



Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy for the East Anglia Methodist District

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
- safeguarding and protecting all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable
- establishing 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 with¹ 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.

In this context, whilst the Methodist Church recognises that marriage should be honoured as a way of life and that no one should enter into this lightly or selfishly it is also aware that some may enter into marriage either against their will or without properly understanding the commitments they are making.

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

¹ Or membership of (PVG scheme Scotland).

Working with the District Safeguarding Officer, we will support risk assessment of those who present a safeguarding risk within a church environment. We will ensure 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.

Policy

The East Anglia Methodist District is committed to safeguarding and protecting all children, young people and vulnerable adults and firmly believes that the needs of children or of people when they are vulnerable are paramount.

The East Anglia Methodist 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 East Anglia Methodist 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 East Anglia Methodist 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 (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 offer care and support to all those who have been abused, whether within the church or outside of it. They will receive a compassionate response, be listened to and believed. They will be offered appropriate pastoral care, counselling and support as they seek to rebuild their lives with the communities and those who care about them.

It also seeks to enable those who have offended or who pose a risk to worship and be part of the church community whilst prioritising the safety of other church members. It takes seriously the issues of promotion of welfare so that each of us can reach our full potential in God's grace.

The East Anglia Methodist 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 (2023).

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 (DSO);
- through the DSO, 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 DSO, District Safeguarding Group and, as appropriate, Connexional Team personnel;
- through the DSO, ensure that all circuits and churches create and implement their own policies;
- support the DSO and the District Safeguarding Group in their work by ensuring that an Independent Chair is appointed and that the group are 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 policy is implemented;
- ensure that each superintendent:

- o 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; and
- o sends a copy of their circuit's policy to the DSO for scrutiny by the District Safeguarding Group the monitoring of which 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 DSO;
- should be well-respected;
- should be able robustly to challenge the district where necessary; and
- should not be the DSO, the District Chair, or a close relative of those fulfilling these roles.

District Safeguarding Group

The District Safeguarding Group (DSG) will have Terms of Reference which will be reviewed regularly. The DSG will promote the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults across the district. This responsibility includes ensuring that:

- the DSG is independently chaired, its business is managed in an effective manner and it has a representative membership of ordained and lay people across the district, including people with experience and / or a professional background in safeguarding;
- the DSG provides support and guidance to the DSO, 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 (NB 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 its contact numbers;
- District and Connexional policies are effectively implemented;
- the Chair, superintendents and District Policy Committee are updated on any changes to safeguarding policy, practice and guidance.

- two meetings are organised annually to provide support and information on safeguarding issues to superintendents, circuit and church safeguarding officers;
- a report is delivered to the first District Policy Committee meeting of each Connexional year by a member of the DSG, which will include a note on the monitoring of district 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 DSO has a key role within the Methodist District and is required to:

- oversee church, circuit and district compliance with the Methodist Church's safeguarding procedures;
- be accessible 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 implementation of safeguarding contracts and relating to specific cases;
- 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 continuing personal development and to the provision of safeguarding training opportunities within the district.

Dated 19/6/25

Signed Phil Hollis District Chair

Date for review 30/6/26