



Charity Registration Number 1135818

**Milnrow Evangelical Church
22 New Street, Milnrow
Rochdale OL16 3PQ**

**Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
Updated Sept 2024**

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

(To be read with the Milnrow Evangelical Church (MEC) Safeguarding Statement)

Please note: when the terms 'we' or 'us' are used throughout, they refer to MEC.

1. Purpose of this policy

To outline our aims, which are:

- To ensure that we provide a healthy, nurturing and protective environment for everyone who engages with our church.
- To ensure that our volunteer children/young people workers are clear about their responsibilities and duties and are supported in fulfilling them.
- To ensure that children, young people and adults who join in our activities as a church are protected from harm and abuse and that if abuse is identified, it will be handled appropriately.

2. Scope of this policy

- This policy applies to everyone who works on our behalf with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- It applies to trustees, senior leaders, office-holders such as elders and deacons, supported full or part-time workers and the volunteers who act on our behalf.

3. Our values and beliefs

- Every human being is created in the image of God and is precious.
- We live in a sinful world where there are many risks and dangers and we seek to protect everyone who uses our services from harm and abuse.
- MEC is not a gathering of sinless people but rather a community of grace where we seek to encourage one another to grow in faith and obedience to God.
- Children, young people and adults have the right to live free of abuse.
- It is our responsibility that when they are in our care we seek to promote their welfare both physically and spiritually, and to protect them from harm, abuse or exploitation.
- We accept as Christians that we are to honour those that God has set over us and to obey the law of the land where we can without infringing the laws of God that are paramount.
- We aim to protect those in our church community who are vulnerable from neglect or abuse within our community. We aim also to be aware that there may be abuse that occurs outside the church and to fulfil our obligations of reporting to the relevant services if we should need to do so.
- Any safeguarding concerns must not be tolerated but be dealt with decisively, promptly, effectively and transparently. This applies to all members of our church, no matter their position or standing.

4. Our responsibilities and commitment

Our responsibilities

- To promote the welfare both physically and spiritually of children, young people and adults in our midst, including but not exclusively, those who are at risk of abuse.
- To treat all people as equal in the sight of God. They are equally sinful, equally loved and equally offered the gift of salvation and reconciliation to God.
- To seek to minister to all, and to encourage growth in obedience to God and His word with equity, transparency and sensitivity, in accordance with our fundamental beliefs as laid out in

our statement of faith that can be supplied to any enquirer by applying to the Church Administrator, (CA).

- To pay attention to the protection and nurturing of those in our midst who are particularly vulnerable to abuse or neglect.
- We have a responsibility to report to the relevant agencies any evidence we have of abuse or neglect in vulnerable children/young people or adults who attend our meetings.
- Should a child/young person or vulnerable adult seek to report to us that they are being abused by someone outside the church then we will seek to listen carefully without judgement and report the matter to the relevant agency as is required of us by the law.

Our commitment

- We will actively seek to create and maintain a culture that is consistent with our biblical principles and best practice in safeguarding.
- We will seek to develop a culture that encourages every member of our church to identify and raise concerns, and we will support this.
- We will ensure that we appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and at least one Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL), who will take responsibility for leading safeguarding of children and adults. (See Appendix A). The DSL will report to the eldership on matters of concern and will advise on the relevant action to be taken.
- We will ensure that we have Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for all our volunteers before they can take any responsibilities with our children and young people's works. (See Appendix B).
- We will ensure that our volunteers are supported and receive appropriate training to deliver best practice safeguarding.
- All our children/young people's work is subject to the direct supervision of the eldership and is the responsibility of our eldership.
- We will use risk assessments and effective systems to ensure safety.
- We are careful in our use of social media and technology.
- We will monitor the conduct of our volunteers. All involved in the children/young people's ministry will be encouraged to work together and support one another.
- We will listen carefully to any allegations of misconduct and will respond promptly with rigor, fairness and transparency.
- We have a zero tolerance of any form of bullying, discriminatory or abusive attitudes, language or behaviours, whether by or to our workers and will deal with such as soon as we are aware.
- We will seek to clearly identify concerns about the safety or wellbeing of those who are part of our church community and to respond appropriately and proportionately. We will provide information, guidance and support as we are able, to help them overcome their challenges. If necessary, we will signpost or refer them to local or national services that can help them.
- We will record and store information accurately and will keep it securely, only sharing information appropriately in line with our legal duties with those who have a right to the information. These include records such as:
 - Consent forms
 - Attendance data for work with children/young people and adults at risk of abuse
 - Confidential recording of safeguarding concerns
 - Confidential recording of any incidents during the children/young people's meetings such as minor accidents etc. and what appropriate action was taken. Parents/carers will always be informed of any such occurrences.

5. General stipulations of this policy

Children

- The children/young people's workers will promote the welfare and protection of the children/young people in their meetings at all times.
- They will maintain order and ensure the safety between children in their conduct to each other and to ensure respect for the church's building and property.
- Bad behaviour will be dealt with promptly so that the meeting is not spoiled for others.
- The workers will assist children to overcome behavioural problems by providing opportunities for support and discussion of any such difficulties. See section 'Children with Special Needs'.

Parent/carer

- When MEC does not provide transport for the children/young people, it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to provide that transport.
- In the case of a designated parent/carer not being available to collect the child/young person, then they will contact the leader in advance with the name of the person deputising for them and that person will confirm their name before they can collect the children/young people.
- The parent/carer will be informed of the above stipulation on the registration form for the meetings.
- Should MEC be providing transport it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to be available to receive the child/young person.
- The parent/carer shall provide a contact number that can be used in cases of emergency.
- The person collecting the children shall remain in the foyer of the building until the meeting has finished.
- The parent/carer of any child in a meeting shall be free to remain in the meeting with their child.

Leaders

- The leaders of each meeting have a vital role in ensuring the implementation of our rules for discipline and safeguarding. Leaders must constantly be alert to possible problems and dangers and must take appropriate action promptly to prevent problems developing.
- The purpose of leadership is both to teach by times of instruction and to model true Christian conduct and attitude at all times.
- They should be fully conversant with this policy and ensure it is implemented.
- They are responsible for keeping a register of all children/young people at their meetings, along with the contact details of the parent/carer to be contacted in case of emergency. The registers shall be kept securely in the Pastor's office. Completed registers shall be kept securely by the CA.
- The leaders are responsible to clearly define the rules of conduct and, when necessary, to implement appropriate, clear and decisive sanctions.
- The leaders are responsible to ensure the safety of the children/young people in all activities throughout the meeting.
- They are to give appropriate help to any injured child and to inform the parent/carer either immediately if urgent action is required, or at the end of the meeting.
- First aid facilities are available in the church building.
- All incidents involving harm to a child, accidental or otherwise, shall be recorded on an incident sheet kept in the incident folder in the secure office.
- If a child/young person has to be removed from the meeting, they must be supervised until they can be returned to the care of their parent/carer. No child/young person is to be left free

to wander around the premises or car park without adult supervision. This may require calling in an additional helper until a parent/carer is available.

- The leader shall ensure that a record is kept of any child leaving the meeting prematurely with the reason they give for leaving. The parent/carer shall be contacted to collect the child/young person early.
- The leaders are to ensure that any concerns that are reported of any physical, sexual, emotional abuse, neglect or inappropriate behaviour by any person is recorded on an incident sheet kept in the incident folder in the secure office. Any concerns are to be reported immediately to the DSL or Deputy DSL. If neither are available then the report should go to an elder.
- The leader shall ensure that the meetings are run with sufficient staff to maintain the guidelines set out in this policy. A rough guide of adult/child ratios is given below:
 - 0-2 years – one adult to three children
 - 2-3 years – one adult to four children
 - 4-8 years - one adult to six children
 - 9-12 years – one adult to eight children
 - 13-18 years – one adult to ten children

However, it is also required that there be no fewer than two adults in any situation during the meetings. This means that if the meeting splits into two locations, then four adults are needed to manage the two locations, unless both locations can be clearly seen from one vantage point. The DSL will discuss with the leaders the appropriate staffing for the meetings in each case.

Sunday School/Crèche for special events

- Children aged 3-7 are accepted into Sunday school as a service for parents involved in worship.
- Any incident with a child shall be reported immediately to the parent/carer or as soon as possible after the meeting.
- The parent/carer of a child in Sunday school shall be required to sign a consent form for the approved MEC staff/volunteers to take the child to the toilet when required. A parent/carer may opt out of this and be called out of the meeting to take the child itself. It is accepted that if the worker takes the child to the toilet then that worker will be on their own with the child and will leave only one adult with the other children in the Sunday school for that period of time.
- Visitors to the church who wish to use the Sunday school facilities offered shall be made aware of the above verbally by the Sunday school leader of the day.
- Helpers in the Sunday school shall be members in good standing in MEC with the required DBS checks.

Children with Special Needs

Overall Aim

- To include and integrate all children into the meetings as far as it is possible. It is to be borne in mind that our workers are untrained, ordinary members of the public with no qualifications in the care of disabled children, young people or adults.
- The inclusion of children with special needs, physical and/or mental, while desirable, shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the parent/carer.

What we aim to provide

- It is our wish to include all children that would desire to come to our children's meetings.
- After consultation with the parent/carer, we will endeavour to assign a key worker to the child to assist them in the meeting. This person will provide the help that typically a Teaching Assistant (TA) would provide in a classroom situation. That is, help with reading, playing games, taking part in activities etc.

What we cannot provide

- We cannot take responsibility for any personal hygiene care, e.g. changing of nappies, dressings etc. Neither can we give medication to any child, including the use of an inhaler.
- We cannot physically restrain a child unless that child is a danger to themselves or others. We cannot physically make a child sit and listen, even if that child is being disruptive to the meeting, preventing others from listening.

Possible Requirements

- The parent/carer stays with the child for a trial period of 4 weeks and takes full responsibility for the specialist treatment of their child. This period could be lengthened or shortened at the discretion of the leader of the meeting, on a case-by-case basis.
- At the end of the trial period, the situation is to be reviewed by the leaders and the parents to see if this is a suitable environment for the child. The welfare of the child is paramount. It may be judged that the child can remain in the group providing the parent is in attendance at all times.
- Regrettably, we cannot offer to provide a childcare service to give the parent/carer a break.
- The leader of the meeting is responsible for talking these stipulations through with the parent/carer in a sensitive and positive manner before we can accept a child with special needs to join the group.
- While it is necessary to inform parents of what we cannot do, we wish to emphasise that we love all children, whatever their needs, and have a desire to facilitate their involvement in our children's activities whenever possible.

General meetings

When these meetings are primarily aimed at adults yet young people are present, and childcare is not provided, for example as at regular Sunday Services then:

- During these times, children remain the responsibility of their parents who are responsible for their safety and care.
- Any concerns or support needs identified will be recorded on an incident sheet and kept in the secure office. They will be reported to the DSL in the usual way.

When young people are present at meetings that are primarily aimed at adults and are participating in the meeting in their own right, then:

- Normal principles of safeguarding will apply.
- If the young person is not believed to be competent to consent to attendance, consent will be sought from their parents/carers.
- If the young person is believed to be competent to consent to attendance, they will be encouraged to be open and transparent with their parents/carers.
- Leaders of the church or meeting in question will be vigilant to ensure that the young person is adequately protected.
- Any concerns or support needs identified will be recorded on an incident sheet and reported to the DSL.

The above guidelines also apply whenever the church is ministering to vulnerable adults.

6. Safeguarding Procedures

These procedures aim to provide our volunteers with clear and simple instructions as to how safeguarding is promoted and how concerns should be handled. They apply to all volunteers and others who act on behalf of the church.

Governance and oversight

The elders will provide effective oversight of safeguarding across the church by:

- Ensuring that a suitable, knowledgeable, appropriately trained and skilled Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a deputy are appointed and that they are adequately supported and resourced.
- Ensuring that a proportionate and legally compliant safeguarding policy is implemented and that it is reviewed at least annually by the elders and trustees with input and support from the DSL and the Deputy DSL.
- Ensuring that a verbal report is given by the DSL/Deputy DSL annually at a members' meeting.
- Ensuring that the safeguarding arrangements are monitored regularly and reviewed annually in line with the annual review of the policy and procedures.
- Ensuring that a clear statement regarding safeguarding is included in the annual report to the Charity Commission.
- That any "Serious Incidents" (as defined in the Charity Commission Guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity>) are reported accurately and in a timely manner. For the purpose of this document the elders and trustees should refer to the section in the above on Safeguarding incidents.

Supported staff and volunteers

- All supported staff (elders/those employed by the church) shall be DBS checked.
- All volunteers working with children/vulnerable adults shall be members of MEC in good standing and shall undergo a DBS check.
- No person with a history of child-related or other criminal sexual offences will be permitted to undertake any role associated with the children's and youth work of the church.
- It is a normal requirement that the DBS check is received before the volunteer begins work with the children/vulnerable adults.
- In exceptional circumstances where it is needful for the person to begin work before the necessary check is received, they must be supervised at all times by a DBS checked worker.

Responding to and reporting safeguarding concerns and disclosures

Managing immediate risk

- Upon identification of a concern or receipt of a disclosure, the worker involved should make an assessment as to whether any immediate action is necessary to protect the individual concerned or others.
- The worker may seek advice from the team leader or from the DSL, however, the seeking of advice **should not** unnecessarily delay or prevent the protective action or place those at risk of further or increased harm.
- In such urgent situations, and if the DSL or Deputy DSL cannot immediately be contacted, the worker should contact an elder who will decide whether or not to contact either the police on 999 or Social Care to obtain support. Under these circumstances the DSL should be notified at the earliest possible opportunity. For relevant contact details of Social Care/Police please see Appendix A.

Reporting concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Once it has been established that the immediate danger has passed, the concern will be reported to the DSL.

- The concerns will be discussed with the DSL at the earliest opportunity, to ensure clarity of understanding.

- Details of the concern must be recorded on the “incidents and concerns reporting form” (see Appendix C) before, during or immediately after the discussion with the DSL. Copies of this form are to be kept in the secure office in the Confidential Safeguarding file.

Managing the risks: the role of the DSL

- In discussion with the worker reporting the concern, the DSL will review any immediate actions taken and will be responsible for follow-up or further action that may be required.
- Upon receipt of the completed form, the DSL will establish a ‘Confidential File’ in relation to the person who is either at risk or who poses a risk to others.
- A Chronology/Record of Action (See Appendix D) will be established and inserted at the front of the Confidential File.
- The Confidential File will be updated with any further discussions or actions, including any advice sought or referrals made and updating will continue on an on-going basis.
- The DSL will confirm to the person raising the concern that the matter has been acted upon.
- The DSL will not provide any unnecessary information. Information is only shared on a ‘need to know’ basis.
- Where the concern meets the statutory threshold, the DSL will notify the parent/carer of the individual concerned (or the individual themselves if they are a competent adult) that a referral is being made to Social Care and/or the Police.
- Information will not be shared with the parent/carer in situations where:
 - To do so would place a child at increased risk of harm or neglect.
 - To do so would place an adult at increased risk of harm or abuse.
 - The concern relates to Fabricated or Induced illness (Munchausen Syndrome).
- Where appropriate, the referral will be made to the relevant Social Care service (see Appendix A).
- All conversations, correspondence and documentation etc. will be placed into the confidential file and the ‘Record of Action’ and Chronology will be maintained on an on-going basis.
- Confidential files will be stored in the secure place with the registers etc. and a copy maintained on the DSL computer files.
- The DSL will relate to the elders when necessary and share information when appropriate to facilitate effective safeguarding.

Allegations against or concerns about supported staff and volunteers

- Allegations against staff or volunteers within the church should be reported to the DSL in the first instance who will report to the elders. If neither the DSL nor the Deputy DSL are available then it should be reported to an elder.
- If the allegation is against an elder then it should be reported to one of the other elders.
- Full details of the allegation will be recorded on an incident sheet and kept in the secure office.
- The elders will determine whether immediate action is required. Notifying the individual that an allegation has been received may thus be unavoidable.
- Care will have to be taken to not compromise the gathering of evidence.
- If it is necessary to notify the individual concerned at this stage, details of the allegation will not be divulged.
- Support must be offered to the subject of the allegations as well as to any potential victims.

If the allegation meets the threshold for the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) then they should be consulted at the earliest opportunity. If the LADO is not available then CSS can be consulted for initial advice.

If the allegation does not meet the threshold for LADO, then CSS will be consulted who will provide independent support and advice to ensure transparency.

Thorough records of all aspects of the handling of the allegation will be retained throughout the process.

These records will be held confidentially in a secure place.

7. Management of ex-offenders or those who pose an actual or potential risk to others: particularly to vulnerable people

Introduction

The code of practice (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-code-of-practice>) published under section 122 of the Police Act 1997 advises that it is a requirement that all registered bodies must treat DBS applicants who have a criminal record fairly and not discriminate automatically because of a conviction or other information revealed.

As a church, we believe in the power of God to forgive and transform individuals. We also believe that every individual is valuable to God and should be protected; particularly those who are vulnerable.

- As an organisation assessing applicants' suitability for positions which are included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 using criminal record checks processed through the DBS, MEC complies fully with the code of practice; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-code-of-practice>, and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly.
- MEC can only ask an individual to provide details of convictions and cautions that MEC are legally entitled to know about.
- All DBS applicants are given a link to a copy of this document at the start of the recruitment process and thereby have this policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders available to them.
- An application for a DBS check is made with regard to every person seeking to work on a voluntary or paid basis with MEC with children or vulnerable adults.
- MEC ensures that all those in MEC who are involved in the recruitment process have access to suitably trained personnel, in order to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences.
- MEC also ensures that they have access to personnel with appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders.
- Where the church becomes aware that an individual is an ex-offender or that they may pose a risk to vulnerable people, the church elders will enter into an open and frank discourse with that individual to understand the context and the risks.
- With the consent of the individual (if required), the church will seek to work in partnership with probation services or other agencies supporting the individual where this is appropriate.
- The elders will assess the risk posed by the individual and will complete a formal risk assessment.
- A formal agreement with the individual will be drawn up and will be signed by the elders. The agreement will include:
 - The church's commitments to the individual who poses the risk.
 - The steps the church will take to support the individual while simultaneously protecting everyone in the church community.
 - The restrictions and conditions that will be applied to the individual's involvement in the life of the church.
 - The consequences of failure to comply with the agreement.
 - When and how the risk assessment and formal contract will be reviewed.
 - All decisions and agreements will be formally recorded and securely stored.

- The individual who poses a risk will be fully involved in the planning process and information will only be shared with church members by the elders either:
 - With the agreement of the individual who poses a risk or,
 - Where information needs to be shared to protect vulnerable people and then, only the minimum information that is essential will be shared and the individual will be informed in advance what information will be shared.

If the individual chooses to leave the church to avoid the management of the risk and starts to attend elsewhere, the elders will take specialist advice as to whether this information should be passed on.

Appendix A

Details of Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

DSL: Hazel Platts
h_platts@yahoo.co.uk
07476784966

Elders: Julian Hurst
julian@milnrow.org
07866707238

DDSL: Ruth Hurst
jrhurst@talktalk.net
07790739006

Contact information for reporting Safeguarding concerns

In the first instance contact the DSL or Deputy DSL. The next call is to an elder. Only go to the authorities if none of the above are available.

<https://www.rochdale.gov.uk/childcare-children/report-child-risk>

Call 0300 303 0440 to report to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) a concern that a child has suffered neglect or abuse.

Also, if you have any concerns that an adult working with the child may have or has caused harm to a child.

If a child is in immediate danger:
Contact the Police on 101 or 999

Police protection and investigation unit: 0161 856 4810

Social Services

[https://www.ourrochdale.org.uk/kb5/rochdale/directory/advice.page?id=yG1fVYspdtE#:~:text=Telephone%3A%200300%20303%208886%20\(Weekdays,as%20possible%2C%20including%20contact%20details.](https://www.ourrochdale.org.uk/kb5/rochdale/directory/advice.page?id=yG1fVYspdtE#:~:text=Telephone%3A%200300%20303%208886%20(Weekdays,as%20possible%2C%20including%20contact%20details.)

Emergency Duty Social Work Team out of hours; including bank holidays

Telephone: 0300 303 8886 (Weekdays 8.30am to 4.45pm) or. Telephone: 0300 303 8875

Safeguarding unit

0300 303 0350

Email: adult.care@rochdale.gov.uk - please give as much information as possible, including contact details.

Appendix B **Details of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and handling of information.**

General principles

As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checking service to help assess the suitability of applicants for positions of trust, Milnrow Evangelical Church (MEC) complies fully with the code of practice regarding the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of certificates and certificate information. We use Christian Safeguarding Services (CSS) as the umbrella organisation to countersign and check our applications for DBS certificates.

Website: www.thecss.co.uk

MEC also complies fully with its obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 and other relevant legislation pertaining to the safe handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of certificate information and has a written policy on these matters, which is available to those who wish to see it on request from the Church Administrator (CA).

MEC does keep a record on a password protected computer of the date of issue, the name of the subject, the type of certificate requested, the position for which the certificate was requested, and the unique reference number of the certificate. This information will be stored on the computer by the DSL and it is not shared with anyone, other than the DDSL or the elders if necessary, without the person's consent. The certificate is kept by the person to whom it refers.

Handling and Usage

In accordance with section 124 of the Police Act 1997, certificate information is only passed to those who are authorised to receive it in the course of their duties. These are, in the first instance, the DSL and the DDSL. We maintain a record of all those to whom certificates or certificate information has been revealed and it is a criminal offence to pass information to anyone who is not entitled to receive it. Certificate information is only used for the specific purpose for which it was requested and for which the applicant's full consent has been given.

Appendix C

Incidents and concerns form

About this form and the person completing it			
Your name	Your phone number	Your mobile number	Your e-mail address
Are you reporting:	An incident	A disclosure	A concern
Department /Group / ministry area			Date completed
About the person or people we are concerned about or involved in the incident			
Their name(s)	Their Address and contact details	Their Date of birth	Name & contact details for parent / (where appropriate)
Details of the incident / disclosure / concern			
Context of the incident / disclosure / concern			
Date of incident / disclosure		Time of incident / disclosure	
Action taken:			
Other action taken or advice sought			
Signature			

Record of safeguarding conversations and actions

Date of action / conversation	Document reference
Description of record	
Information given	
Advice received	
Actions to take	
Outcomes	