

Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy for West Devon Methodist Circuit

This policy was agreed at the Circuit Meeting held on 23rd September 2026.
It will be reviewed in September 2027.

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

The West Devon Circuit recognises that it has a particular care for all who are vulnerable whether by disabilities, 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 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 West Devon 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 West Devon 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 West Devon 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.
- **IMPLEMENT** the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance, government legislation and guidance to achieve safe practice in the circuit and in the churches.
- 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.

- **AFFIRM**, and gives thanks for, the work of those who are workers with children and vulnerable adults and acknowledge the shared responsibility of us all for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable people who are on our premises.

2. 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 Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance (2023). 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 the risk they pose is managed while they are supported and challenged to address their motivations and behaviour.

3. ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

Circuit Meeting

It is the responsibility of the 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 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. The Circuit Safeguarding Officer should be a member of the Circuit Meeting, or have the right, at least, to attend 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 West Devon Circuit appoints **Mr Gary Yates** as the Circuit Safeguarding Officer for adults and children, and supports him in his role.

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 management of those who present a safeguarding risk.
- 4) Ensure that training opportunities are in place for all workers with children and/or vulnerable adults, for Circuit staff 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 that the Circuit Meeting appoints a Circuit Safeguarding Officer/s and that the details of each person are passed to the District Office.
- 6) Ensure that the Circuit Meeting reviews this policy annually.
- 7) Support the Circuit Safeguarding Officer in his work, providing access to resources to enable him to fulfil his functions.

Circuit Safeguarding Officer

- 1) Support and advise 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 Regional Officers for Safeguarding (ROSs) as required by Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance.
- 3) Make 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) Present 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) Attend the Circuit Leadership Team and/or Circuit Ministry Team meetings as necessary to discuss concerns brought to their attention.
- 7) Liaise with 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.
- 8) Work with the Superintendent Minister and the ROS regarding safeguarding concerns.
- 9) Attend and actively participate at safeguarding training, district safeguarding events and meetings.
- 10) Work with local ecumenical partners and their safeguarding representatives.
- 11) Review safeguarding policies for each Church in the Circuit.
- 12) Support the Circuit Superintendent and Administrator with the annual review of the Circuit Safeguarding Policy and ensuring that a copy is sent to the ROS.
- 13) In liaison with the Circuit Administrator, maintain a record of all people within the Circuit who have received Foundation Module and Foundation Refresher (prior to 2020) training, together with dates of attendance.
- 14) Ensure 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 the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance.
- 15) Oversee timely delivery of appropriate training, in liaison with the Church Safeguarding Officers and accredited Circuit Trainers.
- 16) Advise 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.
- 17) Assist the RSO with setting up Monitoring and Support Groups for those subject to safeguarding contracts and reminding the chairs of groups when reviews are due.
- 18) Maintain a directory of useful names and contact details.

Circuit Administrator

- 1) Support the Superintendent Minister and Circuit Safeguarding Officer with the annual review of the safeguarding policy for each church in the Circuit.
- 2) Support the Superintendent Minister with the annual review of the Circuit Safeguarding Policy and send a copy to the District Safeguarding Officer.
- 3) Maintain a record of all people within the Circuit who have received Foundation Module training and Advanced level training, together with dates of attendance.
- 4) Act as DBS verifier on behalf of the Circuit.
- 5) Keep a detailed record of names of those within the Circuit who have DBS checks.

- 6) Remind volunteers and employees 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).

Circuit Stewards

Ensure that 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 Circuit Safeguarding Officer prior to final agreement with the event organiser 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.

- 1) Risk assessment and suitability of the activity and 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.

KEY CONCEPTS and DEFINITIONS

- a) 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.
- b) 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 of or protect themselves.
- c) Safeguarding and protecting children or vulnerable adults from maltreatment; preventing impairment of their health and ensuring safe and effective care.
- d) Adult/child protection is 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.
- e) 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: 23/09/2026

Signed: 

Chair of the Circuit Meeting