

Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy for The Methodist Circuit of Gloucestershire

1. The Policy

The Methodist Church, along with the whole Christian community, believes each person has a value and dignity which comes directly from God's creation of humans in God's own image and likeness. 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.

The Methodist Circuit of Gloucestershire is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults and affirms that the needs of children and of people when they are vulnerable and at risk are paramount.

The Methodist Circuit of Gloucestershire recognises that it has a particular care for all who are vulnerable whether by disabilities or by reduction in capacities or by their situation. 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 our wish to affirm the gifts and graces of all God's people. This policy addresses the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It is intended to be a dynamic policy. It is intended to support the Church in being a safe, supportive and caring community for children, young people and vulnerable adults, for survivors of abuse, for communities and for those affected by abuse.

The Methodist Circuit of Gloucestershire fully agrees with the 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 Methodist Circuit of Gloucestershire 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, child sexual exploitation 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, communities and those who care about them. It recognises that offenders also have needs and will work with them sensitively and respectfully. The Circuit takes seriously the issues of promotion of welfare so that each of us can reach our full potential in God's grace.

The Methodist Circuit of Gloucestershire 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. It commits itself to providing informed pastoral care to those in need, including the supervision of those who have committed criminal offences
2. **IMPLEMENT** the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance, government legislation and guidance to achieve safe practice in the Circuit and in the Churches
3. **PROVIDE** 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
4. **AFFIRM** and give thanks for the work of those who are workers with children and vulnerable adults and acknowledge the shared responsibility of us all for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults on our premises.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this safeguarding policy is to ensure that 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 Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance (2020). The full implementation of these policies should ensure that:

- The 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 they pose is managed while they are supported and challenged to address their motivations and behaviour.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. Circuit Assembly

It is the responsibility of each Circuit Assembly to appoint a Circuit Safeguarding Officer and there should be no gaps in this crucial provision. It is not appropriate for a minister in pastoral charge or Circuit Superintendent 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. Ultimate responsibility for safeguarding within the Circuit lies with the Circuit Assembly.

The Methodist Circuit of Gloucestershire appoints Peter Gardner as Circuit Safeguarding Officer (Children/Young People and Vulnerable Adults) and supports him in his role.

The Circuit Assembly holds the following responsibilities, which may be delegated to the Circuit Safeguarding Officer, if appropriate:

1. Supporting and advising to the Circuit Superintendent and the Circuit Executive regarding safeguarding matters
2. With the support of the Circuit Superintendent, prompt recording and reporting of any safeguarding concerns of which they are made aware. This will include appropriate referral to statutory agencies and DSOs, as required by Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance (2020)
3. Making appropriate arrangements for the secure storage, retention and appropriate sharing of safeguarding information held by the Circuit
4. Promoting the safety and well-being of all children and vulnerable adults within the Circuit
5. Presenting a report to each Circuit Assembly 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 Assembly agenda
6. Receiving and reviewing church risk assessments and training schedules for each Church in the Circuit and sharing with the Circuit Assembly annually
7. Attending the Circuit Staff meeting as necessary to discuss concerns brought to their attention
8. Liaising with individual Church Safeguarding Officers to offer guidance and check they are complying with Methodist Church Safeguarding Policies, Procedures and Guidance (2020). This should include at least one annual meeting
9. Working with the Superintendent Minister, Ministers and the DSO regarding safeguarding concerns
10. Attending and active participation at safeguarding training, district safeguarding events and meetings
11. Working with local ecumenical partners and their safeguarding representatives

12. Reviewing safeguarding policies for each Church in the Circuit prior to presentation to the Circuit Assembly
13. Supporting the Circuit Superintendent with the annual review of the Circuit Safeguarding Policy and sending a copy to the District Safeguarding Officer (DSO)
14. Maintaining of a record of all people within the circuit who have received Foundation/Foundation Module Refresher training and Advanced Module training, together with dates of attendance
15. Ensuring that training is offered to those working with children and vulnerable adults, holding an office of responsibility, or those in other applicable roles as defined in Appendix III of the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance (2020)
16. Overseeing timely delivery of appropriate training, in liaison with the Church Safeguarding Officers and accredited Circuit Trainers
17. 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
18. DBS verification on behalf of the Circuit
19. Retaining records of names of those at circuit level, who have DBS checks
20. 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)
21. 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
22. 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 which will be arranged by the superintendent minister and carried out by them or a nominated substitute. Records of oversight meetings will be signed and agreed. Supervision will include consideration of wellbeing and discussions of the areas of activity included within the role on a regular basis.

3.2. Superintendent Minister

The Superintendent Minister will:

1. Ensure that all churches have appropriate and up-to-date safeguarding policies in place
2. Support those in pastoral charge in exercising responsibility for the implementation of safeguarding policy and practice
3. Ensure the provision of pastoral support for those involved in issues of abuse and in the management of those who present a safeguarding risk
4. Ensure that 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, in accordance with Appendix III of the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance (2020)
5. Ensure that the Circuit Assembly appoints a Circuit Safeguarding Officer and that the details of that person are passed to the District Office
6. Ensure that the Circuit Assembly reviews this policy annually
7. Support the Circuit Safeguarding Officer (Children and Adults) in his work, providing access to resources to enable him to fulfil his functions

3.3 Circuit Executive

The Circuit Executive must ensure that agreed procedures are in place for circuit and ecumenical events that involve children or vulnerable adults.

Procedures for circuit events involving children, young people or vulnerable adults

It is essential that circuit events which involve children or vulnerable adults do not slip through the net because they are not owned by one church. Circuit events must be notified to the DSO prior to final agreement with the event organiser to ensure that all permissions, risk assessments and good practice guidelines are in place.

Responsibilities for those planning and leading the event

All those involved in leading and running the event must be aware of the procedure. The event should have been planned effectively and attention given to the following issues:

1. Risk assessment and suitability of the activity and the premises
2. The appointment of a team to take charge of the event, including safeguarding and first aid personnel (particular health or ability needs should be taken into account)
3. Numbers of children, young people or vulnerable adults involved
4. Transportation following good practice guidelines

This information is to be sent to the DSO for approval PRIOR to the event being agreed.

Key concepts and definitions

- i) 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*
- ii) Vulnerable adults: any adult aged 18 or over who, due to disability, mental function, age or illness or traumatic circumstances, may not be able to take care or protect themselves*
- iii) Safeguarding: protecting children or vulnerable adults from maltreatment; preventing impairment of their health and ensuring safe and effective care*
- iv) 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*
- v) 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 Circuit Meeting held on 22 May 2022
It will be reviewed March 2023