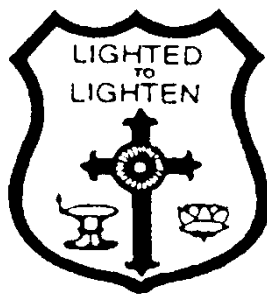


# **ST THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH, BRISTOL.**

*(A Parish in the UK & Europe Zone)*



## **POLICY FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**FIFTH EDITION**

January 2023

*Vicarage:*

*24 Sherbourne Avenue  
Bradley Stoke, Bristol BS32 8BB*

*Worship held at:*

*Stackpool Road, Southville, Bristol BS3 1NW*

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## 1. Introduction

The St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Bristol, UK, is a registered charity (Reg.No. 1122211). This policy has been developed as per the legislative guidelines of the requirements of a charity organisation.

This policy commits the St.Thomas Mar Thoma church to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all who come into our church, especially all children and young people. It also commits the church to supporting, resourcing and training all working with children and young people. In baptism, the church welcomes children as fellow members of the body of Christ and as valued members of our church.

The overall care of all children and young people in the St.Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Bristol is the responsibility of the Executive Committee of the church. Safeguarding is the collective responsibility of the parish members (i.e parents of children and young people). This policy is a framework for action derived and adopted by the guidelines for good practice laid out by THIRTYONE:EIGHT(an independent Christian charity providing professional advice, training, support and resources in all areas of safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm).

The St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church commits itself to following this policy for the safe guarding of its members, especially all children and young people. (Age 18 and under)

## **2. Policy Outline**

- 2.1 Those who work with children and young people will be familiar with this policy and will have agreed to the provisions contained in it.
- 2.2 All organised activities involving children and young people will run in accordance with the principles of good practice laid out in this policy.
- 2.3 Transport arrangements to all Church approved activities is the direct responsibility of parents, and is therefore not covered within the scope of this Policy.
- 2.4 The Safeguarding Officer will be nominated by the EC, appointed by the Vicar, duly ratified by the General Body, to oversee the operation of this policy. Children and young people will be regularly made aware of the Safeguarding Officer.
- 2.5 Access to confidential information (related to safeguarding issues) will be restricted to the Vicar of the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church and the Safeguarding Officer. Such information will be stored securely and in perpetuity in the vicarage.
- 2.6 Responses to disclosures, suspicions or allegations of abuse of children and young people will be made in accordance with this policy.
- 2.7 This policy and it's implementation will be reviewed annually by the EC. Any changes and amendments to this policy should be ratified at the subsequent General Body.

### 3. Summary of Obligations

#### 3.1. Vicar

- a. To approve and appoint Sunday School teachers in consultation with the Sunday School Head Teacher.
- b. Being the President of the EC and the General Body, as well as all organisations and acting as a Resource Leader, to undertake an Enhanced DBS check for working with children and young people.

#### 3.2. General Body

- a. To approve and authorise the policy document and any future amendments to it.

#### 3.3 The Executive Committee (EC)

- a. As the supervisory body responsible for the deployment of this policy, to ensure all its members (Charity Trustees) are mandatorily Enhanced DBS cleared **to ensure compliance with the charity commission prescribed guidelines and to ensure compliance with the public liability insurance policy. Failure to obtain this Enhanced DBS clearance before the 31<sup>st</sup> March every year will bar the member from taking an office within the EC.**
- b. To record in its minutes all those who work with children and young people. (Appointments will be renewed and confirmed as and when required or when a vacancy arises)
- c. To formally approve and record in its minutes organised activities involving children and young people
- d. To nominate the Safeguarding Officer responsible for the operation of this policy and ensure that the identity of this person is well known by children and young people; those who work with them and other members of the parish. The term of appointment will be for 3 years.
- e. To release the Safeguarding Officer from responsibility for any breach. Likewise the Safeguarding Officer has the right to withdraw from this responsibility giving the EC due notice.
- f. To ensure that appropriate training is provided for all Resource Leaders and the Safeguarding Officer
- g. To ensure that all church organised and approved activities are adequately insured- subject to a minimum of £2million public liability insurance.
- h. To provide for the safe upkeep of the premises and equipment.
- i. To provide first aid kits in places where activities take place
- j. To review this policy annually.
- k. To uphold the policy.

#### 3.4 Lead Recruiter

- a. The Lead Recruiter should be appointed by the Vicar of the Parish from one of the four office bearers: Vice President, Secretary, Trustee-Finance or Trustee- Accounts.
- b. To ensure Enhanced DBS Check formalities are completed within 15 days following the February Parish General Body meeting for the elected representatives to the Executive Committee
- c. To raise Enhanced DBS Checks within 15 days for all appointed resource leaders or as and when a vacancy arises.
- d. Will have access to the database maintained by the Safeguarding Officer for the list of all the members with Enhanced DBS checks.

#### 3.5 Additional Recruiter (Safeguarding Officer)

- a. The Safeguarding Officer is to assume the role of the Additional Recruiter.
- b. To assume responsibilities in the absence of the Lead Recruiter.
- c. To raise the Enhanced DBS for the Lead Recruiter.

### 3.6 The Safeguarding Officer.

- a. To oversee the implementation and operation of this policy
- b. To be familiar with the various forms of work with children and young people in which St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Bristol is engaged.
- c. To ensure that children and young people are informed about this policy and its operation
- d. To ensure that they are not a member of the clergy.
- e. To monitor changes in the policy and best practice as issued by the THIRTYONE:EIGHT. Any changes to the policy should be communicated to the EC.
- f. To make themselves available to leaders and Resource Leaders for discussion about this policy and its implementation
- g. To make themselves known and available to the children and young people involved in the churches activities.
- h. To undergo training and cascade the information by way of training.
- i. To go through an Enhanced DBS check.
- j. To advise prospective Resource Leaders about the DBS.
- k. To review this policy annually and report to the EC
- l. To be the first point of contact for allegations and suspicions of abuse.
- m. To escalate and liaise with other agencies in case of any allegation in consultation with the EC.
- n. To report once in three months to the EC with any updates and changes.

### 3.7. Co-ordinators/Convenors (for all church related activities for youth and children)

- a. To implement this policy in the context of the sessions they are running
- b. To consult with the Safeguarding Officer regarding this policy and any practical concerns they might have.
- c. To undergo an Enhanced DBS check as advised by the Safeguarding Officer in consultation with the Vicar.
- d. To meet regularly with the team of Resource Leaders, for support and planning.
- e. Encouraging an atmosphere of mutual support and care which allows all Resource Leaders to be comfortable enough to discuss inappropriate attitudes or behaviour.
- f. Obtaining a General Consent Form for all children or young people in regular attendance at activities. These should be kept, confidentially, by the co-ordinator. They should include names and addresses, emergency contacts (including telephone numbers) and information concerning any medical problems of which they need to be aware. These forms should be available at the relevant activities.
- g. Displaying posters informing that photography will be taken at the event and that parents should speak to the co-ordinator if they have any concerns. However the parents are ultimately responsible for excluding their children from such situations.
- h. Completing a risk assessment form (form will be attached in the Appendix) for activities and transport
- i. Keeping an up to date register of those children, Resource Leaders and volunteers attending activities.
- j. Maintaining session record sheets detailing activities, leaders in attendance and participants. These should be kept by the co-ordinator and be available to the Safeguarding Officer.
- k. Recording any notable incident, which occurs during a session (e.g. an argument between young people, or a stranger on the premises). Such incidents should be recorded on an Incident Report Form and these should be given to the Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.
- l. Maintaining an incident record book that involves any physical harm to a child or young person. This book will be kept in a secure location within the church office.
- m. Ensuring appropriate supervision of the children and young people in their group including ratios, age and gender of Resource Leaders, under the following guidelines:

### Ratio of adults to children/young people

Ratio	Adults	Children/Young People
4 to 8 years	1	6
9 to 12 years	1	8
13 to 18 years	1	10

Special needs and the nature of activities may require higher levels of staffing.

Age of Resource Leaders:

No person under 18 years old may be left in sole charge of any children of any age. Young people who assist with caring for other children/young people must complete a Junior Worker form (template included in the Appendix). They must be supervised at all times by an adult.

### 3.8. Resource Leaders (Sunday School Teachers, Choir Leaders, Youth Leader/Representative, Prayer Group Representatives).

- a. Familiarise themselves with this policy and implement it
- b. Discuss with the Safeguarding Officer and their co-ordinator/convenor how this policy bears upon their work
- c. To attend group planning meetings and support
- d. To undergo the prescribed training.

## **4. Appointment of Resource Leaders**

- 4.1 All prospective voluntary Resource Leaders should be members of the St. Thomas Mar Thoma church for a minimum of one year. Any exceptions or dispensations to this must be approved by the Vicar.
- 4.2 All Resource Leaders will be elected by the respective organisations and/or appointed by the Vicar.
- 4.3 Respective Secretaries of Organisations, following the election/appointment will be responsible to report to the Lead Recruiter within 3 days of the election/appointment.
- 4.4 All such elected/appointed Resource Leaders are to complete the formalities of Enhanced DBS application process within 15 days, following the election/appointment provided Clause 4.5 below is not valid.
- 4.5 Only prospective Resource Leaders who have previously obtained an Enhanced Disclosure from the DBS through the THIRTYONE:EIGHT (CCPAS) within the past three years do not require a further disclosure.
- 4.6 The EC may only appoint a Resource Leaders on the confirmation of receipt of clearance of an Enhanced DBS from the THIRTYONE:EIGHT.
- 4.7 Prospective Resource Leaders, occasional Resource Leaders and those under 18 must be supervised at all times.

## **5. Disclosure and Barring Service**

### **5.1. Applying for Disclosure**

- a. All candidates for a paid post or a volunteer position which involves working with children or young people must undergo a DBS at Enhanced level.
- b. All applications to the DBS will be made through the THIRTYONE:EIGHT.

- c. An application to the DBS made by a volunteer is free of charge.
- d. The Lead Recruiter will progress the application with the THIRTYONE:EIGHT
- e. The THIRTYONE:EIGHT will send a copy of the application to the applicant.
- f. If the disclosure is clear, the THIRTYONE:EIGHT will notify the lead recruiter who in turn will notify the Vicar and Safeguarding Officer.
- g. If the disclosure is 'blemished', the candidate cannot be considered for the voluntary position or hold any office within the church.
- h. The Safeguarding Officer will maintain the database of all those who are DBS cleared (the serial number of the certificates, the date of processing) and to ensure that a three year validity is maintained

## **5.2. Appeals and Complaints Procedure – DBS Disclosures**

Although every effort is made to ensure that all recruitment decisions involving Disclosure information are made sensitively and fairly, should an applicant for a paid post or volunteer position feel that this has not happened the matter can be referred to the THIRTYONE:EIGHT

The applicant should submit the appeal or complaint in writing, stating their name and address, the nature of the complaint or appeal, the date of the Disclosure document, the identity of the person or appointing body responsible for making the appointment to the paid post or volunteer position, and any other relevant information.

## **6. First Aid**

- a. The EC is responsible, through the management structures for the halls, for ensuring that there is a fully stocked first aid kit available for the use of groups.
- b. There should always be a trained first aider available during work with children and young people.
- c. The Safeguarding Officer should hold a list of those qualified as first aiders together with the dates their qualifications need to be renewed. This list should be passed onto co-ordinators.
- d. All Resource Leaders should know the identity of the First Aider and the location of the first aid boxes.
- e. There should be an accident book with each first aid kit.
- f. Hygiene is important – non-latex gloves should always be used when dealing with broken skin or bodily fluids.
- g. Any accidents or incidents must be recorded in the accident book.
- h. If anything is used from the first aid box, the user should inform the Health and Safety Representative who will be responsible for replenishing the stock.

## **7. Good Practice when working with children and young people**

The Resource Leader should:

- a. Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity.
- b. Be aware of their own language, tone of voice and physical presence.
- c. Make sure another adult is present in sensitive situations, such as toileting.



The Resource Leader should not:

- a. Invade the privacy of children or young people when they are showering or toileting.
- b. Play dangerous or sexually provocative games.
- c. Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person, even in 'fun'.
- d. Engage in inappropriate or intrusive touching of any kind.
- e. Scapegoat, ridicule, reject or humiliate any child or young person.
- f. Allow children or young people to involve the worker in excessive attention seeking of a sexual or physical nature.
- g. Invite a child or young person to the worker's home, outside the context of the group's activities.
- h. Share sleeping accommodation with children or young people.

If any worker sees another member of staff acting in ways which could be misconstrued, or are otherwise contrary to this policy, they should speak to them, or to the group leader, or to the Safeguarding Officer about their concerns.

## **8. Appropriate Touch**

In today's culture we are often led to believe that physical touching between an adult and child is always unacceptable and must be avoided at all cost. **This is not the case**, but best practice emphasises avoiding inappropriate physical contact.

What is inappropriate?

Inappropriate touch is that which is initiated on the part of an adult to meet his or her needs rather than the needs of the child or young person. As adults we make assumptions that children and young people will always be glad of a hug or cuddle. Yet, as adults, we would be shocked if an adult pulled us to them, touched or 'bear-hugged' us without our consent.

When this happens we can be left feeling that our physical space has been invaded and that the person doing this has been disrespectful. Children and young people are no different.

**Safe touching is that which is generally initiated by the child and appropriately responded to by the adult.**

Safe and appropriate touching always takes place in a public place in front of other people. Physical contact is unavoidable when working with children especially when they are small. Touch becomes dangerous when there is a lack of respect for a child, when it's violent or related to the worker's own needs rather than those of a child.

Touch is not only normal but an essential part of life in the developing child. Lack of touch impedes the normal and healthy emotional development of the child.

The basic principles are:

- Keep everything in public.
- Touch should be related to the child's needs, not the worker's.
- Touch should be age appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the worker.
- Avoid any physical contact which might be misconstrued

## 9. Types of Abuse

### 9.1 Resource Leaders with children and young people

Resource Leaders with children and young people have a duty to be aware of the different types of abuse of children and young people, and to report anything that concerns them, following the procedures outlined below.

Physical Actual or likely physical injury, or the failure to prevent such injury.

Emotional Severe or persistent emotional ill treatment or rejection likely to cause adverse effect on emotional and behavioural development. This includes threatening behaviour, frightening a child or young person and giving them responsibilities beyond their years. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment.

Neglect Persistent or severe neglect, or the failure to protect from exposure to any kind of danger, resulting in the significant impairment of health or development.

Sexual Actual or likely sexual exploitation. Using children or young people to satisfy sexual desires.

Organised Abuse: This may involve any of the above types of abuse and a number of related or unrelated children and young people. The abusers may be acting in concert, in isolation or through an institutional framework or position of authority. Organised abuse may occur as part of a network of abuse across a family or community or within institutions.

### 9.2 Signs of Abuse

Physical Unexplained or hidden injuries, lack of medical attention

Emotional Reverting to younger behaviour, nervousness, sudden under-achievement, attention seeking, running away, stealing, lying.

Neglect Looking ill-cared for and unhappy, being withdrawn or aggressive, having lingering injuries or health problems.

Sexual Pre-occupation with sexual matters evident in words, play, drawing, being sexually provocative with adults. Also disturbed sleep, nightmares, bedwetting, secretive relationships with adults or children, tummy pains with no apparent cause.

Not all concerns about children and young people relate to abuse, there may be other explanations. It is important that Resource Leaders should keep an open mind and consider what they know about the child or young person and their circumstances.

**The Royal College of Physicians Report of the various signs suggestive of abuse regards the CHILD'S STATEMENT as by far the most significant feature.**

### **9.3 What to do if abuse is reported or suspected**

If a child or young person discloses that that they have been abused

- a. Believe the child.
- b. Take the disclosure seriously.
- c. Tell the child they have done the right thing in telling you.
- d. Reassure the child that they are not responsible for what has happened to them.
- e. Tell the child that you will have to do something about what they have told you, and tell them what you are going to do.
- f. If this is an emergency you must act at once.
- g. Inform the child's parent(s) or carer(s) unless one of them is the alleged abuser.
- h. In all cases, telephone one of the three statutory bodies (the Police, Social Services, the NSPCC) without using names. Do NOT confront anyone yourself. Do NOT conduct any investigation yourself. Do NOT interrogate the child, simply allow them to speak in their own words without prompting.
- i. In addition, if there is concern about a member of the clergy or other licensed staff, contact the Bishop's Secretary for the UK Europe Zone, who will consult with his staff.
- j. If there is time, take a moment to think and take advice. This could be from the Safeguarding Officer.
- k. Write down detailed notes of what has occurred, using the child's own words where possible. These must be handwritten, dated and signed. Typed notes will be regarded as a later interpretation.

#### **If you suspect abuse or are told by a third party that they believe abuse has happened**

1. Take your suspicions, or other's allegations seriously.
2. Tell the other person what you intend to do with this information.
3. Follow steps f-k above.

#### **IF YOU SUSPECT THAT A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON IS AT RISK OF ABUSE, THE ONE THING YOU MUST NOT DO IS DO NOTHING**

### **9.4 Confidentiality when dealing with allegations and suspicions of abuse**

It is always good practice to treat personal information that comes to us with discretion. This means that under normal circumstances such information should not be passed on without the prior permission of the person concerned.

In cases of suspicion or allegations of abuse of children and young people there are certain additional factors that apply.

### **9.5 The law does not allow anyone to keep concerns relating to child abuse to themselves**

"The welfare of the child is the paramount consideration in proceedings concerning children ... Confidentiality may not be maintained if the withholding of the information will prejudice the welfare of the child" (Working Together Under the Children Act 1989. HMSO 1991, p. 13).

This includes disclosures from children and young people themselves and from anyone in the context of the sacrament of reconciliation (confession).

### **9.6 It is important that no-one acts alone in matters where abuse is suspected or alleged**

Investigations should only be carried out by one of the three statutory child protection agencies – the Police, the local authority Social Services Department or the NSEC. One of these agencies should be informed urgently of any suspected or alleged child abuse.

### **9.7 Other people should be informed on a ‘need to know’ basis of situations where abuse is suspected or alleged**

Such people would normally include the parents of the child or young person, the parish priest, the Safeguarding Officer and the bishop (if the concerns are about one of the clergy or another licensed person).

These people should NOT be informed if they are in some way implicated in the concern.

People who do not need to know should not be informed

## **10. Informing Children and Young People**

10.1 This is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Officer.

10.2 The Safeguarding Officer should regularly (at least twice a year for each activity) attend activities to make her/himself known to children and young people.

10.3 At least once a year the Safeguarding Officer should speak to children and young people in their activities to inform them of the operation of this policy and the role of the Safeguarding Officer.

10.4 Posters, including the name of the Safeguarding Officer (as a point of contact for the Safeguarding Officer) and the telephone number of Childline, should be displayed in the church and halls. These should clearly be permanent posters, rather than temporary ones. Some should be at the eye level of smaller children. (Included in the Appendix)

## **11. Unforeseen Situations**

In the event of an unforeseen situation not captured within this policy, the final authority on any decision will be made by the Vicar in consultation with the Parish Secretary and the Safeguarding Officer.

In the unfortunate event of the St. Thomas Mar Thoma church, Bristol, needing to cease its operations, any relevant records or data maintained as per the requirements of this policy, will be forwarded on to the parent registered body:

**The Council of Mar Thoma Parishes in Europe**

Mar Thoma Church, UK & Europe Zone

(Charity Registration No. 1175503

80-96 Cambridge Road, Hounslow, Middlesex TW4 7BH.

## 12. Useful Telephone Numbers

First Response -	0117 9036444 (Monday to Friday)
Emergency Duty Team-	Out of hours and weekend- 01454 615165
NSPCC	0808 8005000
ThirtyOne Eight	0303 003 1111

## 13. Useful Resources

ThirtyOne:Eight – [thirtyoneeight.org](http://thirtyoneeight.org)  
South West Child Protection Procedures 2007 (SWCPP)  
[www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/](http://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/)  
The Children Act 1989 and 2004

Charity Commission for England and Wales :

Guidance (CC3\_feb20.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk))

CC3 - The essential trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do

Guidance (CC30) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

CC30 - Finding new trustees: what charities need to know

**This policy (Fifth Edition - October 2022) replaces all previous versions that was approved by the General Body of the St Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Bristol.**

## Junior Helper Form

Name of Place of Worship/Organisation \_\_\_\_\_

Group \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name of Junior Helper \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for agreeing to be a junior helper in \_\_\_\_\_ (name of group). We very much value and appreciate your willingness to serve God in this way. You will be expected to help \_\_\_\_\_ (leader) with \_\_\_\_\_ (please state tasks). Above all help the children to have lots of fun but not forgetting to have fun yourself.

Never be aggressive, angry or unfriendly towards the children. Try and have a happy smile and be gentle with them during games. Give praise for their achievements but help and encourage them with consideration when they find things difficult. Above all show them God's love through your caring actions.

You will be assigned a named leader (please state) \_\_\_\_\_ who will give you care, personal supervision and guidance. You can talk to them at any time on any topic, even if it's not related to \_\_\_\_\_ (name of group) and even outside \_\_\_\_\_ (name of group) time. Also feel free to contact them if you can't attend \_\_\_\_\_ (name of group).

During \_\_\_\_\_ (name of group) other leaders may ask you to assist them when children are separated into different groups: please take your supervision from them for that period.

Finally, avoid too much close physical contact, children may wish to cling to you or constantly sit on your lap or jump on you whilst rolling around on the floor. Instead just encourage them to take part in what has been organised for them. To support you in the great work you will be doing as a helper we will ensure that you are NEVER alone with the children. We will ensure that you will only be involved in activities where you are under direct supervision and eye contact of the leader.

I \_\_\_\_\_ commit regularly to attend and help at \_\_\_\_\_ (name of group) for the agreed period of time with the exception of sickness, school outings, exams and study leave.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Travel arrangements getting home: I have made travel arrangements after \_\_\_\_\_ (name of group) particularly during the dark evenings, and these are as follows:

**Approved by:** Parent/Carer (person with parental responsibility)

Sign: \_\_\_\_\_ please keep a copy and return the other.

Agreed period: \_\_\_\_\_ months. Expires \_\_\_\_\_ You can arrange to renew this commitment at this date.

Appointment approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ (name of leader of group/organisation)

Named Leader: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_