

Safeguarding Policy – The Church @ The Pines (Bracknell, Berkshire)

Adopted by the Church Leadership Team – 8th March 2026

About Us – Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP)

The Church @ The Pines is a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP). As an LEP, we operate within the oversight and safeguarding frameworks of our partner denominations, The Church of England and the Methodist Church. This policy aligns with the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance and applies to all activities we undertake across venues we use.

1. Our Commitment

The Church @ The Pines is committed to safeguarding as an integral part of its life and ministry. Safeguarding is the action we take to promote a safer culture where everyone is respected, valued, and protected.

We will:

- Promote the welfare of children, young people, and adults.
- Work to prevent abuse from occurring.
- Respond promptly and appropriately to concerns or disclosures.
- Support those who have experienced abuse.
- Challenge any abuse of power.
- Follow all Methodist Church Safeguarding Policies, Procedures and Guidance (2023) and statutory requirements.

2. Statement of Principles

We believe every person is created in the image of God and has inherent dignity, value, and worth. Our community is called to be one of welcome, hospitality, openness, and grace.

We are committed to:

- The care and nurture of all children, young people, and adults.
- Safeguarding and protecting all who may be vulnerable.
- Building a safe, caring church community with informed vigilance about risks.

We will safely recruit and train all those who hold roles of responsibility, including obtaining Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks where required.

3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- All activities run by The Church @ The Pines.
- All staff, volunteers, leaders, and office holders.
- External activities where church leaders or volunteers act in an official capacity.

Because we do not own or manage a building, this policy applies wherever church activities take place, including hired spaces, homes used for small groups, outdoor gatherings, and online environments.

4. Definitions

- Child: Anyone under 18 years old.
- Vulnerable Adult: An adult who may be unable to protect themselves due to disability, age, illness, mental health, trauma, or other circumstances.
- Safeguarding: Actions taken to promote welfare and prevent abuse.
- Abuse: Can be physical, emotional, sexual, financial, domestic, discriminatory, spiritual, organisational, neglect, exploitation, or abuse via technology.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

5.1 Church Safeguarding Officer (CSO)

The Church @ The Pines appoints:

Beth Spain – Safeguarding Officer for Children

Beth Spain – Safeguarding Officer for Adults

The CSO will:

1. Act as the first point of contact for safeguarding concerns.
2. Ensure concerns are recorded and reported promptly (including to the Regional Safeguarding Officer (ROS), the District Safeguarding Officer (DSO) where appropriate, and statutory agencies).
3. Maintain secure, confidential safeguarding records in line with Methodist guidance.
4. Keep church leadership informed (without sharing confidential details).
5. Ensure safer recruitment procedures are followed.
6. Monitor training requirements and maintain training records.
7. Promote safe practice across all activities and venues.
8. Attend circuit/district safeguarding training and meetings as required.
9. Ensure the policy and key contacts are visibly displayed or made available at gatherings and online.

5.2 Minister / Leadership Team

The minister and leadership team will:

1. Ensure this policy is implemented and reviewed annually.
2. Ensure all volunteers receive required training.
3. Support those affected by abuse.
4. Work with the CSO and Regional/District Safeguarding Officers.

5. Ensure activities meet safeguarding requirements across all venues.

5.3 Governance – Church Meeting / Church Council Agenda

Safeguarding will be a standing item on the agenda for Church Meetings to ensure ongoing oversight, accountability, and resourcing. The CSO (or delegate) will report at least annually on policy implementation, training and any learning, without breaching confidentiality.

5.4 Volunteers & Office Holders

Everyone working with children, young people, or adults must:

- Follow this policy.
- Attend required training.
- Follow safer recruitment procedures.
- Report safeguarding concerns immediately.

6. Activities, Venues & Risk Assessment

Regardless of venue (hired premises, homes, outdoors or online), leaders must:

- Complete and record an activity risk assessment before events.
- Ensure appropriate ratios and supervision.
- Obtain parental/carer consent for under-18s.
- Follow good practice for transport (licensed/insured vehicles; appropriate adult supervision; no lone working).
- Where activities are higher-risk or unusual, the CSO will consult the Circuit Safeguarding Officer/ROS/DSO before approval.

7. Pastoral Visiting

Pastoral visitors are supported with safeguarding training upon appointment. Where tasks fall within DBS eligibility, checks will be obtained prior to appointment. Pastoral visiting should normally be arranged so that the visit is known to a leader or recorded in a secure log. If a one-to-one pastoral visit is necessary, the visitor will:

- Inform a leader/CSO of date, time and place ahead of the visit where possible;
- Meet in a visible/appropriate setting;
- Keep brief factual notes and pass any safeguarding concerns to the CSO immediately.

8. Responding to Concerns & Complaints

8.1 Safeguarding concerns or disclosures

We will respond without delay by:

- Listening carefully and reassuring the person;
- Not promising confidentiality;
- Recording factually what was seen/heard/said;
- Reporting promptly to the CSO (or Minister/ROS/DSO/police if there is immediate risk).

The CSO will consider referral to statutory services and the Regional/District Safeguarding Officers and will follow Methodist Church Safeguarding Procedures.

8.2 Complaints mechanism (non-safeguarding concerns about conduct)

Complaints about the actions or behaviour of a member or officer of the Church should be addressed to the Superintendent Minister (Methodist Church), Area Dean or Bishop (CofE). If the complaint is about the Superintendent, it should be addressed to the District Chair. Safeguarding Officers must be informed of any complaint that involves potential abuse of children, young people or adults at risk so that prompt safeguarding action can be taken, in line with Methodist policy.

9. Managing Known Offenders or Individuals Who Present Risk

Working with the CSO and the Regional/District Safeguarding Officers, we will ensure that individuals who present a safeguarding risk are assessed and managed in line with Methodist guidance. This may include referral to statutory agencies, suspension from roles, and the use of a written safeguarding contract with clear boundaries, supervision and regular review by an appointed group. The safety and wellbeing of children, young people and adults will be paramount.

10. School Site Notifications (where applicable)

As Church @ The Pines meets on school premises, notifiable incidents that occur on site will also be reported to The Pines School (site management contact) and copied to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at Bracknell Forest Council, in addition to Methodist safeguarding procedures.

11. Safer Recruitment

We follow Methodist safer recruitment procedures, including:

- Role description and application;
- Interview/discussion and references where required;
- DBS checks where required;

- Induction and Creating Safer Space (introductory safeguarding) training within 6 months;
- Ongoing supervision with brief written records where required;
- Periodic review of training needs (where appropriate)

12. Training

All volunteers in roles of responsibility must complete Creating Safer Space (Foundation) and a refresher at least every three years (or as updated by the Methodist Church). Attendance will be recorded.

13. Data Protection & Record Keeping

Safeguarding records (including concerns, risk assessments, supervision notes and consent/incident forms) will be kept securely, shared on a need-to-know basis, and retained/disposed of in line with Methodist guidance and data protection law.

14. Review of this Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Church Meeting and shared with all volunteers and leaders. A copy will be available at gatherings and/or online.