St Mark’s Unitarian Church

Safeguarding Policy

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Aim

St Mark’s Unitarian Church takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adultswithin its community, or who may be visiting or taking part in any of its activities.

We are committed to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and ensuring their well‐ being.

We recognise we all have a responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual, psychological, financial and discriminatory abuse, and neglect of everyone in our community, and to report any such abuse that we discover or suspect.

We recognise that the personal dignity and rights of vulnerable adults and will ensure all our policies and procedures will reflect these, and comply with the guidelines expressed in the Safeguarding Policy of the General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches.

We believe all adults should enjoy and have access to every aspect of the life of this place of worship.

We undertake to exercise proper care in the appointment and selection of those who will work with children and young people in our programmes and activities.

In recruiting leaders for our programmes and activities we follow agreed procedures. *[Appendix 3]*

We believe every child should be valued, safe and happy.  We want to make sure that children within our community know this, and are empowered to tell us if they are suffering harm.

We are committed to:

* Following statutory, denominational, and specialist guidelines in relation to safeguarding children and adults, and will ensure that all members of our community will work within the agreed procedure of our safeguarding policy.
* Supporting, resourcing and training those who undertake work with vulnerable groups.
* Following an agreed procedure for dealing with concerns about possible abuse.

In line with GA recommendations, and good practice, St. Mark’s Church has a team of people to whom Safeguarding concerns may be reported.

We recognise:

Social Work, [Children & Families], and Police Scotland have responsibility for investigating all allegations, suspicions of abuse, or where there are concerns about a child.  Social Work, [Adult services] and Police Scotland have responsibility for investigating all allegations, suspicions of abuse, or where there are concerns about a vulnerable adult. It is the role of the Safeguarding team to contact these organisations, not to investigate.

We should ensure that the child or vulnerable adult is safe and is not being exposed to further harm.

Where an allegation suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed then the person to whom the incident was reported will contact Police Scotland as a matter of urgency.

We are committed to keeping up to date with training and development on Safeguarding issues

*Above all, we recognise Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.*

Definitions of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Children in Scotland:

In Scotland a child legally becomes an adult when they turn 16, but statutory guidance which supports the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 includes all children and young people up to the age of 18. Section 21 of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland explains how professionals should act to protect young people from harm in different circumstances *(Scottish Government, 2014)*. The key message is: “Although the differing legal definitions of the age of a child can be confusing, the priority is to ensure that a vulnerable young person who is, or may be, at risk of significant harm is offered support and protection”.

Adults at Risk:

The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 defines an adult at risk as a person aged 16 or over who meets the following criteria:

• are unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests;

• are at risk of harm;

• because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, are more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so affected.

This is commonly known as the three-point criterion.

For an adult to be at risk in terms of the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, the adult must meet all three points above.

In practice this means that the following groups of people may sometimes be at risk of harm: people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities or mental health difficulties, older people, and also those who are homeless or affected by addictions.

Safeguarding doc

St. Mark’s Safeguarding Team

The Safeguarding Team should hold meetings regularly, to discuss safeguarding issues. A member of the team should also meet with the leadership team regularly to explore safeguarding matters – having full regard for confidentiality and not discussing individuals.

It is the role of the Safeguarding team:

* To ensure safeguarding policies and procedures are followed.
* To keep accurate records relating to safeguarding concerns are kept.
* To ensure the leadership team is kept informed of issues.
* To work in partnership with statutory and other agencies as required.

The Safeguarding Team may also organise training as required for groups or individuals as necessary.

Currently the Safeguarding Team at St Mark’s church is composed of;

Joan Cook and Mary McKenna *(members of St Mark’s)*

Safeguarding Clearance

Safeguarding clearance is managed through the Safeguarding Officer for the Scottish Unitarian Association, currently Barbara Clifford. Inclusion on the General Assembly Roll of Unitarian Ministers requires clearance in line with current legislation, others taking on such a role, should also have clearance. The relevant level of clearance for others may also be arranged through the SUA. Volunteers for the Children’s programme held on church premises are required to submit an application form, which includes a self-declaration. *[Appendix 3]*

Application process

The Application process for those working with young people or vulnerable groups or individuals should be structured, and transparent.Applicants should be asked to provide the names of two referees, at least one of whom should not be a member of the St. Mark’s community, as well as being asked to complete a Self‐ Declaration Form. *[Appendix 3]*

This form should be completed, submitted and approved prior to the volunteer taking on any role.

Supervision of Activities

All activities which occur under the umbrella of St Mark’s Church, on the Church premises, or elsewhere, will;

1. Be supervised by at least 2, unrelated, adults, who have had their applications to work with children approved.
2. Be subject to the St. Mark’s Safeguarding policy.

3 Be noted in a written record of all the activities, which should include the date and time, place, and names of leaders, and participants, with their ages and be retained in a designated file, in the vestry for a period of 5 years.

Parents/guardians should give written consent to any activities off the premises where they are not present. *[Appendix 2]*

First Aid

A basic First Aid box should be available in areas where activities take place, especially on outdoor activities, and should be checked and updated regularly. There is a First Aid box in the kitchen of the upper hall, and in the kitchenette in the lower hall, identified with a green cross sticker.

First Aid Log Book

A First Aid Log book is kept and all incidents or accidents happening during any activity should be recorded and reported. The Log book for St Mark’s is in the cupboard, in the upper hall kitchen, where the First Aid box is kept.

Lone Working

Procedures should be put in place for a worker who is working on their own to enable them to access support from others. A risk assessment of a situation or task should be carried out to identify potential risks. For example, working alone in someone’s home as a pastoral care worker/visitor brings risks and these should be identified by carrying out a risk assessment.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment should be carried out prior to any special outings, or trips, for children or young people. A risk assessment should also be carried out in situations where an individual may be working alone in someone’s home, or on Church premises *[Appendix 4]*. Completed assessments will be retained in a designated file, in the vestry, for a period of 6 years.

Digital Safeguarding

Digital safeguarding is how we help to keep our members, volunteers and staff safe online, and it’s just as important as keeping safe offline.

Digital safeguarding is required to protect vulnerable groups from harm in the online environment, through the implementation of effective technical solutions, advice and support, and procedures for managing incidents.

St Mark’s is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all our members, volunteers, employees, and users of our digital services and social media, and the same safeguarding principles apply to St Mark’s activities, whether they are offline or online.

This means protecting our members, volunteers, employees and contractors from online harms such as:

* Online bullying and harassment
* Sexual exploitation and grooming online
* Discrimination and abuse on the grounds of any protected characteristics
* Sharing of illegal and inappropriate imagery
* Cyberstalking
* Impersonation and hacking
* Disinformation and misinformation
* The oversharing of personal information

Digital Safeguarding Principles

* Ensure our projects, activities, programmes and campaigns support all of our members, volunteers and staff to stay safe online.
* Use best practice digital safeguarding for technical solutions, processes and procedures.
* Take best practice action when a digital safeguarding incident occurs.
* Maintain links with key organisations to raise awareness and refer and report incidents.
* Carry out risk assessments for all programmes, activities, and services to ensure digital safeguards are in place.

St. Mark’s is committed to;

* Ensuring that social media accounts are set up and used responsibly, and St. Mark’s safeguarding policies are followed in the same way online, as they would be offline.
* Make sure that technical solutions are in place to reduce access to illegal or inappropriate content on devices owned or used by St. Mark’s. These could be filtering or monitoring software, such as parental controls.
* Ensure the correct permissions are in place before taking and using photographs on mobile devices.
* Make sure that parent or carer permissions have been obtained prior to contacting any young or vulnerable member, even if they have initiated contact.
* Make every effort to ensure that all members understand why and how they must use social media responsibly.
* Recognise that digital safeguarding is an important part of life in the 21st century, and that we are committed to always delivering safest practice.

Records will be the responsibility of the Communications Team, and will be retained in a designated file, in the vestry for a period of 6 years.

Procedures Following Suspicion or Allegation of Abuse

Should a child or vulnerable adult make an allegation of abuse, to any member of St Mark’s, they should be reassured, made to feel they are being taken seriously, but not questioned any further.

The child, or vulnerable person, should not be left alone.

A member of the Safeguarding team should be contacted, as well as the police, and Social Work Department, if possible.

The person to whom the allegation was made should at the earliest opportunity make a record of the date, time, and place the allegation was made, the names and addresses of those present, as well as that of the child, or vulnerable person.

They should also note to whom the allegation was reported, as well as the date and time. They should then sign and date this record and keep it confidential.

The matter should be treated confidentially, and details of the incident should not be disclosed to others unconnected to the incident.

Should a member of the community suspect a child or vulnerable adult is being abused, they should contact a member of the Safeguarding team, and depending on the nature of the suspected abuse the police, and/or social work, should be contacted.

The member of the safeguarding team should at the earliest opportunity make a record of the nature of the concern, date and time, the suspicion was raised, the names and addresses of those present, as well as that of the child, or vulnerable person.

The member of the safeguarding team should also note to whom the suspicion was reported, and a note of the date and time. They should then sign and date this record.

Records will be the responsibility of the Safeguarding Team, and be retained in a designated file, in the vestry indefinitely.

When adults are at risk of harm, there is a need to reach a balance between risks and their rights. We recognise that need, between the duty to protect, and the right of the adult who has capacity to make decisions to choose to live in a situation that may put them at risk of harm.

We will work with them to ensure that such risks are understood and minimised. Risk taking, with appropriate support, can be positive and life-enhancing.

Any safeguarding intervention must be the minimum necessary, and proportionate to the risk of abuse or harm.

Historical Abuse

In the course of ministry an adult may disclose historical abuse. This needs to be treated carefully and confidentially. The person should be involved in the extent, and pace, to which they wish to discuss and proceed with such issues, and should be involved in determining whether, how and when, they are formally reported to the police.

We should ensure that the person is not currently being exposed to further harm.

Consideration must be given to the person making, or hearing, such disclosures, that they are not exposing themselves to further risk or allegations.

Working With Those Who Pose a Risk

As an inclusive community, St. Mark’s may find that either one of our community, or someone wishing to attend services, take part in activities, or become part of our community, has been found guilty of an offence relating to children or a vulnerable adult. It is not impossible that this may happen, and such an individual should not normally be denied access to what St Mark’s has to offer.

‘Those Who Pose a Risk’ may be defined as being Registered Sex Offenders, or a person who has committed any sexual offence.

The Safeguarding Act 2018 further clarifies such individuals as being “any person in respect of whom the Safeguarding Service receives notification from any of the

Responsible Authorities that such person poses a risk of harm”.

This would include violent offenders and those suffering from a severe mental disorder, or who we learn poses a risk to others.

This term may, in some circumstances, include some people who pose a risk of serious violent offending.

The Principles which govern our actions in such a situation are:-

* Priority – Safeguarding children and all adults in our Church takes primacy over everything.
* Zero Tolerance – no type of harm or abuse will ever be acceptable or justifiable.
* ‘Duty to protect’ people; employees, contractors, office bearers and volunteers have a ‘duty to protect’ as well as a ‘duty to care’ for everyone in the Church.
* This includes those who are employed, contracted, or working as volunteers.
* Communication – enabling all those involved in the community of the Church to know who to approach if they have concerns that someone may pose a risk.
* Confidential information sharing – the duty to protect takes precedence over an individual’s right to confidentiality whenever a risk is identified.
* Decision making – the responsibility for decision making is a joint one, and not the responsibility of any single person.

The Safeguarding Team will meet with the person, and if necessary, their supervisor, key worker, or probation officer, and a plan will be decided on, to allow the individual the benefits of being part of St Mark’s, but will also protect the vulnerable within our community.

This will usually be in the form of a contract which will be signed by the individual, and a member of the Safeguarding Team, and will be adhered to.

A physical record of meetings with the individual, and others, as well as a signed copy of the contract, will be kept in a secure location, for an indefinite period.

Due to the sensitivity of this information, details will be known only to the Safeguarding Team, and other Key people.

Annual Review

The Safeguarding Policy for St Mark’s is subject to an annual review by the members of the Safeguarding Team, taking account of current legislation, as well as contributions from those working with vulnerable groups, parents/carers, children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The Safeguarding Policy [2022-02] for St Mark’s Unitarian Church was presented to the Council of St Mark’s approved, and signed

on 12th December 2023

by Julie Finneran

Position Convenor, on behalf of St. Mark’s Church Council

*The Safeguarding Policy statement for St Mark’s is available to view on the church notice board in the upper hall, in the vestry of the Church, and on the website.*

*A copy of the Safeguarding Policy for St Mark’s is available in the vestry, may be requested from Council, or a member of the Safeguarding team at any time.*

*Appendices*

*Appendix 1 Safeguarding Statement for display in public area*

St Mark’s Unitarian Church



Safeguarding Statement

St Mark’s Unitarian Church takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adultswithin its community, or who may be visiting or taking part in any of its activities.

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* We should ensure that the child or vulnerable adult is safe and is not being exposed to further harm.
  + Where an allegation suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed then the person to whom the incident was reported will contact Police Scotland as a matter of urgency.

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*Appendix 2*  Consent Form

*This form should be attached to a description of the outing, giving details of the nature of the outing, as well as date, place, times, transport and leaders involved. The group leader should have a copy of the form, and a copy should remain at the Church.*

St Mark’s Unitarian Church

Consent to an Activity/Visit/Outing

*Please complete and return this slip in advance of the planned event. A separate form is required for each child.*

Full name of child …………………………………………………………………………………………

Address………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Please give details of any medical conditions (e.g. asthma, epilepsy, diabetes, allergies, dietary needs) or disability that may be affected by this activity)

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..…….

Emergency Telephone contact numbers, and relationship to child.

Name…………………………………….…… Name …………………….…………………….

Tel no………………………………………….Tel no ……………………………………………

Relationship ..……………………………… Relationship……….………….………………

I have read the above information and I give permission for……………………………………………………………………. to take part in this activity.

I understand;

* My child will receive medication according to my given instructions before or during the event.
* Every effort will be made to contact me as soon as possible should my child become ill or have an accident.
* My child will be given medical/dental treatment as necessary.

Signed …………………………………………………………………

Relationship to child ………………….………….………….……

Date ……………………………………….

*Appendix 3* Application Form

*To be completed and returned to Children’s Programme leader, and Safeguarding team prior to the volunteer taking on any role.*

St Mark’s Unitarian Church

Application Form for St Mark’s Children’s Programme Volunteers

*All prospective volunteers for the Children’s programme are asked to complete this form. The information will be kept strictly confidential, unless requested by an appropriate authority.*

Name ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Date of Birth …………………………………………………

Address…………….……………………………………………………………………………………… .…………………………………………………………………………………………….…………………

Postcode ………………………………………………

Telephone nos. Landline ……………………………. Mobile …………………………………....

E-mail address ………………..…………………………………....

Describe any particular interests, or experience you could bring to the role of Children’s Programme Volunteer.

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Do you know of any circumstances, health, offences or other difficulties, that could affect your suitability to undertake this responsibility?

YES     NO *(Please circle)*

If yes, please give details ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Have you ever had an offer to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults declined? YES     NO *(Please circle)*

If yes, please give details ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Please give the names of two referees who would be willing to be contacted for a written reference on your suitability, one of which should not be connected to St. Mark’s.

Name …………………………………………………. Name ……………..…………………………..

Address …………………………………………… Address …………………………………….

……………………………………………………… ………………………………….……………

Postcode ………………………………………… Postcode ……..……………………………

E-mail address ……………………..….………. E-mail address…………………………….

Please confirm that if you are cleared to undertake this responsibility you will have read, and be willing to comply with, St Mark’s Safeguarding Policy.

Signed …………………………………………………………………. Date ………………………………….

*Please complete this self‐declaration form.*

Self-Declaration *Strictly Confidential*

Have you ever been charged with, cautioned or convicted in relation to any criminal offence; or are you at present the subject of a criminal investigations/pending prosecution?

Yes    No *(please circle)*

If yes, please give details including the nature of the offences and the dates.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

To your knowledge have you ever had any allegation made against you, which has been reported to, and investigated by, Social Services/Social Work Department (Children’s or Adult Social Care)?

Yes    No *(please circle)*

If yes, please provide details.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Has there ever been any cause for concern regarding your conduct with children, young people, or vulnerable adults?

Yes    No *(please circle)*

If yes, please provide details.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Declaration

*Please complete the following declaration*.

I *(full name)* ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

of *(address)* ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Confirm that I have read and will comply with St Mark’s Safeguarding Policy.

Confirm that I am not barred from working with children or vulnerable groups.

I agree to inform the Safeguarding team at St Mark’s Church if I am convicted of an offence after I take up the role of volunteer with the Children’s Programme.

I agree to inform the Safeguarding team at St Mark’s Church if I become the subject of a police and/or social services/social work department investigation.

 I understand that failure to do so may lead to the immediate suspension of my work with the Children’s Programme

Signed: ………………………………………………………………           Date: …………………………………..

*Please return to Children’s Programme Co-ordinator.*

*Appendix 4 Risk Assessment*

ST MARK’S UNITARIAN CHURCH

Risk Assessment

Nature of event ………………………………………………………………..………………

Place of event …………………………………………………………………………………

Dates and times of event …………………………..…………………………………………

[A] Names of those involved, with roles

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Identified Risks Measures recommended to minimise risks Measures implemented

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

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*To be signed by those listed in A*

Signed ………………………………………………… Date …………………………….

Signed ………………………………………………… Date …………………………….

Signed ………………………………………………… Date …………………………….

Those involved are expected to follow the measures recommended to minimise risks, and if circumstances change, to carry out a new Risk Assessment.

If the nature of the event is ongoing, the assessment should be repeated annually, or in the event of a change in personnel.