any consent forms.

Records

As part of initial registration for an activity, the following details should be obtained and updated annually:

- name and address
- date of birth
- emergency contact details
- medical information
- any special needs including activities in which the child is unable to take part
- consent for emergency medical treatment
- Separate consent should be obtained for one-off events and activities (eg swimming) and also for outings, weekends away, etc.
- All personal details and consent forms must be stored securely and not shared with other children or adults unless it is legally permissible to do so. There is further information about when you can share information in the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church.
- Consent for photography, video or film should be confirmed by completing the relevant form.

Any group that includes children under the age of eight that meets *for more than two hours a day* in England must register with Ofsted unless they are exempt, as detailed in Annex A of the *Early Years and Childcare Registration Handbook* www.gov.uk/government/publications/become-a-registered-early-years-or-childcare-provider-in-england. It is an offence to provide such childcare without being registered or on premises that have not been approved.

Register

For all children and young people's activities, a register must be taken of those attending on each occasion. This should include:

- the date of the activity
- the type of activity
- a list of adults present
- a list of children/young people present.

Required staffing levels

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

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

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

should also be based on a risk assessment e.g. increased ratios for outdoor or activities.

Required Adult to Child Ratios (as recommended by the NSPCC)		
0 – 2 years	1 adult to 3 children	1:3
2 – 3 years	1 adult to 4 children	1:4
4 – 8 years	1 adult to 6 children	1:6
9 – 12 years	1 adult to 8 children	1:8
13 – 18 years	1 adult to 10 children	1:10

2 Unaccompanied Children

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

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

2.1 Action on arrival of an unaccompanied child

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

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

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

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

2.1.1 Children not collected from an activity

Church leaders should not be expected to be responsible for, or transport, children unless this has been arranged and agreed beforehand. The required provisions around the transportation of children must be followed if this becomes necessary (see page 10).

Where a child is not collected from an activity without prior agreement, the following steps should be taken:

- The parent or carer should be contacted to confirm whether it is safe for them to go home

unescorted.

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

Please note: If there is a risk that the child may run away before a parent/carer or social care staff arrive then do not share with child that parent/carer has been called. Make a note of their physical appearance including what they are wearing in case they run away and the police have to search for them. Also, consider moving to a place in the building that is less open so they cannot easily abscond, and try to think of something to occupy them in the meantime. If the child leaves the building or premises then:

It is not advisable to follow the child as this can make their behaviour more unpredictable and therefore dangerous e.g. with traffic etc.in their attempt to get away. Church staff should not leave until all children have departed.

2.1.2 Involving other agencies

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

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

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

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

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

- how the child would get to and from church
- their level of maturity

- the child's wishes and feelings
- the views of parents/carers
- the availability of staff or volunteers who are cleared to undertake regulated activity to escort the child
- any risks that may arise from lone attendance and how they might be minimised
- consideration of any persons who might present a risk on site e.g. those with relevant safeguarding contracts.

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

2.2 Mixed-age activities

Care should be taken to ensure that children in mixed-age activities such as choirs, music and drama groups are supervised. DBS checks are not required for adults in those groups who do not have specific responsibility for children.

Separate changing facilities should be provided when needed for adults and children and different genders. Children should be supervised only by those authorised to do so.

2.3 Safe environment

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

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

When evaluating a venue, the following should be considered:

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

- Groups must have access to a phone in order to call for help if necessary.
- Adults must be aware of the fire procedures.
- Unaccompanied children or adults deemed vulnerable should be discouraged from walking along dark and badly lit paths in or outside of the premises.
- Suitable provision for first aid must be available.

2.4 Special needs

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

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

6.3.10 Whistleblowing

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

6.3.11 Drug and Alcohol Use

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

First aid kits and accident books

- A first aid kit and accident book should be available on the premises. The contents of the first aid kit should be stored in a waterproof container and be clearly marked. Each group should designate one worker to check the contents at prescribed intervals.
- All staff and volunteer workers should be encouraged to have some first aid knowledge and the church or circuit should encourage access to first aid training. There should be an adequate number of qualified first aiders and a list of first aiders should be compiled and kept available.
- All accidents should be recorded in an accident book.

E-safety

- Ensure that all electronic communications are appropriate and professional.
- If using e-technology as a group activity, ensure that an adult worker knows and understands what is happening within the group.
- Do not make any relationship with a child (other than family members) through a social networking site.
- Maintain a log of all electronic contact with individuals or groups including messaging and texting.
- Ensure that parents or carers are aware of what their children or young people are doing and have given their written permission in advance.
- When demonstrations are being given, plan beforehand to ensure that all websites visited have material that is appropriate for the age group taking part.

- Where children and young people are given access to undertake their own searches on the Internet, search engines are recommended by the Dept for Education and Skills.
- Children and young people should be regularly informed and reminded of safe Internet use and accessing social media. If they have any concerns or fears, they must be encouraged to access websites such as NSPCC or Childline or talk to an adult.
- See also Eastcote Methodist Church Social Media Guidelines

Transporting children on behalf of the church

Drivers

- All those who drive children on church-organised activities should have held a full and clean driving licence for over two years.
- Drivers who are not children's workers should be recruited for the task through the normal recruitment process.
- Any driver who has an endorsement of six points or more on their licence should inform the group leader and the church/circuit safeguarding officer.
- Any driver who has an unspent conviction for any serious road traffic offence should not transport children for the Church.
- Drivers must always be in a fit state (ie not overtired, not under the influence of alcohol, not taking illegal substances and not under the influence of medicine, which may induce drowsiness).
- Drivers of church-owned vehicles should provide a copy of their driving licence on an annual basis or provide consent and relevant details for a check to be made via the government website.

Private cars

- Children and young people should not be transported in a private car without the prior consent of their parents or carers. This also applies to formally arranged lifts to and from a church activity.
- All vehicles that carry children for church activities must be covered by a comprehensive insurance policy for both private and business use. They should have up-to-date road tax and where applicable, MOT.
- The insured person should make sure that their insurance covers the giving of lifts relating to church-sponsored activities.
- All cars that carry children must be in a roadworthy condition.
- All children must wear suitable seat belts and use appropriate booster seats. If there are insufficient seat belts, additional children should not be carried.
- At no time should the number of children in a car exceed the usual passenger number.
- There should be a non-driving adult escort as well as the driver. If in an emergency a driver has to transport one child on his or her own, the child must sit in the back of the car. A signed and dated record must be kept of the reasons for this.

Minibuses/coaches

- Before using a minibus, ensure you know the most up-to-date regulations for its use and have had a trial drive.
- Check your licence covers the vehicle group you are intending to drive.
- Workers/helpers should sit amongst the group and not together.
- If noise or behaviour appears to be getting out of control, stop the vehicle when safe to do so, until calm is restored.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Church Council. Next review date: **June 2027**

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

Dated **15th October 2026**

Important telephone numbers

Local agencies

Police (all non-emergency enquiries)	101
Local police Child/Family Protection Unit	Hillingdon Stronger Families Hub Tel: 01895 556006
Local council Children's Services/Social Care	Hillingdon Stronger Families Hub Tel: 01895 556006
Local Emergency Social Work Team	Hillingdon Stronger Families Hub Tel: 01895 556006
Local general hospital	Hillingdon Hospital Tel: 01895 238282 Mount Vernon Hospital Tel: 01923 826111

Support and Advice Organisations

Childline	0800 1111
Family Lives (helpline for parents)	0808 800 2222
YoungMinds (parents helpline, mental health)	https://www.youngminds.org.uk
Hopeline (suicide support for young people)	Live chat https://www.thehopeline.com
FRANK (drug and alcohol support)	0300 123 6600

Telephone Numbers for Staff

Methodist Church Contacts

Connexional Safeguarding Officer	Claire de Stefano 07799 900472 safeguarding@methodistchurch.org.uk

Church and circuit contacts

Name	Role	Phone
Dr Lynita Conradie	Superintendent minister	020 8866 1743
Dr Lynita Conradie	Minister	020 8866 1743
	Circuit Safeguarding officer (Children)	
Jill Wells	Church Safeguarding officer (Children)	07796 044204
Jo Holt	Church Safeguarding officer (lettings)	020 8868 0353