

## **Statement of safeguarding principles**

Every person has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of humans in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this potential 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.

## **Principles**

We are committed to:

- the care and nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and adults
- the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable
- the establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse.

We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with safer recruitment principles, including the use of criminal records disclosures and registration with<sup>1</sup> the relevant vetting and barring schemes.

We will respond without delay to every safeguarding concern which suggests that a child, young person or adult may have been harmed, working in partnership with the police and local authority in any investigation.

We will seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care.

We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.

Working with the District Safeguarding Officer, we will support the risk assessment of those who present a safeguarding risk within the Church environment. We will ensure that appropriate pastoral care is offered, and measures are taken to address identified risks including referral to statutory agencies, suspension and the use of safeguarding contracts. We will recognise and apply the restrictions to appointment laid down in Standing Order 010 of the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church.

In all these principles, we will follow legislation, guidance and recognised good practice.

# SAFEGUARDING POLICY

This policy to be agreed at the Circuit Meeting held on 9th March 2023 will be reviewed annually

## 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 North Shields and Whitley Bay Methodist 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 North Shields and Whitley Bay 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 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, vulnerable adults, for survivors of abuse, for communities and for those affected by abuse.

The North Shields and Whitley Bay 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 North Shields and Whitley Bay 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, 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, 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 North Shields and Whitley Bay Methodist 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 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 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. Ultimate responsibility for Safeguarding within the Circuit rests with the Circuit Meeting.

The North Shields and Whitley Bay Methodist Circuit appoints Linda Eccles as **CIRCUIT SAFEGUARDING OFFICER** and supports her in this role.

The circuit meeting holds the following responsibilities which may be delegated, if appropriate, to the **CIRCUIT SAFEGUARDING OFFICER** to:

1. Support and advise the Circuit Superintendent, Ministers, Staff and Circuit stewards in fulfilling their roles with regard to safeguarding.
2. With the support of the Circuit Superintendent, to promptly record and report any safeguarding concerns of which they are made aware. This will include appropriate referral to statutory agencies, and DSO as required by the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance.
3. Confirm with the Superintendent Minister appropriate arrangements for the secure storage, retention and appropriate sharing of safeguarding information held by the Circuit.
4. Promote the safety and well-being of all children and vulnerable adults within the Circuit
5. Ensure that safeguarding is on the Circuit Meeting agenda and present a report at least annually and as often as appropriate, about safeguarding matters and events (noting the need for relevant confidentiality regarding specific cases).
6. Receive risk assessments, policy and training information from churches across the circuit for sharing with 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 offer guidance and support, and enable Circuit Churches to be compliant with connexional safeguarding policy, procedures and guidance. This should include at least one annual meeting.
9. Work with the superintendent minister, ministers and the district safeguarding officer regarding safeguarding concerns.
10. Attend and actively participate in relevant safeguarding training, district safeguarding events, and meetings, as appropriate
11. Work with local ecumenical partners and their safeguarding representatives as appropriate.
12. Support the Circuit Supt with the annual review of the circuit safeguarding policy and sending an updated copy to the district safeguarding officer.
13. Receive a copy of the safeguarding policy for each church in the circuit each year for review and presentation to the Circuit Meeting
14. Maintain a record of all people within the circuit who have received Foundation Module training and Foundation Module Refresher training together with dates of attendance
15. Enable safeguarding training opportunities to be made available for all those in the Circuit who need to attend (as defined in Appendix 3 of the Methodist Church policy).
16. Oversee timely delivery of appropriate training, in liaison with accredited Circuit Trainers
17. Remind all circuit churches of the requirement to adopt a safer recruitment policy when appointing staff, or volunteers
18. Be involved in DBS verification on behalf of the circuit, as appropriate.
19. Retain records of names of those at circuit level who have DBS checks.
20. Provide 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. Assist 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. Keep a list of useful safeguarding resources and contact details.

( See Appendix 6 for further information with reference to the Circuit Safeguarding Officer role)

Where a circuit safeguarding officer carries out the above activities, there is a requirement for supervisory oversight to be arranged by the Superintendent Minister, and carried out by them, or a nominated substitute, with signed and agreed records of meetings. Supervision should include consideration of well-being and discussion of the areas of activity within the role, on a regular basis.

### 3.2. Superintendent Minister

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 3 of the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance)
5. Ensure that the Circuit Meeting appoints a circuit safeguarding officer and that the details of the person are passed to the district office.
6. Ensure that the Circuit Meeting reviews this policy annually.
7. Support the circuit safeguarding officer in their work, providing access to resources to enable them to fulfil their function.

### 3.3 Circuit stewards

Ensure 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 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 9th March 2023

Signed Revd Eva Walker

.Chair of Circuit Meeting