

Section 1:

Introduction and Statement of Intent

1.1 What is safeguarding?

We have become much more familiar with the term “child protection” in recent years and it is generally accepted that a child protection policy needs to be in place to make sure we are aware how to protect children from abuse and what to do if we have concerns. Today the term “safeguarding” is now widely used and is much more comprehensive than child protection alone. Many of the principles we have learnt through child protection procedures are now applied to the protection of adults who may be at risk and our policies and practice have broadened to include this. Safeguarding is the term that describes the function of protecting adults and children from abuse or neglect and also includes measures to prevent vulnerable people from coming to harm in the first place.

This new safeguarding handbook is in response to these developments as well as to changes in legislation which have redefined regulated activity.¹

Safeguarding is now an essential part of any responsible organisation’s governance and practice and it is generally a requirement to have safeguarding policies and procedures in place as part of securing charitable status and grant and funding applications. As churches, seeking to reflect the character and commands of Jesus, we want to do this to the best of our ability and operate in an exemplary manner within our communities.

Safeguarding includes the following elements, all of which are covered in this handbook.

- Safer recruitment of workers and volunteers
- Good working practice
- Recognising the signs of abuse towards vulnerable people and how to respond to concerns
- Health and safety

1.2 About this handbook

This handbook replaces our child protection policy “For the Sake of our Children”. It has been revised and updated to include vulnerable adults and recent changes in legislation surrounding vulnerable groups and criminal records checks. It aims to give clear practical guidance to those responsible for organising activities with vulnerable groups in the local setting.

The guidance and advice in this document forms the adopted policy of the Union of Welsh Independents, Baptist Union of Wales and Presbyterian Church of Wales in regard to working with vulnerable groups.

We recommend that on receiving this handbook you familiarise yourself with its content and make any changes necessary to your local processes and systems. The handbook should then serve as a reference tool. Updates will be sent out when necessary and will also be available on the Interdenominational Protection Panel website. www.paneldiogelwch.org.uk Please also remember that the panel officers and General Secretaries are available to help and support you.

In **Section 2** you will find step by step guidance on the recruitment and selection process that all bodies working with vulnerable groups are required to undertake. This is not a new process but recent changes in the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)² have made it even more important that employers and local

¹ Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (Controlled Activity) (Wales) Regulations 2010, The Disclosure and Barring Service (Core Functions) Order 2012, Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

² The Criminal Records Bureau and the Independent Safeguarding Authority have now merged into the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). CRB checks are now called DBS checks.

bodies take more responsibility regarding the initial selection of workers and volunteers. This process aims to make sure that every reasonable measure has been taken to ensure that our vulnerable groups are cared for by safe and suitable individuals. There are a number of forms and checklists which you will find in **Section 7** which will also help to guide you through the process.

In **Section 3** you will find some good practice guidance regarding working with children and young people and again in **Section 7** some forms to help you to operate this guidance. This section also contains information regarding child protection and how to respond if you suspect or are told about an abusive situation.

Section 4 contains good practice guidance regarding working with vulnerable adults and information regarding the abuse of adults and how to respond if you suspect or are told about an abusive situation.

Section 5 looks at how we can support those affected by abuse and contains some useful contacts and information.

Section 6 contains useful contacts and further information and **Section 7** contains all the forms referred to in this handbook. These are also available electronically on our website.

1.3 Role of the panel and the three denominations

The Interdenominational Protection Panel was established in 2001 when the child protection policy ‘For the Sake of Our Children’ was introduced.

The Panel is a limited company since 2009 and directors are from the Union of Welsh Independents, Baptist Union of Wales and Presbyterian Church of Wales - “the three denominations”.

The role of the Panel is to support and advise the three denominations in relation to safeguarding practice in their work with children and young people and vulnerable adults. This is done through the production and updating of the safeguarding policy as well as by providing training and support to local bodies. As a registered body with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) the Panel is responsible for processing DBS checks for employees and volunteers within the three denominations. In 2008 it expanded to become an ‘umbrella body’ enabling it to provide disclosure checks for organisations and agencies who are not members of the three denominations. The panel employs a Training and Safeguarding Officer and an Administration Officer.

The Panel officials facilitate panel meetings to discuss issues relating to safeguarding practice and policy and make decisions on blemished disclosures. These panels are made of up representatives of the three denominations nominated because of their expertise, interest or professional background. The panel adheres to a strict confidentiality code.

1.4 Statement of Intent

Members of the church³ community have an obligation to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults in each and every activity.

The church undertakes to operate its policy and procedures in relation to the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

The church undertakes to comply with statutory requirements in relation to selecting and appointing individuals to undertake paid or voluntary work.

The church undertakes to provide a system whereby those who care for children, young people and vulnerable adults are trained and supported.

The church undertakes to recognise situations where children and young people and vulnerable adults could potentially suffer harm during the course of church activities.

The church undertakes to challenge any misuse of authority by an individual.

The church undertakes to listen to children and vulnerable adults and to respond sensitively and in line with its policy and guidelines.

The church undertakes to respond immediately when a suspicion of abuse is drawn to its attention, and to co-operate with the Local Authority or the Police if an investigation is launched. It also undertakes to share information responsibly to facilitate an effective investigation.

The church undertakes to provide pastoral care to those who suffer abuse or direct them to pastoral care.

The church undertakes to provide pastoral care for offenders or suspected offenders, or to refer them to pastoral care.

The church undertakes to work with the Panel's Training and Safeguarding Officer, and/or the General Secretaries of the three denominations, who will provide advice and guidance to local churches in relation to safeguarding. The church will cooperate with those tasked with responding to and collating information in relation to cases giving cause for concern within the three denominations.

The church undertakes to support and encourage parents and carers as they care for their children.

³ The term 'church' includes both central denominational structures and local churches.

