



The Mustard Tree Community Church

Judging less, Loving more

Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults

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The Mustard Tree Community Church
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Version History

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A. General policy statement

The Mustard Tree Community Church believes that every person has a value and dignity which stems directly from the creation of male and female in God's own image and likeness. Therefore this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and to protect them from harm. Jesus saw all people as valuable, especially those who were vulnerable. He gave them love, attention, time and respect.

The Mustard Tree Community Church has a moral and legal duty to ensure that it functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults. We are committed to fulfilling the requirements of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and the Vetting and Barring Scheme and other relevant legislation aimed at the protection of vulnerable adults.

Throughout this policy and procedures, reference is made to "vulnerable adults". This term is used to mean:

"those aged 18 and over who, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation are permanently, or for the time being, unable to take care of themselves, or to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation."

The leadership recognises that some adults, who do not come under this definition, are also vulnerable to abuse. Accordingly, the procedures may be applied (with appropriate adaptations) to allegations of abuse and the protection of all adults.

The leadership is committed to ensuring that the Mustard Tree Community Church:

- Provides a safe environment for vulnerable adults.
- Identifies vulnerable adults who are suffering.
- Takes appropriate action to see that such vulnerable adults are kept safe from harm.

In pursuit of these aims, the leadership will approve and review policies and procedures with the aim of:

- Raising awareness of issues relating to the welfare of vulnerable adults and the promotion of a safe environment for the vulnerable adults and young people.
- Providing procedures for reporting concerns.
- Establishing procedures for reporting and dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff.
- The safe recruitment of staff.

Leaders and volunteers working with vulnerable adults will receive training adequate to familiarise them with vulnerable adults' protection issues and responsibilities and the church's procedures and policies, with refresher training at least every 3 years.

B. Values underlying this policy

The Mustard Tree Community Church should be a place where all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse. The Church is called by God to support those at the margins, those less powerful and those without a voice in our society. The Mustard Tree Community Church aims to create a safe and non-discriminatory environment by being aware of situations that create vulnerability. Issues which need to be considered include the physical, emotional and spiritual environment and the attitudes and actions of people with responsibilities.

A person who might be considered vulnerable has the right in common with all people to:

- Be treated with respect and dignity and with recognition of abilities and gifts.
- Have their privacy respected.
- Be able to lead as independent a life as possible.
- Be able to choose how to lead their life and make their own decisions.
- Have the protection of the law.
- Have their rights upheld regardless of their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religion or cultural background.
- Be able to use their chosen language or method of communication.
- Be heard.

Adult vulnerability must be recognised as a human condition that affects people's ability to participate. The Mustard Tree Community Church family must seek to live out our calling by valuing all people and the contributions each individual can make.

C. Lead Responsibility for protection of vulnerable adults

- 1) The designated Safeguarding Officer with lead responsibility for vulnerable adults protection issues is **Donna Gaywood** (07480 256703 dm.gaywood@virgin.net) and the Deputy Safeguarding Officer is **Jackie Schachner** (07726 277821 jackieschachner24@gmail.com).
- 2) The Safeguarding Officer has a key duty to take lead responsibility for raising awareness within the organisation of issues relating to the welfare of vulnerable adults, and the promotion of a safe environment for the vulnerable.
- 3) The Safeguarding Officer is responsible for ensuring that; *exempted questions** are asked on relevant volunteer application forms and as part of the employment process.
**Exempted questions* are questions asking a potential employee to reveal their full criminal history (other than protected cautions and convictions), including spent convictions.
- 4) The Safeguarding Officer will be appropriately trained and should keep up to date with developments in vulnerable adults protection issues. The Safeguarding Officer will also have responsibility for making new leaders and volunteers aware of the existing vulnerable adults' protection policy.
- 5) The Safeguarding Officer will be the main contact point for vulnerable adults' protection issues and will have contact details for relevant organisations available for employees and volunteers. This list will usually include contact details of relevant individuals and provisions such as the local police vulnerable adult's protection unit.

D. Definitions of vulnerability in adults

Vulnerability can be permanent or temporary and can be of a greater or lesser degree. It can be increased by various factors including any of the following:-

- Sensory or physical disability or impairment
- Learning disability
- Physical illness
- Mental illness
- Dementia
- Substance and alcohol misuse
- Impact of an event in life such as bereavement, the actions of others or a change in living situation

Vulnerability may bring with it some difficulties in making decisions or communicating those decisions. However, it should always be presumed that the capacity to make decisions exists, although this may be expressed in ways other than verbally.

The term 'vulnerable adults' has a number of different definitions. In order to bring into focus those adults for whom the Church should have a particular care, this is the definition which is used in this policy:

Any adult aged 18 or over, who by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation is permanently or for the time being unable to take care of himself/herself, or to protect himself/herself from significant harm or exploitation.

The Criminal Records Bureau defines vulnerable adults as follows.

A person aged 18 or over who receives services of a type listed below:

- Accommodation and nursing or personal care in a nursing home.
- Personal care or support to live independently in his/her own home.
- Any services provided by an independent hospital, independent clinic, independent medical agency or National Health Service body.
- Social care services.
- Any services provided in an establishment for a person with learning difficulties. The reason for receiving these services could be any of those listed below:
 - A learning or physical disability.
 - A physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise including an addiction to alcohol or drugs.
 - A reduction in physical or mental capacity.
 - A dependence on others in the performance of, or a requirement for assistance in the performance of basic physical functions.
 - Severe impairment in the ability to communicate with others.
 - Impairment in a person's ability to protect himself/herself from assault, abuse or neglect.

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 defines a vulnerable adult as.

- A person who has attained the age of 18 years and:
- Is in residential accommodation.
- Is in sheltered housing.
- Receives domiciliary care.
- Receives any form of health care.
- Is detained in lawful custody.
- Is in contact with probation services (i.e. receiving help or supervision).
- Receives a welfare service of a prescribed description.
- Receives any service or participates in any activity provided specifically for persons (who have particular needs due to age; any form of disability; a physical or mental problem which will be prescribed; together with two other issues which are not relevant in this).
- Receives direct payments.
- Requires assistance in the conduct of his/her own affairs.

Whilst there are various definitions of 'vulnerable adults', it is important to remember that the Church needs to safeguard vulnerable adults from abuse, harm and neglect.

E. Definitions of abuse and relevant conduct

Abuse

The leadership recognises the following as definitions of abuse:

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse causes harm to a vulnerable adult's person. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning or suffocating. It may be done deliberately or recklessly, or be the result of a deliberate failure to prevent injury occurring.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent or severe failure to meet a vulnerable adult's basic physical and/or psychological needs. It will result in serious impairment of the vulnerable adult's health or development.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves a vulnerable adult or young person being forced or coerced into participating in or watching sexual activity. It is not necessary for the vulnerable adults to be aware that the activity is sexual and the apparent consent of the vulnerable adults is irrelevant.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse occurs where there is persistent emotional ill treatment or rejection. It causes severe and adverse effects on the vulnerable adult's or young person's behaviour and emotional development, resulting in low self worth. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all forms of abuse

Relevant conduct

A *relevant conduct* is a conduct which must be referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) (see below) and which could lead to a barring decision. The DBS [defines relevant conduct](#) in relation to a vulnerable adult as conduct that:

- Endangers a vulnerable adult or is likely to endanger a vulnerable adult.
- If repeated against or in relation to a vulnerable adult would endanger the vulnerable adult or be likely to endanger the vulnerable adult.
- Involves sexual material relating to children (including possession of such material).
- Involves sexually explicit images depicting violence against human beings (including possession of such images).
- Is of a sexual nature involving a vulnerable adult.

F. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

The [Disclosure and Barring Service \(DBS\)](#) helps employers make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children. It replaced the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) in 2012. The DBS is responsible for:

- 1) Processing requests for criminal records checks.
- 2) Deciding whether it is appropriate for a person to be placed on or removed from a barred list
- 3) Placing or removing people from the DBS children's barred list and adults' barred list for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

A vulnerable adult is defined as a person who is over 18 and the subject of **Regulated Activity** ([as defined by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act \(SVG\) 2006](#)), that is:

- 1) The provision of health care by, or under the direction or supervision of, a health care professional.
- 2) The provision of personal care.
- 3) A social care worker's provision of relevant social work to a client or potential client.
- 4) The provision of assistance in relation to general household matters which is required by reason of age, illness or disability.
- 5) The provision of any relevant assistance in the conduct of an adult's own affairs.
- 6) The conveying of adults who need to be conveyed by reason of age, illness or disability.
- 7) Prescribed activities which involve or are connected with the provision of health care or relevant personal care to adults, and do not fall within any of the main categories of regulated activity above.

Duty to refer to the DBS

- 1) The Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 also makes it mandatory to refer anyone known to pose a threat of harm to a vulnerable adult to the DBS. The Safeguarding Officer must not knowingly allow the employment of anyone who poses a risk to vulnerable adults; this includes anyone who is believed to have committed a 'relevant conduct' (see Definitions of abuse and relevant conduct) while on the job or who has a record of such conduct.
- 2) Therefore church has a legal duty to refer an employee or volunteer who poses a risk of harm to vulnerable adults to the DBS, failure to do so can result in a fine and/or up to 5 years imprisonment. There must be sufficient and solid evidence that the employee or volunteer poses a risk of harm before they can be referred to the DBS. The DBS will not consider evidence based on rumour or unsubstantiated reports. The employer should also inform the police and other relevant authorities if they believe a 'relevant conduct' has occurred.
- 3) More information on the referral process can be found on the [DBS website](#).

G. Dealing with disclosure of abuse and procedure for reporting concerns

If a vulnerable adult or young person tells a leader or volunteer within the church about possible abuse:

- 1) Listen carefully and stay calm.
- 2) Do not interview the vulnerable adult, but question normally and without pressure, in order to be sure that you understand what the vulnerable adult is telling you.
- 3) Do not put words into the vulnerable adult's mouth.
- 4) Reassure the vulnerable adult that by telling you, they have done the right thing.
- 5) Inform the vulnerable adult that you must pass the information on, but that only those that need to know about it will be told. Inform them to whom you will report the matter.
- 6) Make notes as soon as possible (preferably within an hour). Record dates and times of these events and when you made the record. Keep all hand written notes securely, even if these have been typed subsequently.
- 7) If a vulnerable adult has spoken to you, write down exactly what they said, when he/she said it and what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. description of activity). Also write down your responses to the vulnerable adult.
- 8) Leaders or volunteers should not investigate concerns or allegations themselves, but should report them immediately to the Safeguarding Officer or the Deputy Safeguarding Officer.
- 9) Report your discussion as soon as possible to the Safeguarding Officer. If the latter is implicated report to the deputy. If both are implicated to Social Services.
- 10) You should not discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone other than the Safeguarding Officer.

Reporting allegations of Abuse against Leaders or volunteers

The procedures apply to all people within the church community, whether leaders, administrative staff, or volunteers. The word 'Leaders' is used for ease of description.

- 1) In rare instances leaders of Christian organisations have been found responsible for the abuse of vulnerable adults. Because of their frequent contact with vulnerable adults, leaders may have allegations of abuse made against them. The Mustard Tree Community Church recognises that an allegation of 'vulnerable adult abuse' made against a leader or someone within the church may be made for a variety of reasons and that the facts of the allegation may or may not be true. It is imperative that those dealing with an allegation maintain an open mind and that investigations are thorough and not subject to delay.
- 2) The Mustard Tree Community Church recognises that the Vulnerable Adults Act 1989 states that the welfare of the vulnerable adults is the paramount concern. It is also recognised that hasty or ill-informed decisions in connection with a leader or volunteer can irreparably damage an individual's reputation, confidence and career. Therefore, those dealing with such allegations within the church will do so with sensitivity and will act in a careful, measured way.
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- 4)

H. Ensuring safer recruitment and selection (both employed and voluntary)

The Mustard Tree Community Church recruitment processes take account of the following:

- 1) They apply to leaders and volunteers who may work with vulnerable adults.
- 2) The post or role is clearly defined.
- 3) The key selection criteria for the post or role are identified.
- 4) Vacancies are advertised in order to ensure a diversity of applicants.
- 5) Professional and character references are obtained.
- 6) Previous employment history is verified.
- 7) Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are be undertaken (maintain sensitive and confidential use of the applicant's disclosure).
- 8) A variety of selection techniques are used (e.g. qualifications, previous experience, interview, reference checks).

All volunteers working with vulnerable adults must complete an application form for 'Voluntary Work with Children and Young People or Vulnerable Adults' (see Appendix 5 of the Child Protection Policy).

I. Good Practice

The following are adapted from the Home Office Safe from Harm Guidelines:

- 1) Adopt a policy on safeguarding vulnerable adults. Ensure that a policy statement is displayed on the premises.
- 2) Plan the church's work to minimise situations where the abuse of vulnerable adults may occur or where situations may be misinterpreted (e.g. ensure the presence of more than one other person where possible; ensure recording visits; make arrangements for safe transport).
- 3) Apply appropriate procedures to all paid and voluntary people with responsibility.
- 4) Ensure clear role descriptions, review and training plans are in place for all 'people with responsibility' in writing.
- 5) Ensure safe recruitment practices and that checks and references are always undertaken and institute a probationary period for each new worker.
- 6) Train all 'people with responsibility' in safe practice and safeguarding including updating training.

Appendix 1 – Resources

Relevant Organisations

Sight
Royal National Institute for the Blind
105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
www.rnib.org.uk

Hearing
Royal Institute for Deaf People
19-23 Featherstone Street
London EC1Y 8SL
www.mid.org.uk

Mental Health
Mind
15-19 Broadway
London E15 4BQ
www.mind.org.uk

Older People
Age UK
Astral House
1268 London Road
London SW16 4ER
www.ageuk.org.uk

Action on Elder Abuse
0808808 8141
www.elderabuse.org.uk

Dementia
Alzheimer's Society
Gordon House
10 Greencoat Place
London SW1P 1PH
www.alzheimers.org.uk

Learning Disability
Mencap
123 Golden Lane
London EC1Y 0RT
www.mencap.org.uk

Domestic Violence
Women's Aid
08457 023468

Physical Disability
The Shaftesbury Society
16 Kinston Road
London SW19 1JZ

SCOPE
6 Market Road
London N7 9PW
www.scope.org.uk

Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse
www.caada.org.uk

Substance Abuse
www.ukna.org.uk (drugs)
www.alcoholicsanonymous.org.uk

Survivors
Christian Survivors of Sexual Abuse
c/o 38 Sydenham Villa Road
Cheltenham
Gloucester
GL52 6DZ

Survivors UK (support for male survivors)
2 Leathermarket Street
London SE1 3HN
www.survivors.org.uk

Respond (support for those with learning difficulties who have been abused)
3rd Floor
24-32 Stephenson Way
London NW1 2HD
www.respond.org.uk

Resource material is available from the above organisations.

South Gloucestershire Local Authority Adult Services will also have resources.
www.southglos.gov.uk

Appendix 2 - Responding to an allegation of harm

Responding to an allegation of harm to an adult who may be vulnerable

