

# Beeston Methodist Church

## Guidelines on Touch

*As the people of the Methodist Church we are concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God's purpose for everyone. We seek to safeguard all members of the church community of all ages. It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults.*

Touch is an important part of human relationships. Touch can be necessary to protect a child from danger. Touch can also be a natural way to respond to someone in distress. Everyone working with children/young people and vulnerable adults should be sensitive to what is appropriate and inappropriate physical contact. Leaders need to be aware that however well intended, some actions could be misconstrued as harmful.

The following advice is for all church workers with children and young people and vulnerable adults:

- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different to a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch shall be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child/young person/vulnerable adult, not the worker.
- Avoid any activity that is (or could be construed as) sexually stimulating to the adult or the child/young person/vulnerable adult.
- Children, young people and vulnerable adults are entitled to determine the degree of physical contact with others except in exceptional circumstances, e.g. when in need of medical attention.
- Team members should take responsibility for monitoring each other in the area of physical contact. They should challenge a team member if necessary, and inform the leader of the group involved.
- Team members should be aware of appropriate and inappropriate touch between each other, and challenge inappropriate touch between attendees.
- Team members should look out for signs of self-harm. If any are noted, the overall leader must be informed. The overall leader must then inform the Minister or a member of the Safeguarding Team.
- People with sight impairment use touch as part of their everyday life and should not be discouraged, although care should be taken that inappropriate touch is not used.
- Some people with additional needs do not respond well to touch of any form even if they are upset. Leaders should be informed by parents or carers if this is the case.
- Physical punishment of a child is illegal.

## **What to do if...**

### **You have concerns about possible abuse, including allegations:**

1. In an emergency, respond immediately. Consult BMC safeguarding officer and decide together whether to seek advice or to make a referral.
2. Keep a record of what happened, your concerns and your actions.

### **A child or young person wishes to disclose that they have been abused:**

1. Keep listening. Do not question or investigate.
2. Do not promise confidentiality; tell them we need to share this.
3. Assure them they are not to blame.
4. Tell them what you are going to do and that they will be told what happens.
5. Make careful notes of what is said, record dates, times, events and when you are told.
6. Report to BMC Safeguarding officer email [safeguarding@beestonmethodist.church](mailto:safeguarding@beestonmethodist.church)
7. Only tell those who need to know.