

Safeguarding in Lincolnshire District

Responding Well – The District Safeguarding Policy 2024/25

Introduction

This Policy affirms that the Lincolnshire District of the Methodist Church in Britain is committed to keeping safeguarding integral to the work and ministry of its churches. Keeping people safe, supported and cared for lies at the heart of all it does and this policy comes at a time when there are remaining and in some cases increasing vulnerabilities for people of all ages, particularly.

- The continuing aftermath of the Covid pandemic on provision of services;
- Fuel poverty and the rise in fuel costs and their impact on individuals and families
- On-going financial challenges for many;
- Increasing need for mental health support and services for all ages, especially young people;
- Protection and security for all in our churches, communities and activities.

1. The District safeguarding Policy - Philosophy.

- 1.1 The Methodist Church, along with the whole Christian community, believes each and every person has a value and dignity, which comes directly from God. Christians see this as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things, this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and, therefore, to protect them from harm.
- 1.2 The District is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people, and adults who are or may be vulnerable and/or need care and support. It affirms that the needs of children and of people when they are vulnerable are paramount. It acknowledges that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and no-one is exempt from fulfilling that responsibility.
- 1.3 The District recognises that there is particular help, support and care needed for those who are vulnerable. It recognises that this vulnerability may be temporary or permanent and may be visible or invisible but acknowledges this does not diminish our duty of care towards an individual but seeks to affirm their value to God and to each other.
- 1.4 The District recognises the serious issue of the abuse of anyone and recognises that this may take many forms in the light of growing awareness and learning. It acknowledges the effect abuse may have on individuals, and on their families, especially on their development, including spiritual and religious development. The District accepts its responsibility for ensuring that all people are safe in its care and that their dignity and right to be heard is a priority. It accepts its responsibility to support, listen to and work for healing

with survivors, offenders, communities and those who care about them. It takes seriously the issues of promotion of welfare so that each of us can reach our full potential in God's grace.

- 1.5 The District commits itself to responding well and without delay to any allegation or cause for concern that a child or adult may have been harmed, whether in the church or any other context. It commits itself to challenge the abuse of power of anyone in a position of trust. It especially supports the learning from the Methodist Past Cases review in its report "Cost, Courage and Hope 2015" and will continually use this to inform its practice to offer the most sensitive and appropriate response and care to all.
- 1.6 The District commits itself to ensuring the implementation of Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church (2024 - updated), national government legislation and guidance and local policies and protocols, especially in relation to safe practice in circuits and churches.
- 1.7 It particular takes account of the findings of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), the governmental formal review of safeguarding practices across a wide range of agencies and situations, including faith communities and the Methodist church, among other denominations.
- 1.8 The District commits itself to the provision of support, advice and training for lay and ordained people to ensure they are clear and confident about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults who may be vulnerable. It affirms the role of the District Safeguarding Group (DSG), the District Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and those others who hold safeguarding roles in circuits and churches.
- 1.9 In summary commits itself to:
 - Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility for children and adults within the church;
 - Responding promptly and appropriately to every safeguarding concern or allegation.
 - Caring as a priority pastorally for victims and survivors of abuse and other people affected;
 - Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns of allegations of abuse and others affected;
 - Promoting good safeguarding practice;
 - Carrying out risk assessments and putting safeguarding measures in place where individuals pose a presenting risk to children, young people or vulnerable adults;
 - Working to make safe cultures within our churches, which positively promote safeguarding as the core of its life, care and ministry.
- 1.10 The District sees safeguarding in its widest sense, not just about harm and abuse but people's welfare and well-being, relationships between people, day-to-day vulnerabilities and anything that affects someone's overall quality of life. Safeguarding is therefore at the centre of all our work, the core of our faith and the "golden thread" that runs through the life of our churches..

2. Purpose.

- 2.1 The purpose of this safeguarding policy is to ensure everyone understands their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of all in the life of the Church and to ensure people are clear about roles and responsibilities for children and adults in our care and those using our premises. It is to be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church (2024 - updated).
- 2.2 Given this policy is governed by Methodist Council and Methodist Conference, it is mandatory. All related policies and procedures are also mandatory. Information given in related documents that is *more guidance in nature* does not carry the same authority but it is highly advisable that such advice is adhered to given it is a result of experience and learning over recent times.

3. Governance.

- 3.1 District Council will take the overall responsibility for the work of safeguarding, with the District Safeguarding Group (DSG) as the vehicle to drive forward the development and implementation of all requirements as laid down nationally and locally across the District.
- 3.2 The District must employ a District Safeguarding Officer (DSO) who will report to Chair of District and offer support, advice and expert help to promote the work of safeguarding at all levels.
- 3.3 The District employs an Independent Chair of the DSG, accountable to District Council and will attend with them at least once a year.
- 3.4 At a Circuit level, the Circuit Leadership Team will oversee the work of safeguarding across the Circuit and ensure that it complies with safeguarding requirements. In particular, it will appoint and support the work of the Circuit Safeguarding Officer(s).
- 3.5 At a local level, each Church Council will oversee the work of safeguarding in the church and understand their role as trustees to ensure compliance with policies and procedures. It will oversee adherence to letting agreements by outside groups, safer recruitment into church roles and appointing and supporting the work of the Church Safeguarding Officer(s).
- 3.6 The use of Circuit Safeguarding Teams is encouraged as a means of having a group of people who can support each other but also discuss, plan and scrutinise safeguarding requirements and how they should be implemented in the local churches in a sensitive and appropriate way. The group can then support the work of the Circuit Safeguarding Officer(s), offer a way of bringing together common themes and issues arising in the local churches, and develop a strategy to deal with them.

4. Partnerships

Individuals and families.

- 4.1 The District commits itself to working in partnership with individuals and their families by showing respect and sensitivity at all times when offering help and support of any kind, individuals, including children where appropriate, kept informed about action taking place unless advised that this may not be helpful. This would usually occur in situations of abuse and harm.
- 4.2 Superintendents and Ministers will work with appropriate church and circuit safeguarding officers to ensure the right support and action takes place.

External agencies

- 4.3 The District commits itself to working closely with external agencies to ensure the best support for those who need help. It will co-operate, particularly, with statutory agencies in working as a partner and, through DSG and the DSO, ensure working relationships with key colleagues, especially Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO/DOLA), Local Safeguarding Children and Adult Board colleagues and Public Protection agencies.
- 4.4 From time to time, as necessary, the District Safeguarding Officer will attend relevant meetings to represent the District, especially where there has been a concern that needs the involvement of, and collaboration with, other agencies.

The Charity Commission

- 4.5 The District recognises the importance of working in partnership with the Charity Commission to fulfil its duty to inform it of serious safeguarding matters as advised by the District Safeguarding Officer. The District policy appertaining to making a referral to the Charity Commission 2024 outlines the pathway and responsibilities for making such a referral.

5. District Safeguarding roles and responsibilities.

- 5.1 Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. The structures in place across the Methodist Connexion allow concerns to be dealt with in a way that ensures advice can be sought from, and appropriate action taken, by a range of people.
- 5.2 Appendix (i) outlines the roles and responsibilities of all key safeguarding roles and responsibilities in the District.
- 5.3 Ministers will not take on safeguarding roles, particularly as church or Circuit safeguarding officers. The only exception may be if cover is needed during an absence of these roles but in such circumstances, the DSO MUST be consulted and agreement reached.

6. Procedures for dealing with safeguarding concerns – “Responding Well”.

- 6.1 The District continues to adopt the phrase “Responding Well” as the over-arching term for its work, safeguarding policies and procedures especially when dealing with a concern. This term reflects the commitment to responding to concerns appropriately, sensitively and in line with requirements whilst maintaining a sense of dignity for those being helped and supported.
- 6.2 In certain situations, usually when there is a need to draw together information quickly, the DSO will initiate what is referred to in the district as a “rapid response meeting” with key people. i.e. a Zoom/Face to Face meeting to plan at an early stage the intervention and support need
- 6.3 Each church and circuit must have in place a safeguarding policy for both children and adults. In the Connexional year 24/25, the first church council of the year (for church policy) and the first CLT meeting (for Circuit policy) will approve these.
- 6.4 In terms of procedures, the District has in place a District “Responding Well” Safeguarding Flowchart dated September 2024 for dealing with any concerns about children, adults and those in church roles. It is the policy of the District that all churches will adopt this flowchart as a means of ensuring the appropriate and efficient response to concerns.
- 6.5 Each safeguarding policy and procedure in the District has a summary of the key points, separate to it. It is these that are displayed publicly in a designated place that will ensure all those in the church, visitors to it and those in a role in the church are clear on their responsibilities. Other appropriate policies will be displayed. Good practice will suggest that photographs and contact numbers of key safeguarding people should be displayed alongside the flowchart on a designated space provided for safeguarding information in the church.
- 6.6 It is the policy of the District that any concerns will be:
- *listened to and taken seriously;*
 - *responded to within appropriate timescales and in consultation with others;*
 - *kept “live” until they are agreed as dealt with and everyone is safe;*
 - *victim and ‘survivor focused to ensure sensitive care and respect is given;*
 - *dealt with, where appropriate, in collaboration with other agencies*

7. Support to those hurt by someone in the church and/or outside of it.

- 7.1 The District recognises the impact of harm of any kind. Harm done in the context of the church brings with it additional trauma, given that church settings are expected to be safe places and its officers especially committed to safeguarding and protecting and not abusing their power. Given this, particular support will be given to those who are hurt in the context of the church, whether past or present.

7.2 If harm or abuse is experienced outside of the context of the church but becomes known to the people in the life of the local churches, the District will respond in the usual way to offer support and get the right help especially, if necessary, from external agencies. It is hoped people feel safe enough to tell people in churches of their abuse or concerns - wherever or whenever they arose or occurred.

7.3 *Reflect and Respond – the Methodist charter and resources to support victims/survivors*

The District will promote the Methodist commitment to responding well to those who have been hurt. The Charter confirming this is contained in the above resources and will be at the centre of the Districts work and reviewed by the DSG each year to ensure the Charter is being properly represented.

8. Provision of safeguarding training – Creating Safer Space Foundation face to face/on line training and Advanced on line/face to face training.

8.1 The District, in partnership with the Learning Network, will develop, implement and deliver essential and appropriate training as required by the Methodist Church and national governmental standards. Training is critical to the District's ability to safeguard and protect. Refusal to attend training will be taken seriously and, if necessary, will invoke Methodist disciplinary arrangements, including suspension from posts until such training has been completed.

8.2 In particular, the District will deliver the Methodist Creating Safer Spaces training at Foundation Level On line/Face to Face version (2024) and the Advanced On Line/Face to Face Module 2024. All those in appropriate roles, whether voluntary or paid, will attend as appropriate every 4 years, including Local Preachers and Worship Leaders.

8.3 People in appropriate roles will attend as mandatory Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Unconscious Bias training.

8.4 In working with the Learning Network, especially through the relationship with the DSO, the District will identify training and development to build on 'continuing learning needs, especially for those in safeguarding roles.

8.5 Church and Circuit Safeguarding Officers will play a key role in highlighting numbers for training, keeping systems for recording who has undertaken which training and keeping people informed of their training requirements. Circuit Administrators, if in place, will be very useful in helping to co-ordinate such information and store it centrally.

8.6 The DSG will oversee the development of training within the District as a whole and ensure that all necessary requirements are being fulfilled.

8.7 *Monitoring and Support Group (MSG) training.*

It is now mandatory for all members of a MSG group to undertake the Methodist training before, or during, they take up that membership.

9. Safe places and safe people.

Safer Recruitment.

- 9.1 The District will ensure roles are safer recruited through a robust recruitment process as laid down in the District Safer Recruitment Policy 2024, in line with the Methodist church safer recruitment policy 2023.

Letting arrangements.

- 9.2 The Church Council as Trustees is responsible for overseeing the use of the church premises by outside groups, making sure they are compliant with requirements and reviewing at least annually the groups using the premises and how they are conducting themselves.
- 9.3 All outside groups using church premises will be subject to a letting agreement and will be required to produce evidence of their own safeguarding policies and appropriate DBS checks. Where no policy is in place, the church letting the building will require the group to use that particular church's safeguarding policy.
- 9.4 Any lettings should be agreed only when considered against any other lettings taking place in the same building/vicinity in the church at the same time. It may be that the presence of a particular group occurring at the same time as another may mean increased risk to those groups and make a particular letting not possible.

Risk assessments – buildings, events and special occasions.

- 9.5 It is essential that all buildings, activities and special events are risk assessed to ensure compliance with policy, procedure and insurance requirements. This is especially important for Youth and Children's Workers as they engage with the type of activities that will require robust assessment.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA)

- 9.6 As part of the EDI strategy of the Methodist church, an EIA or related notes will be completed especially for special events to ensure all diverse needs of those attending and contributing are considered. This process of assessment is contained with the Methodist church's EDI website but the DSO should be contacted for help and support in completing one.

Risk assessments – Safeguarding concerns.

- 9.7 From time to time, it will be necessary for certain situations to be risk assessed to ensure people are safe and free from harm. This may be due to concerns about others behaviour and conduct or possible risks an individual may pose in general. These assessments will always be completed by the DSO in partnership with appropriate others and as appropriate the Chair of District. There will be a range of situations where such a risk assessment will be needed and the District will be committed to undertaking these without delay and as advised.
- 9.8 In addition, certain situations may need a more independent risk assessment by another DSO colleague from another District as commissioned by the Connexional Safeguarding Team at Methodist Church House. For these assessments, the District will co-operate at all times, making information available as required to the person undertaking the risk assessment.
- 9.9 The District in particular will work to support those who are offenders within the church and who desire to worship and maintain contact with the church by ensuring safeguarding contracts are in place and monitoring and supports groups to oversee them. These replace Covenants of Care as agreed by Methodist Conference 2017.

Accessibility in offering help.

- 9.10 The District will ensure that churches, Circuits and the District itself have available on all its websites and visible notice boards contact numbers, especially emergency ones, of those who are in safeguarding roles and who are best placed to offer safeguarding help and advice. This will include emergency agency numbers. These will be easily accessed to avoid people having to ask for them should they wish to remain anonymous.
- 9.11 Further, there will be appropriate links on church and Circuit websites to allow people to easily connect to District and Connexional safeguarding Policies and related documents to ensure people who need help in this way can make use of information easily.

Social Media.

- 9.12 In the light of the growing use of social media to communicate and connect to others, the District is committed to making this aspect of safeguarding a high priority in ensuring relevant, up to date and accessible advice, policies and procedures. Concerns about the use of social media to cause harm in any way must always be treated as a safeguarding matter and the appropriate procedures followed

10. Criminal record checks (DBS – Disclosure and Barring Service).

- 10.1 All those in an appropriate role will be subject to a DBS check that is relevant to that role and updated every 5 years. All those without valid DBS clearance will not continue or begin in that role until one has been obtained.
- 10.2 DBS checks and clearance are mandatory for Ministers/Deacons, including Supernumerary Ministers, paid Lay Workers, Worship Leaders and Local preachers
- 10.3 The revised Lincolnshire District Safer Recruitment Policy 2024 outlines the requirements for DBS checks and the response needed should one contain information, which needs further consideration and assessment (referred to as a “blemish”).

11. Specific circumstances.

- 11.1 A number of complex situations may require a particular safeguarding response and the DSO will be consulted to help and advise in such circumstances.
- 11.2 This will be especially important in dealing with such emerging safeguarding issues as domestic abuse, harassment, modern slavery, radicalisation, female genital mutilation, trafficking, child sexual exploitation, spiritual abuse - more detail in the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church (2024).
- 11.3 The District takes very seriously incidents of hate speech and/or involvement of anyone in the promotion of any information, material or personal views which do not uphold the doctrine of the Methodist church and/ which cause offense or harm to any individual(s). This is particularly relevant when using social media platforms. All matters of this kind will be seen as safeguarding issues and dealt with accordingly.

12. Additional miscellaneous policy additions in the light of learning from safeguarding situations within the District.

Displaying material on designated spaces.

- 12.1 All churches will continue to ensure that safeguarding information is displayed in designated spaces and accessible to the main church populations who use the building for whatever purposes. The Methodist safeguarding posters will be used. The use of a movable, portable notice board with essential information on may be useful to display information when lettings are taking place or certain activities for which such information in a prominent position would be helpful.

12.2 Essential information is:

- The summaries of ALL policies relating to Safeguarding;
- The District Responding Well Flowchart;
- The District Person in the Pew flowchart;
- The Methodist Safeguarding Posters which include contact numbers of the church, circuit and District Safeguarding Officers (photos are optional but very helpful);
- Contact numbers of your local emergency services and appropriate local authority agencies including ChildLine, social care out of hours numbers and the Police (101/999)

12.3 Many churches now have information on the back of toilet doors and other useful designated places within its premises.

Compliance with safeguarding requirements.

12.4 It is District Policy that if anyone refuses to comply with any aspect of safeguarding requirements, the matter be referred to the DSO for further help and if necessary to arrange a face-to-face meeting with an individual or group. If matters are still not able to be resolved, the DSO will refer the matter to the Chair of District who will consider the appropriate formal responses. This could, and has, included people being suspended from their role until they are safeguarding complaint.

Offering transport as part of church care and responsibilities

12.5 The District will ensure that all those who offer transport/lifts on behalf of the church have the appropriate insurance in place. This must be obtained before any arrangement is agreed. This insurance is easily accessed through most insurance companies and is added in the context of volunteers who are offering transport or as part of church business. There is usually no cost at all for this addition.

In addition, the church must exercise its duty of care in ensuring any driver who is transporting on behalf of the church is fully able to do so in relation to their health and general capacity. If any concerns arise, it is essential that they are raised as appropriate to ensure the safety of all and the public at large.

Offering transport as friends, whilst not falling under the requirements of this policy, would require the usual care in ensuring the safety of all out of respect for that friendship.

GDPR and Safeguarding

12.6 The District is committed to the implementation of GDPR in general, and especially in the context of safeguarding. During the Connexional year 2024/25 it will ensure that the use of privacy notices in all aspects of its safeguarding work is fully established, not least through the continuing use of training and briefing sessions to ensure everyone is fully aware of their responsibilities.

The District Safeguarding Officer.

12.7 It is the policy of the Methodist church that all Districts have a District Safeguarding Officer (DSO). For this District that DSO will work as per the role outline at Appendix (i) of this Policy, be line managed by the Chair of District and supervised by the appropriate Connexional Casework supervisor.

12.8 The contact details of the DSO are contained in the District Directory and on the District website.

Cover arrangements for safeguarding officers in the District.

12.9 The District Safeguarding Officer has the support of Connexional colleagues to offer cover for any leave of absence from work. When this is necessary, it will be done in conjunction with the Chair of District and District Officer.

12.10 Circuit safeguarding Officers will ensure cover is in place during any leave periods or if not able to fulfil the role for any reason. These arrangements will be made in conjunction with the Circuit Superintendent and communicated to the Circuit accordingly. In addition, the DSO will be informed.

Church safeguarding officers should seek to ensure cover where possible but inform the Minister of any leave arrangements who can communicate if necessary directly with the Circuit safeguarding Officer and/or DSO should a local concern arise.

13. **Additional miscellaneous policy additions in the light Safeguarding sessions held in the District since 2020**

New policies and guidance

13.1 The District has developed its policy and guidance framework to cover areas of developing practice and these are now in use as appropriate and available on the District website:

Lone working – Policy

Living with Dementia - Policy

Visiting other organisations - Policy

Responding Well to Rough Sleepers – Policy;

Starting new projects/Initiatives – Guidance;

Photograph/Social media - Policy;

Giving Character references – Policy.

Thresholds for seeking advice from the DSO

13.2 In addition to the many issues that will be reported to the DSO, the following areas of practice will additionally be automatically referred to the DSO:

- Domestic abuse situations;
- Bullying – conflict, harm caused by offensive behaviour;
- Rough sleepers;
- Those needing help because of addiction;
- Those suffering self-harm or making statements of ending life.

13.3 The above will be treated as safeguarding situations. It may be necessary for appropriate action to be taken to protect people in the “now,” moment but when appropriate, if not at the start of the concern being identified, the DSO will be informed.

14. Policy review

14.1 This policy will be reviewed each year in order to ensure it is up to date, relevant and in line with national and local initiatives and requirements.

Appendix (i)

Key Safeguarding Roles and responsibilities.

Local churches.

The responsibility to ensure safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and followed belongs to the Church Council. It is important that all Church Council members, whether or not a completely church congregation, understands their legal duties and therefore ensures:

- policies and procedures are in place;
- policies and procedures are displayed as directed by the District/Circuit Safeguarding Officer;
- policies are reviewed pro-actively every 12 months by the Church Council with a report being offered by the Church Safeguarding Officer as to how they are working and any concerns about them;
- that the local church has a Church Safeguarding Officer who is not the Minister. If one is not able to be found, the Church Council secretary will caretake that role until the vacancy is filled;
- that the Church Council meeting will have safeguarding as a standing item on each meeting agenda;
- that the Church Safeguarding Officer ~~be~~ is a member of the Church Council;
- that the church has a safer recruitment sub-committee in place for confirming people in roles.

Circuits.

The Circuit Leadership Team is responsible for the oversight of safeguarding within its churches to help, support and ensure compliance. The Circuit Leadership Team will ensure that;

- the Circuit has at least one Circuit Safeguarding Officer in place;
- the Circuit Administrator is clear about his/her role in relation to holding records for safeguarding;
- each CLT and Circuit meeting has Safeguarding as a standing item on the agenda;
- the Circuit Safeguarding Officer is a member of CLT in their safeguarding role or at least attends the Circuit Meeting to report on safeguarding matters.

District.

The District Council is responsible for the oversight of Safeguarding across the District at a strategic level and must ensure:

- there is a District safeguarding Officer (DSO) in place;
- there is a District Safeguarding Group (DSG) in place;
- Safeguarding is a standing item on its meeting agenda each time;
- Safeguarding is a standing item on its Synods;
- the DSO is a member of the District Council or able to attend to give appropriate reports as required;

- That the DSO has the necessary support, line management and external supervision in place.

Specific responsibilities.

District Safeguarding Group

The District Safeguarding Group (DSG) will oversee the work and promotion of safeguarding across the District. It will meet at least four times a year and have an Independent Chair.

Its role is to:

- ensure support to all circuits and churches in implementing District and Connexional policy;
- oversee the promotion of safeguarding children and adults across the District and ensure that all necessary information is disseminated at a local level to support this;
- ensure that the Chair of District, superintendents, ministers, paid workers and all lay staff and relevant committee/group members are updated on any changes to safeguarding policy, practice and guidance. (The Chair of DSG, supported by the District Safeguarding Officer, will report to the District Leadership Team as required with such changes);
- ensure that the work of safeguarding across the District is up to date and in line with National Policy and Guidance;
- initiate programmes of awareness and good practice;
- work collaboratively with other relevant groups (e.g. Connexional, regional and ecumenical partners and professional colleagues) on safeguarding issues.
- Cascade relevant information from the DSG to Circuit meetings .

District Safeguarding Officer (DSO)

The District must have in place a DSO or in any absence of one, a named person to oversee the role, but not a Minister, who serves the DSG and the wider District to:

- ensure DSG is kept up to date with relevant national and local developments;
- advise DSG on safeguarding issues, practice and procedures;
- offer advice, and consultation to ordained and lay staff in the District on any individual case, situations and / or emergencies;
- be available to assist with implementation of policy and procedure;
- undertake risk assessments as appropriate;
- be a critical link between all relevant Committees to ensure safeguarding is relevant and connected to groups within the District;
- support Superintendent Ministers in their implementation of safeguarding policies;
- ensure that Superintendent Ministers are aware of their responsibilities and enable training opportunities to be made available;
- use the expertise and advice of the District Safeguarding Group and, as appropriate, Connexional personnel;
- ensure that all circuits and churches create and implement policies and assist them in doing so;
- be a pro-active link between the District and external agencies, especially statutory organisations, in ensuring the best support for those who need help;

Church Safeguarding Officer.

Each church must have a church safeguarding officer. In the absence of one, the Church Council should choose who should cover this role temporarily. A Minister should not take on this role.

The responsibilities of the Church Safeguarding Officer are to:

- provide support and advice to the minister and the stewards in fulfilling their roles with regard to safeguarding.
- ensure that a suitable, signed church safeguarding policy is displayed at all times in the church on a safeguarding noticeboard, along with names of current safeguarding officers, national helplines and other suitable information. This must be renewed annually.
- record all safeguarding issues that are reported to the church safeguarding officer, according to Methodist policy and procedure.
- promote appropriate routes for reporting of concerns
- identify and inform those who are required to attend safeguarding training and maintain records of attendance. Work with the circuit safeguarding officer and DSO to arrange training.
- attend training and meetings relating to the role
- work in partnership with the lettings officer, stewards and user groups to promote good safeguarding practice on church premises. This will include gaining written confirmation that hirers of church premises are aware of the church safeguarding policy or are using an appropriate policy of their own.
- check that safeguarding is included as an agenda item at all Church Council meetings and report to the Church Council annually.
- inform all those with responsibility for recruitment, whether paid or voluntary, of their obligation to follow safer recruitment procedures.
- advise the circuit safeguarding officer and/or DSO of any issues with compliance with safeguarding training, policy or safer recruitment requirements and respond promptly to any request from them about audit of safeguarding activities.

Circuit Safeguarding Officers

Each Circuit within the District must have at least one Circuit Safeguarding Officer who is not a Minister. In the absence of one, arrangements should be made with an adjoining Circuit to agree mutual support until the vacancy is filled.

Given the importance of this role, any new appointment must be formalised and follow the Connexional Safer Recruitment policy 2021.

The Circuit will formally commission all those who take up this post by way of a simple commissioning service at the appropriate Circuit service. This will serve to help identify the person in the role to others in the Circuit, raise the profile of the work that this role will undertake and give a public profile to the post holder.

The key roles are:

- Support and advice to the circuit superintendent and the circuit stewards regarding safeguarding matters.
- With the support of the circuit superintendent, prompt recording and reporting of any safeguarding concerns that they are made aware of. This will include appropriate referral to statutory agencies and DSOs, as required by Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance.
- Making appropriate arrangements for the secure storage, retention and appropriate sharing of safeguarding information held by the circuit.
- Promoting the safety and well-being of all children and vulnerable adults within the circuit.
- Presenting a report to each circuit meeting about safeguarding events (noting the need for confidentiality regarding specific cases) and reminding relevant parties (where necessary) that safeguarding should be a standing item on the Circuit Meeting agenda
- Receipt of church risk assessments, policy and training schedules for sharing with the circuit meeting annually.
- Attending the circuit staff meeting as necessary to discuss concerns brought to their attention.
- Liaising with individual church safeguarding officers to offer guidance and check they are complying with Methodist Church Safeguarding Policies, Procedures and Guidance. This should include at least one annual meeting.
- Working with the superintendent minister, ministers and the DSO regarding safeguarding concerns.
- Attending and active participation at safeguarding training, district safeguarding events and meetings.
- Work with local ecumenical partners and their safeguarding representatives.
- Reviewing safeguarding policies for each church in the circuit prior to presentation to the Circuit Meeting.
- Supporting the circuit superintendent with the annual review of the circuit safeguarding policy and sending a copy to the DSO.
- Maintaining a record of all people within the circuit who have received Foundation Module and Foundation Refresher (prior to 2020) training together with dates of attendance
- Ensuring that training is offered to those working with children and vulnerable adults, holding an office of responsibility, or are in other applicable roles as defined in Appendix III of the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance 2020.
- Overseeing timely delivery of appropriate training, in liaison with the Church Safeguarding Officers and accredited Circuit Trainers.
- Advising all churches in the circuit of the requirement to adopt a safer recruitment policy and to carry out required procedures when appointing staff or volunteers.
- DBS verification on behalf of the circuit.
- Retaining records of names of those at circuit level who have DBS checks.
- Providing reminders to church safeguarding officers about the need to apply or reapply for checks in accordance with the Methodist Church policy (for updates, the period is currently every five years).
- Assisting the DSO with setting up Monitoring and Support Groups for those subject to safeguarding contracts and reminding the chairs of groups when reviews are due.
- Maintaining a directory of useful names and contact details.

Where a circuit safeguarding officer carries out the above activities, there is a requirement for supervisory oversight from the superintendent minister or nominated substitute, with signed and agreed records of meetings.

All Circuit Safeguarding Officers are invited to attend DSG to both receive up to date information and represent their Circuit in any safeguarding matters related to it. Attendance is not mandatory.
Superintendent Minister

- Ensure all churches have appropriate and up-to-date safeguarding policies in place.
- Ensure all churches have appropriate and up-to-date safeguarding policies in place.
- Support those in pastoral charge in exercising responsibility for the implementation of safeguarding policy and practice.
- Ensure the provision of pastoral support for those involved in issues of abuse and in management of sex offenders.
- Ensure training opportunities are in place for all workers with children, vulnerable adults, for staff of the circuit and for members of the local churches in the circuit.
- Ensure the Circuit Meeting appoints a circuit safeguarding officer/s and that the details of each person are passed to the district office.
- Ensure the Circuit Meeting reviews this policy annually.
- Support the circuit safeguarding officer (Adults) and the circuit safeguarding officer (Children) in their work, providing access to resources to enable them to fulfil their functions.

Administrative posts.

In most cases these posts will be working either in a voluntary or paid role to work alongside the local church and/or the Circuit to maintain an administrative oversight in support to the Superintendent, Ministers and Safeguarding Officers.

The main tasks for safeguarding by anyone in such roles especially Circuit administrators will be to:

- ensure records are in place to be clear those in a role have an up-to-date DBS clearance in place as appropriate;
- know when any DBS is due for renewal;
- keep and maintaining records for safeguarding training as appropriate;
- ensure all policies and procedures are in date;
- act as a central point for administrative information especially in relation to role outlines and safer recruitment processes of local churches and the Circuit.

A template form for collecting and maintaining all this information is available on the District website safeguarding pages.

District Chair.

- Support Superintendent Ministers in their implementation of safeguarding policies.
- Ensure that Superintendent Ministers are aware of their responsibilities in this area and enable training opportunities to be made available.

- Use the expertise and advice of the District Safeguarding Group, the District Safeguarding Officer and, as appropriate, Connexional personnel.
- Support the District Safeguarding Group(s) in this area as requested.

Howard Smedley
DSO.
1st September 2024