

THE METHODIST CHURCH

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy For South Worcestershire Circuit

This policy was agreed at the Circuit Meeting held on 14th September 2021. It will be reviewed in September 2022.

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 South Worcestershire 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 South Worcestershire 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 South Worcestershire Circuit 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 South Worcestershire 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, institutional abuse or neglect, abuse using social media or human trafficking. 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 South Worcestershire Circuit 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. It commits itself to providing informed pastoral care to those in need, including the supervision of those who have committed criminal offences.

The South Worcestershire Circuit commits itself to ensuring the implementation of Connexional Safeguarding Policy; government legislation and guidance and safe practice in the circuit and in the churches.

The South Worcestershire Circuit 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.

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 (2020).

The South Worcestershire Circuit appoints STUART WATKINS as Circuit Safeguarding Officer (Adults) and Circuit Safeguarding Officer (Children) and supports him in this role.

a) Roles and responsibilities

Superintendent

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 (Adults) and a Circuit Safeguarding Officer (Children) and that the details of that 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

1. Support and advise the Circuit Superintendent and the Circuit Stewards in fulfilling their roles.
2. Provide a point of reference to advise on safeguarding issues.
3. Liaise with the District Safeguarding Group(s).
4. With the support of the Superintendent ensure that any incidents and allegations are followed up or referred as necessary.
5. Attend the Circuit Meeting and report on the implementation of circuit safeguarding policy and practice.
6. Receive risk assessments, policy and training schedules from churches across the circuit and report on these to the circuit meeting annually.
7. Attend the circuit staff meeting as necessary to discuss concerns brought to their attention.
8. Liaise with the individual Church Safeguarding Officers to ensure that they are being compliant with Connexional policy, procedures and guidance.
9. Work with ministers and the District Safeguarding Officer to address safeguarding concerns.
10. Work with the superintendent minister regarding any safeguarding concerns
11. Inform the District Safeguarding Officer of any safeguarding concern or incident in the circuit 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).
12. Agree with the superintendent minister about how and where records are stored and who should have access.
13. Meet with the Church Safeguarding Officers at least annually.
14. Attend training as necessary.
15. Attend district safeguarding events.
16. Work with local ecumenical partners and their safeguarding representatives
17. Review the circuit safeguarding policy at least annually and send an updated copy to the District Safeguarding Officer.
18. Advise churches where necessary on their policies.
19. Keep up to date with current policies and practice in statutory services and within the church.
20. Meet for supervision and these records to be signed and stored.
21. Annually appraise the role of the CSO and the suitability of the post holder

b) Procedures for circuit events involving children 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 Circuit Safeguarding Officer prior to these being agreed to ensure that all permissions, risk assessments and good practice guidelines are in place as necessary.

c) Responsibility for those planning and leading such an 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 or vulnerable adults involved.

4. Transportation following good practice guidelines.

This information to be sent to the Circuit Safeguarding Officer PRIOR to the event.

d) Key concepts and definitions

1. 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.
2. Safeguarding and protecting children or vulnerable adults from maltreatment; preventing impairment of their health and ensuring safe and effective care.
3. 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. 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.

Dated 14 September 2021

Signed by the Revd Christopher Collins, Chair of Circuit Meeting