

## **Practical Guidelines**

Safeguarding can never be simply about the absence of doing wrong things. The church must proactively look after people – following the example of Jesus who sought to change people’s prospects as well as their circumstances. As we do this, we need to be acutely aware that of the risks that may come. In times of crisis, the most vulnerable in society will have that vulnerability amplified.

These Guidelines are in place to advise churches on practical responses to unprecedented times.

### *Provision of Supplies*

According to the most recent governmental guidelines visiting those who are self-isolating because of symptoms should be limited to dropping off supplies. If these supplies are dropped off outside, this will limit the chances of physical contact. Other methods of contact should be used to ensure that social connections are still able to function.

### *Dependence Attachment*

It is entirely conceivable that those self-isolating may become reliant on those providing care. The volunteer needs to be aware that this has the potential to become an intense, perhaps even dependent relationship.

### *Domestic Violence*

In times of financial hardship, reports have shown that domestic violence can often increase. If there are children present, then they may potentially be at risk from exposure to such activity, which can have lasting and profound effects not only on their mental health, but also on their future behaviour as adults. If there are any concerns about this, please contact An Garda Síochána, PSNI, TUSLA or Gateway. The Connexional Safeguarding Officer can also provide advice.

### *Pastoral Sensitivities*

During such extreme times, the church needs to be extremely sensitive to the particular needs of our communities. If the volunteer has any reservations or concerns about the well-being of the individual, these should be passed on without delay to the minister. If any volunteer has any reason for concern when offering assistance to those who are vulnerable, advice can always be sought from the Connexional Safeguarding Officer on [safeguarding@irishmethodist.org](mailto:safeguarding@irishmethodist.org)

### *Childcare*

There may be some who will offer childcare/ babysitting in light of current events. While the vast majority of these offers will be entirely altruistic in nature, please be aware that there may well be some opportunists who would seek to take advantage of such stressful times. Individuals should always know those offering to provide such help. If this is ever offered on behalf of a church, the volunteers should have a valid Police Check in place having been processed by the Methodist Church in Ireland, and have attended Safeguarding training provided by the Methodist Church in Ireland in the previous three years.

## **Guidelines for those Self-Isolating**

### *Awareness of ulterior motives*

In times of social upheaval, there will always be profiteers and there will always be opportunists who take advantage of others. Sadly, these people can sometimes be found within the walls of the church.

Therefore, those self-isolating should be encouraged to observe the following guidelines:

- Never open the door to someone unexpected or unfamiliar, without photographic ID;
- keep a note of dates and times that people have been visiting;
- keep a track of most essential items, so that if an offer of provision of supplies is made, that these items can be requested.

## **Home Visitation**

Current Government Guidelines in both jurisdictions are very clear about limiting all but essential physical contact. Therefore, the vast majority of contact should be via telephone or email. However, if in exceptional circumstances, where the latest Government Guidelines are being adhered to, home visitation is necessary, the following should be observed:

Ensure that the individual is contacted beforehand, so that:

- the individual will not be scared;
- to check up on the health of the individual;
- and to check for any specific needs.

The reason for the visit should be clarified before the visit, along with the expected boundaries.

Any prior contact should be made by someone that the individual knows.

### *Handling Money*

If visiting someone who is self-isolating due to age, infirmity or potential risk, and that individual requests a transactional arrangement, the following guidelines should be observed:

- A family member is contacted by phone to inform them of the reason for money changing hands (eg to purchase supplies or freewill offering). This call should state the exact amount of money;
- Receipts should be kept from shops, or issued by the church treasurer;
- Direction should be given to other, trustworthy sources who may be able to deliver supplies in the event that a volunteer is no longer able to provide that level of support.

### *Insurance Implications*

There are significant differences between an individual who volunteers as a private citizen, and someone who is a representative of the church. In the instance that something untoward might happen due to guidelines not being observed, the church might find itself liable. Therefore, there should be very clear boundaries put in place. If someone is visiting from the church, oversight needs to be given, a log needs to be kept, ideally with the minister, and a note made about any support given.

### *Safe Handling*

A volunteer should never do anything of an intimate nature for someone which he/she can do for himself/herself. While there may be the possibility of needing such intimate care, the volunteer is almost certainly not qualified to provide this care.

## **Safeguarding Guidelines for On-line contact**

For some, staying connected with their teenagers, on-line contact may prove to be useful. If this is the case, then the following should be observed:

- Any direct interaction must only be with teenagers- never children (because under 13s are prohibited from using social media.) Indirect interaction may take place through the likes of YouTube with comments switched off. Any communication regarding this contact must go through parents;
- If there is a discussion, there must always be at least two adult leaders taking part in the conversation;
- There must never be any private/ direct/ instant messaging between leaders and teenagers;
- Parents must be happy that this is how you are connecting and are clear about the purpose of using the platform
- The leadership of the church must know how you are staying connected and the purpose behind it.