

Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy for the Oxford Circuit

This policy was agreed at the Circuit Meeting held on 21 March 2019. It will be reviewed at the Spring Circuit Meeting in 2020.

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

The Oxford Circuit 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 seeks 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, vulnerable adults, for survivors of abuse, for communities and for those affected by abuse.

The Oxford Circuit 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 Oxford Circuit 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 Oxford Circuit 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. Ensure the **IMPLEMENTATION** of Connexional Safeguarding Policy; government legislation and guidance and safe practice in the circuit and in the 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.
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.

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 (2017)*.

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. Circuit Meeting

- 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.

The Oxford Circuit appoints Alison Matthews as Circuit Safeguarding Officer (Adults) and supports her in her role.

3.2. Superintendent Minister

1. Ensure 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 management of sex offenders.
4. 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.
5. Ensure the Circuit Meeting appoints a circuit safeguarding officer/s and that the details of each person are passed to the district office.
6. Ensure the Circuit Meeting reviews this policy annually.

7. 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.

Circuit stewards

Ensure agreed procedures are in place for circuit and ecumenical events that involve children or vulnerable adults.

Circuit safeguarding officer (CSO)

1. Support and advise the circuit superintendent and the circuit stewards in fulfilling their roles.
2. Make sure the safety and well-being of all children and vulnerable adults within the circuit is maintained.
3. Be the point of reference for individual Church Safeguarding Officers throughout the circuit to guide and advise them upon Methodist Church safeguarding policy requirements.
4. Liaise with the district safeguarding group(s).
5. Keep themselves informed of safeguarding issues.
6. With the support of the superintendent, make sure that any incidents and allegations are followed up or referred as necessary.
7. Know how to respond to any concerns raised if somebody believes that a child, young person or vulnerable adult may have suffered, may be suffering or is at risk of harm. They should take the concerns seriously and always, without delay, make an immediate referral to a statutory agency. In all cases, the District Safeguarding Officer should be informed.
8. Make sure a record of all safeguarding issues is kept and report (in conjunction with the superintendent and relevant minister) any concerns to the district safeguarding officer within 24 hours on the referral form (please see the *Safeguarding Records: Joint Practice Guidance for the Church of England and the Methodist Church - 2015*).
9. Act on behalf of and consultant to the Superintendent with regard to reports required by the district or Connexion
10. Make sure that safeguarding is placed on the Circuit Meeting agenda as a 'standing' item and present a report to each meeting about safeguarding events (noting the need for relevant confidentiality regarding specific cases).
11. Receive risk assessments, policy and training schedules from churches across the circuit and report on these to the circuit meeting annually.
12. Attend the circuit staff meeting as necessary to discuss concerns brought to their attention.
13. Liaise with the individual church safeguarding officers to make sure that they are being compliant with connexional policy, procedures and guidance.
14. Work with the superintendent minister, ministers and the district safeguarding officer regarding safeguarding concerns.

15. Agree with the superintendent minister about how and where records are stored and who should have access.
16. Meet with the church safeguarding officers at least annually.
17. Attend applicable training as necessary.
18. Attend district safeguarding events.
19. Be a member of and actively participate in district safeguarding liaison meetings as called by the District Safeguarding Officer
20. Work with local ecumenical partners and their safeguarding representatives.
21. Review the circuit safeguarding policy at least annually and send an updated copy to the district safeguarding officer.
22. Advise churches where necessary on their policies.
23. Request and review copies of the safeguarding policy for each church in the circuit each year after any amendments by the churches.
24. Keep up to date with current policies and practice in statutory services and within the church.
25. Organise and contribute to safeguarding training for all those working in voluntary and paid roles within the circuit.
26. Maintain a record of all people within the circuit who have received Foundation Module training, Foundation Module Refresher training together with dates of attendance
27. Make sure that all persons receive appropriate training when working with children and vulnerable adults, hold an office of responsibility, or are in other applicable roles as defined in the Methodist Church policy.
28. Oversee timely delivery of appropriate training, in liaison with the Church Safeguarding Officers and accredited Circuit Trainers
29. Make sure that all circuit churches adopt a safer recruitment policy when appointing staff, or volunteers
30. Act as DBS verifier on behalf of the circuit.
31. Keep a detailed record of names of those at circuit level who have DBS checks.
32. Remind 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).
33. Be prepared to assist in forming a small group to make provision for people who may pose a risk to others, participating in Safeguarding Agreements and ensuring periodic reviews of them.
34. Keep a directory of useful names and contact details.
35. Ensure supervisory oversight from the superintendent minister or nominated substitute, with signed and agreed records of meetings.

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

It is essential that circuit events that involve children or vulnerable adults do not slip through the net because they are not owned by one church. Circuit events to be notified to the District Safeguarding Officer prior to these being agreed to ensure that all permissions, risk assessments and good practice guidelines are in place.

Responsibility 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 District Safeguarding Officer for approval PRIOR to the event being agreed.

Key concepts and definitions

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Safeguarding and protecting children or vulnerable adults from maltreatment; preventing impairment of their health and ensuring safe and effective care.
4. Adult/child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity undertaken to protect children/specific adults who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm, including neglect.
5. Abuse and neglect may occur in a family, in a community or 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.

Dated

Signed Chair of Circuit Meeting