

# Chester and Stoke-on-Trent Methodist District

## Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

March 2015

### Introduction

1. 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.
2. We are charged to love and care for each other. This is particularly true where the most vulnerable members of our community are concerned whether they are children, young people or adults. The Chester and Stoke-on-Trent Methodist District is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and vulnerable adults and views their needs as being of paramount importance.
3. Safeguarding is about creating a safe environment where all can flourish and know themselves to be of worth. We are committed to doing that. Each church, group or activity will have a Safeguarding Policy and seek to work with best practice.
4. The Chester & Stoke-on-Trent Methodist District endorses 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 church community of all ages'.***

5. For questions concerning Safeguarding send an email with the title 'Safeguarding' to the District Office [chester.stoke@btconnect.com](mailto:chester.stoke@btconnect.com). There are several downloads regarding Safeguarding on our District Download page including key contacts. Please click the link to navigate to the Download page at: <http://www.chestokemethodists.com/downloads.asp>
6. To contact the District Safeguarding Coordinator for advice, to report a concern or to refer a suspected situation of abuse please ring **07910 283986**.
7. The District Safeguarding Group has also produced a 'Really Useful Safeguarding Update Pack' of information which is appended to this policy and is also available on the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District website. It includes information on the current membership of the District Safeguarding Group and useful contact numbers of organisations which work with and support children and vulnerable adults.

## Key concepts and definitions

**Safeguarding** relates to the action taken to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and protect them from harm. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Safeguarding is defined in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013' as

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health and development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

**Abuse** is a violation of a child or vulnerable adult's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented, or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and it may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it [The Department of Health in its 'No Secrets' Report].

**Adult/child protection** is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect children/vulnerable adults who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm, including neglect.

**Vulnerable Adults** are 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. The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 defines a vulnerable adult as a person who has attained the age of 18 years and:

- a) is in residential accommodation
- b) is in sheltered housing
- c) receives domiciliary care
- d) receives any form of health care
- e) is detained in lawful custody
- f) is in contact with probation services (i.e. receiving help or supervision)
- g) receives a welfare service of a prescribed description
- h) receives any service or participates in any activity provided specifically for persons [who have particular needs due to age; any form of disability; a physical or mental problem which will be prescribed; together with two other issues which are not relevant in this]
- i) receives direct payments
- j) requires assistance in the conduct of their own affairs.

## Policy

8. The Chester & Stoke-on-Trent Methodist District recognises that none of us is invulnerable but that there is a particular caring responsibility 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.
9. The Chester & Stoke-on-Trent 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 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.
10. The Chester & Stoke-on-Trent Methodist District 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.
11. The Chester & Stoke-on-Trent Methodist District 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.
12. The Chester & Stoke-on-Trent Methodist District commits itself to ensuring the implementation of Connexional Safeguarding Policy, government legislation and guidance and safe practice in circuits and churches.
13. The Chester & Stoke-on-Trent Methodist District 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. It affirms the role of the District Safeguarding Group.

## Purpose

14. The purpose of this safeguarding policy is to ensure procedures are in place across the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District and that people are clear about roles and responsibilities for children and vulnerable adults in our care and who use our premises.
15. It is to be read in conjunction with the Methodist Safeguarding Handbook (2010) and the Connexional Policies approved by the Methodist Council:
  - Safeguarding Children and Young People (2010)
  - Safeguarding Adults when They Are Vulnerable (2010)
  - Guidance to Prevent Domestic Abuse / Violence (2010)
  - Safer Recruitment Policy (2013)

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **Role of the Independent District Chair of the District Safeguarding Group**

16. 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 District Safeguarding Coordinator
  - be well-respected
  - be able robustly to challenge the District where necessary
  - should not be the District Safeguarding Officer, the District Chair, nor a close relative of those fulfilling those roles.

### **Role of the Chair of the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District**

17. The District Chair attends the District Safeguarding Group and should:
- support the District Safeguarding Group and its Independent Chair
  - ensure that Superintendent Ministers are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities in
  - support Superintendent Ministers in their implementation of safeguarding policies and will enable training opportunities to be made available
  - use the expertise and advice of the District Safeguarding Group and, as appropriate, Connexional personnel.
  - ensure that all circuits and churches create and implement their own policies

### **Superintendent Ministers**

18. As part of the discharge of their safeguarding duties, each Superintendent Minister will:
- complete an audit/monitoring form after the first Circuit Meeting of each Connexional year confirming that policies are in place in the circuit and each church and that these have been annually reviewed
  - ensure that the Circuit has sufficient Circuit Safeguarding Officers
  - send copies of circuit policies to the District Safeguarding Group
  - ensure that where there are District Meetings and events, the district policy is implemented
  - support the District Safeguarding Group in taking forward incidents and allegations promptly and in accordance with good practice.

### **District Safeguarding Group**

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

- the District Safeguarding Officer is fully supported including confidential advice and discussion on complex cases
- the Group has a representative membership of ordained and lay people across the district including people with experience and/or professional background in safeguarding
- any incidents and allegations are followed up or referred 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.
- publicity is given to its contact numbers
- District and Connexional policies are effectively implemented
- support programmes of awareness, training and good practice are initiated
- the Chair, Superintendents and District Policy Committee are updated on any changes to safeguarding policy, practice and guidance.
- a report is delivered to the first District Policy Committee meeting of each Connexional year by a member of the District 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

**District Safeguarding Coordinator**

20. The District Safeguarding Officer has a key role within Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District and is required to :

- Be the focal point of contact for advice and the taking of referrals on all safeguarding matters
- The person who has to be contacted by churches about all safeguarding issues and is fully involved and oversees all situations of concern including the establishment and review of all covenants of care
- Liaises regularly with Local Authority Designated Safeguarding Offices and the police as necessary
- lead and advise local churches on safeguarding matters
- oversee Church, Circuit and District compliance with the Methodist Church’s Safeguarding Procedures
- undertake safeguarding risk assessments for the Connexional Safeguarding Advisory Panel
- 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 churches a safe place for children and vulnerable adults

Dated: 2 March 2015

Signed: ..... Revd Peter Barber, District Chair

Date for review: .....