

8th July 2017

Dear Branch Leader,

Knitted Teddies

You may be aware that a needle was found inside a knitted teddy in another diocese three years ago. This discovery potentially put Mothers' Union at risk of damaging litigation. Fortunately this risk did not materialise. However, the Central Board decided that there had to be a response to the incident. European Safety Standards require that all Soft Toys manufactured and sold in shops for children under the age of 14 years, or made by hand in people's homes for donating to children in the same age range must be labelled with an attachable CE tag. The Central Board were advised that our Knitted Teddies fall within the scope of this standard and that steps must be taken to ensure that they meet the requirements.

During the last two years much consideration has been given as to how best Mothers' Union can fulfil its responsibilities. Research has been carried out into the suitability of materials and patterns together with the testing methods that should be used to assess conformity with the Regulations. The tests are simple and use kit costing about £20. It is not intended that each diocese should have or need a testing kit as testing is recommended on a Provincial basis.

It has been decided that teddies should be made to a standard knitting pattern and set of instructions as the more variations there are the greater the chance of errors and loss of product quality. Accordingly, the attached guidance and recommendations set out standards to be kept in the UK and All Ireland. These instructions tally with those Birmingham Diocese have been using for teddies for the prisons except that in the past clean polyester stuffing from cushions has been accepted. This is no longer acceptable and new stuffing is required to British Standards on fire resistance and cleanliness.

Teddies made to the updated standards were thoroughly tested recently and met all the physical tests such as torsion resistance, strength when pulled, flammability, and soundness of joins. Repeat test on laundered

teddies were equally successful. This means that a "Technical File" was created for teddies made to the recommendations, enabling them to be given a CE Safety label (a legal requirement for all soft toys given to children under 14). There is, therefore, ample evidence to justify the Trustees confidence that our knitters were operating to the highest standard. However, we must not be complacent. We must follow the guidelines so carefully drawn up by Mary Sumner House. These are attached to this letter.

In future, all teddies knitted to the standard should be submitted to Judy Townsley (or whoever is Knitting Coordinator), contact details in Diocesan Directory, who will then arrange distribution after she has fixed CE Labels. The labels will be supplied by Mary Sumner house and will bear an identification code consisting of a Diocesan element supplied by MSH and a branch code generated by the Diocese. The size of the labels will be about a quarter that of the labels that some of you may have seen last year.

There may be a future requirement to make differently proportioned teddies to an alternative pattern. There is no objection to this but passing a new, discreet, set of tests giving rise to a new "Technical File" will be required before a CE Label can be attached.

This revised way of working may give rise to some cost increases. It is important that Mothers' Union continue with this valuable piece of our Mission. Branches may wish to fund raise to support this. Equally, if branches no longer wish to knit teddies, please let me know.

Possible Diocesan Codes for Branches regularly making teddies

St. Paul's, Blackheath 001

St. Mary & St. Margaret castle Bromwich 002

St. Alphege Solihull 003

St. John Knowle 004

St. Peter & St. Paul Water Orton 005

This letter is sent out following agreement by the Trustees on 8th July 2017. The ongoing process is subject to annual review.

Eric Swindells

Unit Coordinator Action & Outreach on behalf of Birmingham Trustees