

Thames Valley Circuit

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Statement of Principles of The Methodist Church, Thames Valley Circuit

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 male and female 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 Thames Valley Circuit 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 Thames Valley Circuit is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and vulnerable adults and affirms that the needs of children or of people when they are vulnerable is paramount.

This policy addresses the safeguarding of children and young people under 18, and vulnerable adults. It is intended to be a dynamic policy. It is intended to support the Churches of the Thames Valley Circuit in being safe, supportive and caring communities for children, young people, vulnerable adults, for survivors of abuse, for communities and for those affected by abuse.

The Thames Valley 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 Churches' communities of all ages.'

The Thames Valley Circuit recognises the serious issue of the abuse of children and vulnerable adults. It recognises that this may take the form of physical, emotional, sexual, financial, spiritual or institutional abuse or neglect. 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 Thames Valley 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 Thames Valley 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 Thames Valley 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 Methodist Safeguarding Handbook (2010). Each church has a copy of this handbook, held by the Safeguarding Officer appointed for each church. The ordained Ministers have a copy of the Handbook.

The Thames Valley Circuit appoints Kathy Rickman as Safeguarding Adults Coordinator and Safeguarding Children Coordinator and supports her in this role.

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 Safeguarding Adults Coordinator and a Safeguarding Children Coordinator 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 Safeguarding Adults Coordinator and the Safeguarding Children Coordinator in their work, providing access to resources to enable them to fulfil their functions.
8. Ensure the safe recruiting of paid and volunteer Circuit Staff and Local Preachers, including appropriate Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks.

Circuit Stewards

Ensure agreed procedures are in place for Circuit and ecumenical events that involve children or vulnerable adults.

Circuit Safeguarding Adults Coordinator and Circuit Safeguarding Children Coordinator

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.

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.

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:

- Risk assessment and suitability of the activity and the premises.
- 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.
- Numbers of children or vulnerable adults involved.
- Transportation following good practice guidelines.

Key concepts and definitions

i) Vulnerable Adults: any adult aged 18 or over who, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation is permanently or for the time being unable to take care of her or himself, or to protect her or himself from significant harm or exploitation.

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

iii) 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.

iv) 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

Signed Chair of Circuit Meeting

This policy was agreed at the Circuit Meeting held on June 21st 2011. Rev Andrew Baker signed the paper master. Regular reviews have been timetabled.