

BUNYAN MEETING, BEDFORD

CARE AND SAFETY POLICY

1. Statement of intent

We have a “duty of care” for all adults, young people and children with whom we are involved.

We acknowledge that those under 18 years old have special needs as do adults with conditions limiting their mental or physical abilities.

In addition, any person can be vulnerable in particular circumstances, such as when they are dependent on a welfare service or undergoing a crisis.

Safer Recruiting processes are used for all our leaders and workers whether in paid or voluntary positions. This is for all from the Church Minister to the kitchen assistant.

All documents with personal data are kept securely and destroyed safely after 6 months e.g. references, permission forms etc.

Registers are kept and risk assessments made for all activities on the church premises and also for those activities held by the church at other venues or outside of any building.

In addition to adopting safe practise in every activity organised by, on or in the Church we aim to ensure that the building, meeting rooms etc. are safe and well maintained.

We ensure that fire and electrical equipment is regularly tested. If any meetings take place in a building other than the Church’s own we do the best we can to ascertain that these checks have been carried out.

As Christians, we would want to go further than this and say that we are responsible to God for the way we treat everyone. So we seek high standards because we want to, not just because we have to!

Taking good care is a never-ending process – so the Church will review its procedures and documents ideally every twelve months. This document was last revised in May 2018 and agreed by the Church meeting on 30th May 2018.

- **Bunyan Meeting adopts the following Congregational Federation guidelines as the standards for all its work with children, young people and adults.**

2. Applying good practice

The church’s involvement falls into three categories:

- a) the informal fellowship of people of different ages and capabilities in the worshipping community;

- b) groups organised specifically for children, young people or adults;
- c) groups organised by other agencies on the church premises.

a) Informal fellowship

Church Members have a shared responsibility for all those attending worship and other all-age activities. No one of any age but especially those under 18, elderly or in currently vulnerable circumstances, should be left in a dangerous situation.

No person should be subjected to physical or verbal abuse, or inappropriate contact of any kind. All members have a responsibility to step in and challenge such behaviour, and to report it straight away to a church officer.

- **The Church accepts a shared responsibility for all its children and young people, and undertakes to be diligent in their care and supervision.**
- **The Church accepts a shared responsibility for adults who share in its life, and is committed to developing awareness of their needs and dignity.**

b) Church groups

At present these are:	Sunday School	Jenny Gunton
	Museum Groups	Nicola Sherhod
	Basement Project	Anne-Marie Abbate

- **Holders of these positions are required to notify the deacons' meeting each time they wish to appoint an assistant leader, so that the church can assure itself that the necessary recruitment steps are taken.**

c) Other groups using church premises

At present these are:	Castle Life Art	Sally Heard
	Come and Sing	Evelyn Sutherland
	Bedford Philatelic Society	Julie Barnard (Hon Treasurer)
	Bedford Ballet School	Karen Lowe

- **The Church advises holders of the positions above that all work on its premises must meet the standards set down in this policy. The Church ensures that rental agreements are supplied and amended as appropriate. The groups are advised to have sufficient insurance cover appropriate for the activity carried out on the church premises.**

3. Safer Recruitment and levels of checking

All church leaders having direct contact with children and those adults who are in vulnerable circumstances are asked to obtain a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

These lists have been adapted to take into account the introduction of vetting and barring schemes detailed in the Protection of Freedom Act 2012 and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scotland.

There may be other roles identified within the Church in addition to the ones listed. Checks are not available for people under 16 years.

A Local Workers Form (LWF) is required to be completed by everyone wishing to work in a paid or voluntary role within the church. References and interviews including a probationary period are required for all posts. Enhanced DBS/PVG certificates are obtained for all relevant roles.

The DBS/PVG certificate is the property of the applicant however they are required to show the Church's appointed safeguarding officer/protection verifier their certificate on its receipt. Details that may affect the role to which they wish to be appointed are noted and acted upon. This may mean that they are unable to take up the role applied for. The date for renewal is noted for church records. Copies should not be taken or kept by the church

- i. Barred List Check for Children & Adults (includes Enhanced Check)**
 - Any Minister, Pastor or Church Ministry leader
 - Any retired Minister or Pastor still engaged in Church work
- ii. Barred List Check for Children (includes Enhanced Check)**
 - Leaders/Supervisors of people regularly working with Children
 - People transporting children on behalf of the Church
- iii. Barred List Check for Adults (includes Enhanced Check)**
 - Leaders/Supervisors of people working with Adults
 - People transporting adults on behalf of the Church to hospital/health care providers.
 - Visitors authorised by the Church who undertake assistance with shopping, bills etc.
- iv. Enhanced Checks Only**
 - The Leaders of groups or activities which involve children or young people under 18 on a regular basis.
 - The Leaders of groups or activities which involve adults on the Church premises.
 - Protection Verifiers with a safeguarding role.
- v. Applicants requiring Self Disclosure Only (completion of LWF and references sought)**
 - Helpers in any group who are supervised at all times.
 - Protection Verifiers checking documents only.
- vi. DBS certificate issued by a third party**
 - Regular visiting worship leaders from other churches undertaking no pastoral duties are asked for evidence of a Disclosure certificate.

The church appoints Mrs Sue Stewart as its Protection Verifier.

The primary role of a Protection Verifier is to establish the identity of an applicant for a disclosure certificate on behalf of the Congregational Federation's registered body, 'Due Diligence Checking' (DDC). To apply for a Disclosure certificate in England and Wales the applicant uses either the online application process or a paper form and in Scotland a PVG scheme application form.

The Protection Verifier must have an email address and provide the Congregational Federation with contact details including their date of birth.

Verifiers in England and Wales are advised to process disclosure applications online and need to register with 'Due Diligence Checking' (DDC) in order to do this. Contact should be made through the Federation's safeguarding Officer initially to arrange this.

Full Guidance notes are available on the DDC website www.ddc.uk.net.

4. Good Practice – Safeguarding

In addition to the safer recruiting measures and general duty of care to all people outlined above, the church advises all leaders of work with **under 18's** of the following requirements:

a) Supervision

Leaders must be prepared and ready before admitting children to the building. Children remain under leaders' supervision throughout their time on the premises. Leaders and helpers who do not have the appropriate DBS/PVG certificates need to be supervised at all times and should not be left in sole charge of a child or group. If they are required to assist in toileting they need to have a DBS/PVG check.

a) Working Safely

Leaders and helpers must avoid situations where they are alone with a child. A leader should not work alone with a group behind closed doors. If possible, children should be led by at least one person of their own gender. The rooms used should be suitable for the numbers of children attending. Registers should be taken at every meeting. Risk assessments should be carried out periodically.

b) Handling Information

Leaders should be able to respond correctly if a child reports that they have been abused:

- do listen

- do not promise to 'keep a secret'

- do not jump to conclusions or start an investigation

- do not keep the information to yourself

- if a child may be in immediate danger, contact the police.

The Church appoints **ChildLine (0800 1111)** as its confidential advisers. Any disclosures of abuse or maltreatment must be reported to an appropriate agency, and the Church Secretary informed of the action taken.

d) Home Contacts and Permission

An accurate register of children must be kept including addresses and telephone numbers. Parents' permission to attend must be obtained in writing at least once a year and whenever children are to be taken off the premises.

e) Standard of work

Leaders are required to maintain a high standard of work, and encouraged to take up training opportunities to enhance their skills.

5. Regulated activities

a) Basis in law

The Protection of Freedom Act 2012, The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and Protecting Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 require those undertaking 'regulated activities' to obtain safeguarding registration.

b) Definition of 'regulated activities'

These are roles which involve responsibility for children (such as teaching, training, care, supervision or transport arranged by the church) and which are undertaken regularly, frequently or intensively.

This includes: **those working once a week or more**

those working for four days or more in a month

(e.g. a week-long holiday Bible club for children)

those working overnight (e.g. a youth group sleep-over)

those managing or supervising any of the above.

c) Definition of ‘vulnerable’

People may be vulnerable because of their age (i.e. under 18); an incapacity (e.g. restricted sight); because of a circumstance (e.g. recent bereavement); or because of reliance on a service (e.g. transport arranged by the church).

Safeguarding registration is required for roles which take some responsibility for people whenever they are in vulnerable circumstances. This occurs whenever the service is provided and does not need to meet the frequently or intensively rule as above for children. Transport to hospital etc. assistance with shopping, eating and toileting requires a DBS check even if only done occasionally or on a short term basis e.g. because of incapacity due to illness.

Services targeted mainly or solely at vulnerable people (e.g. an advice service for those who find it difficult to fill in forms) are likely to involve roles in this category.

d) Referring Information

The church is legally obliged to refer information about individuals who may pose a risk to children or other vulnerable people. The church must report to the Disclosure and Barring Service any person dismissed from a position within the church even if they have not been charged with a criminal offence.

Referrals are to be made to the appropriate safeguarding agency (DBS/PVG). When such action is being considered, the Congregational Federation Safeguarding Office should be contacted immediately.

6. Additional guidelines

a) Staffing numbers

Recommended ratios of adults and children are:

0-2 years:	1 adult for 3 children
2-3 years:	1 adult for 4 children
3-7 years:	1 adult for 8 children
8+ years:	1 adult for 10 children.

b) Safe Activities

Leaders should avoid inherently dangerous or inappropriate games – e.g. young children lifting each other off the ground.

c) Emergencies

A first aid box is provided in the kitchen and in the Office. Leaders should ensure there is a telephone available for use in an emergency. Any accidents must be recorded in the accident book. Other serious incidents should also be recorded in writing and the record kept securely.

Leaders must be familiar with the fire procedure and evacuation routes. It is suggested that a fire drill be performed with the group once each term.

d) Safe Use of Images

All photographs which include children used on a church website or for any other public display (such as a church magazine) must reflect normal children's activities and show the children fully clothed.

Photographs in which individual children can readily be identified may only be displayed on the church's website provided parents / carers have given specific written permission.

Larger group photographs in which children cannot readily be identified may be used on the website provided parents / carers have given general written permission for their children to be included in church publicity.

This general permission must also be obtained by the church before children's images are used in magazines, posters, etc. or published by a third party, such as a local newspaper or a denominational magazine.

e) Electronic communications

Only church post holders holding a valid Disclosure and Barring Check may have their contact details included in the website or contact young people directly by electronic means.

It is recommended that meeting times are only given on a church website for children's groups where all children are met by parents or carers and there is no unrestricted entry to the building. (i.e. there is a locked door with bell or someone attending the entrance).

It is recommended that all contact with under 18's or other vulnerable persons through e-mail, message boards, etc. is copied to a church officer or available for regular inspection in some other way as agreed by the church.

It is recommended that phone calls and texts between leaders and young people are kept brief and functional. For example, 'what time is club tonight?' 'It's at 7, see you there'.

It is recommended that the Church adopts a Social Media policy and has this available for church leaders and volunteers. This is in the course of preparation and will be approved by the Church Meeting in 2021. The church appoints **Mr Tom Barwood** to administer and monitor this.

a) Possible physical hazards

Hazards should be noted and appropriate guidelines given to prevent accidents etc. Leaders are responsible for seeing that safety rules are kept. Regular risk assessments should be carried out.

b) Off the premises

Written risk assessments are recommended for any trips off premises. A simple pro forma is available. Prior consent by the Church Meeting is required for any planned residential trips.

c) Support for Leaders

The Church seeks to support and encourage all leaders in their work, and expresses this support through the deacons' meeting. Leaders may ask to meet with the deacons at any time to discuss their work.

Policy put before the Church Meeting on 25th November 2020