

DISTRICT SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy for Darlington Methodist District

The Darlington 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 Darlington 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 Darlington 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 Darlington 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 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 Darlington 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 Regional 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).

a) Roles and responsibilities

District Chair

The District Chair attends the Regional Safeguarding Group and should:

- Manage and support the work of the Regional Safeguarding Officer (RSO).
- Through the RSO, 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 RSO, Regional safeguarding group and, as appropriate, Connexional Team personnel.
- Through the RSO, ensure that all circuits and churches create and implement their own policies.
- Support the RSO and the Regional 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 completes an audit/monitoring form annually confirming that policies are in place in each circuit and church and that these have been annually reviewed. Each superintendent shall send a copy of their circuit's policy to the RSO for scrutiny by the Regional Safeguarding Group. The monitoring of this will be a subject of the Regional 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
- should not be the RSO, the District Chair, or a close relative of those fulfilling these roles.

Regional Safeguarding Group

The Regional Safeguarding Group will promote the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults across the district. This responsibility includes ensuring that:

- The group is independently chaired; its business 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 professional background in safeguarding.
- The group provides support and guidance to the RSO, 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 Council meeting of each Connexional year by a member of the Regional Safeguarding Group, 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.

Regional Safeguarding Officer (RSO)

The RSO 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.

District Safeguarding Policy Darlington 2024

Dated: 27th February 2024

Signed by Revd Richard Andrew, District Chair

Date for review: 18th March 2025

(Copy of the signed policy)