



The Methodist Church

Serving locally, connecting the county

Safeguarding in Lincolnshire District

Hearing the voices of victims and survivors – response, resources and respect 2024

1st September 2024

"There are many lessons to be learnt, but the most challenging are those that require a significant culture change throughout the church, and particularly for ministers and church leaders.

The Church will need further courage to implement the review's recommendations, which are far-reaching and call for major changes in both practice and culture. The Methodist Church has already taken measures to improve safeguarding across the Connexion and implementing the learning from this review will be the next step to ensuring that the Church can be a safe place for all.

(Part of the apology from the Methodist Church 2015 – in full at the end of this policy)

Introduction

The District is committed to and supports whole-heartedly the work of the Methodist church in caring for and supporting those hurt in the life of the church as well as their families and important people in their lives as appropriate.

During 2022/23 the District undertook a number of safeguarding sessions looking at its response to victims and survivors and to consider the Connexional resources "Reflect and Respond" to ensure the best possible respect for those who need help.

In 24/25, the District is to hold further sessions on how best to integrate all resources through the life of churches and how this can be done for certain roles e.g. local preaching, worship leading, pastoral visiting, stewarding etc.

The District Safeguarding Group (DSG) has a survivor representative on it to ensure that its work is sensitive to and considerate of the issues for victims and survivors and bring a unique perspective to all the work, planning and delivery we do,

Response.

The District Responding well flowchart 2024 should be available in all churches, displayed in a designated space within the church. In order to ensure anyone who raises concerns, especially victims and survivors themselves, do not lose a sense of control over what is likely to happen and are respected for having a voice in processes and procedures, it is essential that the DSO is contacted for advice.

It is usual practice when appropriate that the DSO will gather as soon as is possible the key people to plan sensitively and carefully. If matters have already be notified to agencies, the DSO will be liaise with agencies to become a partner with them in offering the best support. All this recognising the need to keep the victim or survivor at the centre of everything that is happening, seeking consent and being transparent.

Safeguarding training.

The content of Foundation and Advanced training 2024 continues to take account of past and current learning in our work with victims and survivors. Courses continue to be shaped by the recognition from the Past Cases Review that much more could be done. Further, the apology given by the Methodist church in 2015 remains an active reminder of the commitment to reviewing and changing practice, the very reason the training courses are constantly under review.

Promoting support to victims and survivors

The District will display in a designated space appropriate telephone numbers for emergency helplines and other relevant numbers. Many churches now exercise the practice of information on the back of toilet doors, in discreet places and using their websites and other accessible information sites.

Commitment to the Survivors Charter

The Methodist church has worked with survivors to produce the charter. The District remains commitment to promoting this in its churches – see end of policy – and display it to affirm this.

Church Councils, Circuit meetings, District Council and Synods should always have on its agenda an item for safeguarding , which should reflect also on continually considering ways to promote work with victims and survivors and the implementation of the charter.

Resources.

The Methodist Church has a range of survivor resources:

[Support for Survivors - Methodist Church](#)

[Survivor Resources - Methodist Church](#)

[Other Organisations - Methodist Church](#)

[Contacts for Survivors' Organisations - Methodist Church](#)

Church issues 'full and unreserved apology' to abuse survivors

28 May 2015

Courage, Cost and Hope, the full report of the Past Cases Review is available on the District and Methodist websites.

The Methodist Church in Britain has today published the report of an independent review of past safeguarding cases related to the Church from 1950 to 2014.

Speaking on behalf of the Church, the Secretary of the Methodist Conference and General Secretary the Revd Dr Martyn Atkins has issued a full and unreserved apology to survivors and victims of abuse in response to the report:

"On behalf of the Methodist Church in Britain I want to express an unreserved apology for the failure of its current and earlier processes fully to protect children, young people and adults from physical and sexual abuse inflicted by some ministers in Full Connexion and members of the Methodist Church. That abuse has been inflicted by some Methodists on children, young people and adults is and will remain a deep source of grief and shame to the Church.

"We have not always listened properly to those abused or cared for them, and this is deeply regrettable. In respect of these things we have, as a Christian Church, clearly failed to live in ways that glorify God and honour Christ.

"I am certain that the Methodist Conference will want to resolve to do all in its power to improve its systems to protect children, young people and adults from abuse within the life of the Church and on Church premises, and to review them diligently on a regular basis."

The independent Past Cases Review considered all safeguarding cases for which there were written records and those recalled from memory by ministers and members of the Church going back to 1950. These included cases that occurred within a church context as well as those which were reported to the church as a matter of pastoral concern but which occurred away from the church.

In each identified case, the Church's response was reviewed on whether it had been safe, pastorally appropriate and compliant with current legislation and policy. Where possible and appropriate cases have been referred to the police or other remedial action has been taken. The aim of conducting the review and writing the report has been to learn the lessons of the past so that safeguarding work within the Methodist Church is of the highest possible standard and the Church is safe for all.

The review identified 1,885 past cases, which included sexual, physical, emotional and domestic abuse as well as cases of neglect. In approximately one quarter of these cases, church ministers or lay employees were identified as the perpetrators or alleged perpetrators. In 61 of these cases there was contact with the police and there are 6 ongoing police investigations as a result.

The review, which has taken three years, was led by former Deputy Chief Executive of Barnardo's Jane Stacey, who has had a long career in senior management of organisations in the child welfare field.

"It was a courageous act for the Methodist Church to launch such a comprehensive Past Cases Review. Even more courageous was the response from the survivors or victims who relived very difficult experiences to contribute to the review, either directly or through a third party. However thorough the review has been, there are undoubtedly cases that have not been reported and the Church would encourage survivors and victims and those with any information to contact the Safeguarding Team: safeguarding@methodistchurch.org.uk. They will be listened to and support will be offered.

"There are many lessons to be learnt, but the most challenging are those that require a significant culture change throughout the church, and particularly for ministers and church leaders. The Church will need further courage to implement the review's recommendations, which are far-reaching and call for major changes in both practice and culture. The Methodist Church has already taken measures to improve safeguarding across the Connexion and implementing the learning from this review will be the next step to ensuring that the Church can be a safe place for all."

Methodist Survivors Charter.

This charter was written by the Methodist Survivors Advisory Group and is an invitation to the Methodist church to listen, to repent, and to change.

We call on the Methodist Church:

- To enable every survivor to know they matter
- To convince every member or person in contact with the Methodist Church to know why the Survivors Agenda matters.
- To see survivors of abuse as successful people, not only or always victims.
- To work for the expression and celebration of the full humanity of survivors whose personhood and flourishing must be about more than just survival.
- To practise and live out that the truth about abuse (establishing of facts) is a cause worth fighting for.
- To enable every member to benefit from the principles underlying the work of the Methodist Survivors Advisory Group and learn from the group.
- To encourage more listening, contemplation and self-reflection for all church people.
- To support the supporters of survivors and stand alongside them.
- To understand that it takes a community to support a survivor - it is a congregational responsibility. There is a shared responsibility of being fully present to the abused.
- To recognise the church is already fractured and wounded because survivors of abuse are part of the Church.
- To change attitudes in relation to mental health.
- To recognise that some survivors are unlikeable and some perpetrators are likeable and charming, and learn to avoid stereotypes.
- To learn the difference between secrecy, privacy and confidentiality.
- To understand that a survivor may not know what is meant by family, forgiveness, trust, foundation, safety, truth or confidentiality.
- to be a resource for people supporting historical survivors.
- To detoxify the disclosure of sexual abuse (over and above other disclosures).
- To encourage a healthy theology of the Body and avoid spiritualising everything
- To promote the declaration that the Methodist Church has a zero tolerance response to abuse.

(taken from pages 22-23 of the Reflect and Respond study guide)