



Berkshire & Hampshire Borders Methodist Circuit

Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy

This policy was agreed at the Circuit Meeting held on 11th September 2024. It will be reviewed in September 2025.

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 Berkshire and Hampshire Borders 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 Berkshire and Hampshire Borders 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 Berkshire and Hampshire Borders 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 Berkshire and Hampshire Borders 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.

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The Berkshire and Hampshire Borders 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. **AFFIRM** 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 *Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance (2023)*. The full implementation of these policies should ensure that:

- 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 the risk they pose is managed in partnership with wider Methodist agencies 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 a minister in pastoral charge or circuit superintendent to fill any gap, because of the potential conflict of roles but an individual safeguarding officer may cover the role in more than one location. The role will usually be undertaken on a voluntary basis, although expenses should be met. Ultimate responsibility for safeguarding within the circuit lies with the Circuit Meeting. In the Berkshire and Hampshire Borders Circuit the role of the Circuit Safeguarding Officer is fulfilled by the Circuit Safeguarding Team. Members of the circuit safeguarding team or a spokesperson thereof should be a member of the Circuit Meeting or have the right to attend at least annually to report on implementation of the safeguarding policy. Where an individual holds the role in more than one location, they must be able to cover the activities identified in the relevant role outline and be facilitated to attend meetings to report on safeguarding in each location.

The Berkshire and Hampshire Borders Circuit appoints Martin Borgars, Brenda Caborn, Peter Frank, Yvonne Hunt and Gina Tagoe as Circuit Safeguarding Team for Adults and Children and supports them in their role.

The Circuit Meeting holds the following responsibilities which may be delegated to the Circuit Safeguarding Team, if appropriate:

1. Support and advice to the circuit superintendent and the circuit stewards regarding safeguarding matters.
2. With the support of the circuit superintendent, prompt recording and reporting of any safeguarding concerns of which they are made aware. This will include appropriate referral to statutory agencies and District Safeguarding Officers, as required by Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance.
3. Making appropriate arrangements for the secure storage, retention and appropriate sharing of safeguarding information held by the circuit.
4. Promoting the safety and well-being of all children and vulnerable adults within the circuit.
5. Presenting a report to each circuit meeting about safeguarding events (noting the need for confidentiality regarding specific cases) and reminding relevant parties (where necessary) that safeguarding should be a standing item on the Circuit Meeting agenda.
6. Receiving and reviewing church risk assessments and training schedules for each church in the circuit and sharing with the circuit meeting annually.

7. Attendance at the circuit staff meeting as necessary to discuss concerns brought to their attention.
8. Liaison with the individual church safeguarding officers to offer guidance and check they are complying with Methodist Church Safeguarding Policies, Procedures and Guidance. This should include at least one annual meeting.
9. Working with the superintendent minister, ministers and the district safeguarding officer regarding safeguarding concerns.
10. Attending and active participation at safeguarding training, district safeguarding events and meetings.
11. Work with local ecumenical partners and their safeguarding representatives.
12. Review of the safeguarding policy for each church in the circuit prior to presentation to the Circuit Meeting.
13. Supporting the circuit superintendent with the annual review of the circuit safeguarding policy and sending a copy to the District Safeguarding Officer.
14. Maintenance of a record of all people within the circuit who have received Foundation Module training, Foundation Refresher Module (prior to 2020), and Advanced Module training together with dates of attendance
15. Ensuring that training is offered to those working with children and vulnerable adults, holding an office of responsibility, or are in other applicable roles as defined in Appendix III of the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance.
16. Overseeing timely delivery of appropriate training, in liaison with the Church Safeguarding Officers and accredited Circuit Trainers
17. Advising all churches in the circuit of the requirement to adopt a safer recruitment policy and to carry out required procedures when appointing staff or volunteers.
18. DBS verification on behalf of the circuit.
19. Retaining records of names of those at circuit level who have DBS checks.
20. Provision of 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. Assisting the District Safeguarding Officer in setting up Monitoring and Support Groups for those subject to safeguarding contracts and reminding the chairs of groups when reviews are due.

22. Maintenance of a directory of useful names and contact details.

23. Where some or all of the activities of the safeguarding officer of an individual church are by necessity being temporarily carried out by the minister in pastoral charge while other arrangements are made, this period shall not exceed 12 months and within this period the Circuit Safeguarding Team will implement a process of support to facilitate the sharing of the role with another church or the identification of an alternative person to take on the 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 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 9 of the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance.
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 Team 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.

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 must 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.