



The **Methodist** Church
Plymouth & Exeter District

District Safeguarding 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/people 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 Plymouth & Exeter District is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and vulnerable adults and firmly believes that the needs of children and of people when they are vulnerable is paramount.

The Plymouth & Exeter District fully agrees with the Connexional Team 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 Plymouth & Exeter 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 affirm the gifts and graces of all God's people.

The Plymouth & Exeter 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 (modern day 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 Plymouth & Exeter 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.

Purpose

The purpose of this Safeguarding Policy is 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)***

https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/30182/safeguarding_policy_and_procedures_for_the_methodist_church_in-britain_july_2023.pdf

Roles and Responsibilities

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 is 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 Safeguarding 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 Policy Committee.

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

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 from across the District, including people with experience and/or professional background in safeguarding.
- the group provides support and guidance to the District Safeguarding Officer, including confidential advice and discussion on complex cases.
- any incidents and allegations are followed up or referred on, as necessary, with the support of the District Chair (Note: 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 relevant contact numbers.
- District and connexional policies are effectively implemented.
- the District Chair, Superintendents and District Policy Committee are updated on any changes to safeguarding policy, practice and guidance.
- an annual meeting is organised to provide support and information on safeguarding issues to Superintendents, Circuit and Church Safeguarding Officers. In addition, there will be separate meetings with Superintendents and Circuit Safeguarding Officers.
- a report is delivered to the District Policy Committee meeting in February of each connexional year by a member of the District Safeguarding Group, which will include a note on the monitoring of District safeguarding events.
- collaborative work is undertaken with other relevant groups (e.g. connexional, regional and ecumenical partners and professional colleagues) on safeguarding issues.

District Safeguarding Officer

The District Safeguarding Officer has a key role within the Plymouth & Exeter 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 should always be informed of a disclosure or concern about abuse)
- be contacted 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 Connexional Safeguarding Advisory Panel
- take a lead on working with individual cases in the District, including representing the Church in meetings with external organisations
- 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.

Key Concepts and Definitions

1. A child is anyone who has not 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 which is 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: **31st January 2024**

Signed: **District Chair**

Date for Review: **January 2025**

APPENDIX

Visiting Preachers

Where worship is led and/or a sermon preached by anyone other than a Methodist minister, accredited Local Preacher and Worship Leaders, the inviting church should either:

- a. seek evidence that the person leading the worship has been trained in safeguarding matters and request sight of a current DBS Disclosure, OR
- b. ensure that the person leading the worship is accompanied by an appropriate adult throughout the time that they are on our premises and/or ministering in one of our churches/societies.

It is the responsibility of the Circuit Superintendent, when making the Circuit Plan, to ensure that this requirement is of this fulfilled.