

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

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 male and female 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 Lancashire Methodist District is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and vulnerable adults and that the needs of children or of people when they are vulnerable are paramount.

The Lancashire 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 Lancashire 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 Lancashire 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 or institutional abuse or neglect. 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 Lancashire Methodist District commits itself to 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.

The Lancashire Methodist District commits itself to ensuring the implementation of Connexional Safeguarding Policy, government legislation and guidance and safe practice in circuits and churches.

The Lancashire Methodist District commits itself to 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.

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 Methodist Safeguarding Handbook (2010).

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

- Support Superintendent Ministers in their implementation of safeguarding policies.
- Ensure that Superintendent Ministers are aware of their responsibilities in this area and will 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 their own policies
- Support the District Safeguarding Group in taking forward incidents and allegations promptly and in accordance with good practice
- Will ensure that at District Meetings and events, the district policy is adhered to.

3.2. District Safeguarding Officer

- should have oversight of church, circuit and district compliance with the Safeguarding Handbook
- should provide policy advice and other guidance to churches and Circuits
- should take a lead on working with individual cases in the District, and MUST always be informed of a disclosure or concern about abuse
- should ensure that both their own work, and other safeguarding work in the District, is supported through full case recording
- will promote good communication and effective information sharing
- will undertake safeguarding risk assessments, as appropriate
- will be committed to personal continuing professional development and to the provision of opportunities for safeguarding learning within the District.

3.3. District Safeguarding Group

- ensure that District Group meetings are planned, supported by an agenda and someone to act as minute taker.
- have an independent Chair, as set out in the Safeguarding Framework 2010.
- ensure that the District Chair or representative attend on a regular basis, with personal attendance by the Chair at least annually.
- include members who can contribute professional expertise in relation to safeguarding children, young people and/or vulnerable adults

- decide whether to have a joint committee or two separate committees for the work of children and vulnerable adults/adult protection. Where there are two separate committees, the lead role for domestic abuse/violence should be agreed.
- maintain the expertise of the Group through a programme of training and, where needed, professional supervision.
- report at least annually to the District Council.
- maintain a record of circuit safeguarding representatives and identify any gaps so that action can be taken by the local superintendent minister or the District Council.
- support the provision of safeguarding training, working together with the Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network Group.
- ensure that records are kept, both of who has been accredited to work as a safeguarding trainer in the District and who has attended such training.

3.4. Superintendents

- Each Superintendent will complete an audit/monitoring form after the first Circuit Meeting of each Connexional year confirming that policies are in place in the circuit and each church and that these have been annually reviewed. The Superintendent will send copies of policies to the District Safeguarding Group as requested by the District Safeguarding Group.
- Will comply with Connexional Safeguarding Policy within Circuit and Church policy & procedures.
- Ensure, in liaison with the Circuit Safeguarding Co-ordinator, the creation of an annual safeguarding training programme

3.5. Circuit Meetings

- It is the responsibility of each Circuit Meeting to appoint a Circuit safeguarding coordinator 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 coordinator 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 Co-ordinators

- 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 coordinator. In large churches there may need to be more than one individual. No church should be without a safeguarding coordinator 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 District Safeguarding Coordinators Update Morning annually [usually in March]
- support the District Safeguarding Officer and minister in the management of Covenants of Care, for example through coordinating regular meetings.
- the Circuit Safeguarding Co-Ordinator has an additional responsibility to support the work of church co-ordinators.

4. Understanding of:

4.1. Child

A child is any child or young person under the age of 18 years. It does not matter if the young person is in employment and living alone or is possibly in the Armed Forces if they are under 18 they are defined as a child or young person.

4.2. Vulnerable Adults

A vulnerable adult is any adult aged 18 or over who, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation is permanently or for the time being unable to take care of her or himself, or to protect her or himself from significant harm or exploitation.

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.

Signed:

Rev Paul H Davis
Chair of Lancashire Methodist District

Date: 19th January 2015

Date for Next Review: January 2016