

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

1. The Policy

The Cumbria Methodist District is committed to the safeguarding and protecting of all children, young people and vulnerable adults and firmly believes that the needs of children or of people when they are vulnerable are paramount.

The Cumbria Methodist District fully agrees with the Connexional statement reiterated in Creating Safer Space 2007:

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.

The Cumbria Methodist District recognises that none of us is invulnerable but that there is a particular care for those whose vulnerability is increased by situations, by disabilities or by reduction in capacities. It is recognised that this increased vulnerability may be temporary or permanent and may be visible or invisible, but that it does not diminish our humanity and seeks to promote and affirm the gifts and graces of all God's people.

The Cumbria Methodist District recognises the serious issue of the abuse of children and vulnerable adults and recognises that this may take the form of physical, emotional, sexual, financial, spiritual, discriminatory, domestic or institutional abuse or neglect, abuse using social media or human trafficking (slavery). It acknowledges the effects these may have on people and their development, including spiritual and religious development. It accepts its responsibility for ensuring that all people are safe in its care and that their dignity and right to be heard is maintained. 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.

The Cumbria Methodist District commits itself to:

1. **RESPOND** without delay to any allegation or cause for concern that a child or vulnerable adult may have been harmed, whether in the Church or in another context. It commits itself to challenge the abuse of power of anyone in a position of trust.
2. Ensure the **IMPLEMENTATION** of Connexional Safeguarding Policy; government legislation and guidance and safe practice in circuits and churches.
3. The **PROVISION** of support, advice and training for lay and ordained people that will ensure people 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.
4. **AFFIRMS** and gives thanks for the work of those who are workers with children and vulnerable adults and acknowledges the shared responsibility of us all for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults who are on our premises throughout the Cumbria District.

2. Purpose

The purposes of this safeguarding policy are to ensure procedures are in place and people are clear about roles and responsibilities for children and vulnerable adults in our care and using our premises. It

is to be read in conjunction with the *Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church* (July 2023 and as updated thereafter).

The full implementation of these policies should achieve the following:

- Church (and all associated activities) is a safer place for everyone
- Communities we serve have confidence that children and vulnerable adults are as safe as possible and that their wellbeing is enhanced in the life of the church.
- People in the church are alert to unsafe practices and are able to challenge them.
- Office holders are safely recruited, trained for their roles and are accountable for their activities.
- People who have experienced abuse are accepted, empowered and supported in maintaining control over their lives and making informed choices without coercion.
- People who abuse are held accountable to the law and their risk is managed while they are supported and challenged to address their motivations and behaviour.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 District Chair

The District Chair attends the District Safeguarding Group and should:

- Manage and support the work of the District Safeguarding Officer.
- Through the District Safeguarding Officer, ensure that Superintendent Ministers are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and enable skills training opportunities to be made available.
- Use the expertise and advice of the District Safeguarding Officer, District Safeguarding Group and, as appropriate, Connexional Team personnel.
- Through the District Safeguarding Officer, ensure that all circuits and churches create and implement their own policies.
- Support the District Safeguarding Officer and the District Safeguarding Group in their work by ensuring an Independent Chair is appointed and that the group are capable of taking forward reports of incidents and allegations promptly and in accordance with good practice.
- Ensure that, where there are district meetings and events, the district policy is implemented.
- Ensure each Superintendent completes an audit/monitoring form after the first Circuit Meeting of each connexional year confirming that policies are in place in each circuit and church and that these have been annually reviewed. Each Superintendent shall send a copy of their circuit's policy to the District Safeguarding Officer for scrutiny by the District Safeguarding Group. The monitoring of this will be a subject of the District Safeguarding Group's report to the District Council.

3.2 Independent Chair of the District Safeguarding Group

As part of the implementation of the recommendations from the President's Inquiry (Safeguarding) 2011, the Methodist Conference affirmed in 2012 that every district must have a group to focus on safeguarding work with children and vulnerable adults and should have an Independent Chair, as set out in the Safeguarding Framework (2010), who:

- should be strongly committed to supporting the District Safeguarding Officer
- should be well-respected
- should be able robustly to challenge the district where necessary
- should not be the District Safeguarding Officer, the District Chair, or a close relative of those fulfilling those roles.

3.3 District Safeguarding Group

The District Safeguarding Group will promote the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults across the district. This responsibility includes ensuring that:

- The group is independently chaired; its business managed in an effective manner and it has a representative membership of ordained and lay people (including the Circuit Safeguarding Officer for each Circuit) across the district including people with experience and/or professional background in safeguarding.
- The group provides support to the District Safeguarding Officer in the fulfilling of their functions and responsibilities within the District, and in turn the District Safeguarding Officer will provide support for the fulfilling of any functions and responsibilities by members of the group within the Circuits, including through the sharing of information and good practice and appropriate reflection on any issues that may be raised.
- Any incidents and allegations are followed up or referred on as necessary with the support of the District Chair (NB the responsibility lies with the Chair or the relevant person in pastoral charge).
- A response is provided to requests for help, advice, information and training.
- Programmes of awareness, training and good practice are initiated.
- Publicity is given to its contact numbers.
- District and connexional policies are effectively implemented.
- The Chair, Superintendents and District Policy Group are updated on any changes to safeguarding policy, practice and guidance.
- A meeting is organised annually to provide support and information on safeguarding issues to Superintendents, Circuit and Church Safeguarding Officers and Foundation Module Trainers.
- A report is delivered to the first District Policy Group meeting of each connexional year by a member of the District Safeguarding Group, which will include a note on the monitoring of district events.
- Collaborative work is undertaken with other relevant groups (eg connexional, regional and ecumenical partners and professional colleagues) on safeguarding issues.

3.4 District Safeguarding Officer

The District Safeguarding Officer has a key role within the Cumbria Methodist District and is required to:

- oversee church, circuit and district compliance with the Methodist Church's safeguarding procedures
- be the focal point of contact for advice and the taking of referrals on all safeguarding matters (the district safeguarding officer MUST always be informed of a disclosure or concern about abuse)
- be accessible by churches about all safeguarding issues, be fully involved and oversee all situations of concern including the establishment and review of all safeguarding contracts
- liaise regularly with designated officers of the local authority and the police as necessary
- undertake safeguarding risk assessments for the implementation of safeguarding contracts and relating to specific cases
- take a lead on working with individual cases in the district, including representing the Church in meetings with external organisations
- refer cases, as required, to the relevant Connexional Casework Supervisor, and liase appropriately with the Local Area Designated Officer ('LADO') and other statutory agencies, and with ecumenical colleagues.

- have a clear understanding of the issues facing faith communities as they seek to make their places of worship a safe place for children and vulnerable adults
- be committed to personal continuing development and to the provision of safeguarding training opportunities within the district.

3.5 Circuit Meetings

- It is the responsibility of each Circuit Meeting to appoint a Circuit Safeguarding Officer and there should be no gaps in this crucial provision. It is not appropriate for any minister to fill any gap, because of the potential conflict of roles. The role will usually be undertaken on a voluntary basis although expenses should be met. If, for any reason, it is not possible to fill this role then it will automatically defer to the Circuit Stewards to fulfil the duties until a suitable person can be appointed.

3.6 Church Councils

- It is the responsibility of each Church Council to appoint a Church Safeguarding Officer and there should be no gaps in this crucial provision. It is not appropriate for the minister to fill any gap, because of the potential conflict of roles. The role will usually be undertaken on a voluntary basis although expenses should be met. If, for any reason, it is not possible to fill this role then it will automatically defer to the Church Stewards to fulfil the duties until a suitable person can be appointed.

3.7 The Church & Circuit Safeguarding Officers

- These roles support the District Safeguarding Officer in the implementation of good safeguarding practice across Circuits and churches. Given the variety of provision across the Connexion, the formulation of these roles can vary. In some areas, particularly rural areas, clusters of churches can appoint a Safeguarding Officer. In large churches there may need to be more than one individual. No church should be without a safeguarding officer and this person's name should be advertised.
- act as the first port of call for concerns and a link with the District Safeguarding Officer.
- together with the minister in pastoral charge or the Superintendent, ensure that the Church Council/Circuit Meeting is fulfilling its safeguarding responsibilities as set out in the Safeguarding Framework.
- advise on safer recruitment and safe working practices (bringing the policies to life locally).
- oversee the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) application process.
- act as safeguarding champion, ensuring that safeguarding work with children and vulnerable adults is visible and prioritised - for example through featuring on Church Council and Circuit Meeting agendas at every meeting.
- coordinate the provision of safeguarding training and maintain records of attendance.
- attend the Safeguarding Officer's Update Morning annually [usually in June]
- support the District Safeguarding Officer and Minister in the management of Safeguarding Agreements, for example through coordinating regular meetings.
- the Circuit Safeguarding Officer has an additional responsibility to support the work of Church Safeguarding Officers.

Understanding of:

4.1 Child

A child is anyone who has not yet reached their eighteenth birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, a member of the armed forces, in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change his/her status or entitlements to services or protection.

4.2 Vulnerable Adults

A vulnerable adult is any adult aged 18 or over who, due to disability, mental function, age, illness or traumatic circumstances, may not be able to take care or protect themselves.

4.3 Safeguarding and protecting children or vulnerable adults

Safeguarding and protecting children or vulnerable adults from maltreatment; preventing impairment of their health and ensuring safe and effective care.

4.4 Adult/child protection

Adult/child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect children/specific adults who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm, including neglect.

4.5 Abuse and neglect

Abuse and neglect may occur in a family, in a community and in an institution. It may be perpetrated by a person or persons known to the child or vulnerable adult or by strangers; by an adult or by a child. It may be an infliction of harm or a failure to prevent harm.

This policy was agreed at the Cumbria District Policy Group meeting on 17th October 2023, and will remain in place until 31st August 2024 when a North West England District Policy will replace it.

Signed: *J N Tebbutt*

Rev Dr James N Tebbutt

District Chair

Dated: 17th October 2023