

Safeguarding Policy Update

Contact Name and Details	Nicola Sylvester, Safeguarding Policy Manager SylvesterN@methodistchurch.org.uk
Action Required	The Council is asked to approve the proposed changes to the safeguarding policy.
Resolutions	80/1. The Council receives the report. 80/2. The Council adopts the standards and criteria in respect of District Safeguarding Groups. 80/3. The Council approves the revised safer recruitment policy. 80/4. The Council approves the addition of the new anti-bullying policy to the Safeguarding Policy.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ District Safeguarding Group standards ▪ Revised Safer Recruitment Policy ▪ New Anti-Bullying Policy
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. District Safeguarding Group (DSG) Standards and Criteria – the current guidance on DSGs in the Safeguarding Policy is not very specific and these new standards are designed to bring greater consistency between districts as well as offer scope for geographical variation by use of criteria options 2. Revised Safer Recruitment Policy – this updates and replaces the previous policy (October, 2020) 3. Anti-Bullying Policy – this is based on the understanding in the Positive Working Together training resource and recent work with Complaints and Discipline and others in broadcasting three webinars explaining the church's approach to combatting bullying
Consultations	District Chairs' Safeguarding sub group, Safeguarding Committee and District Safeguarding Officers' Policy Group

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	None
Financial	There is no additional financial impact
Personnel	Connexional Safeguarding Policy Manager
Wider Connexional	Policy to be implemented across the Connexion.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Policy may be implemented by Local Ecumenical Partnerships where applicable

Safeguarding Policy Update

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper presents a number of subject areas for the Council to approve new and revised policy, which, once approved, will become policy to be implemented across the Connexion. The specific areas addressed in this paper include the introduction of the District Safeguarding Group standards and criteria, a revised Safer Recruitment Policy, and the introduction of the Anti-bullying policy
- 1.2 The review of the safeguarding policy and procedures is part of the Church's on-going commitment to a safe and welcoming Church for all. The Safeguarding Committee continues to explore the means of ensuring consistent standards of implementation across the Connexion.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The District Safeguarding Group (DSG) standards and criteria, which were compiled by a group of DSG Chairs, and were presented to the Safeguarding Committee (SGC) who approved them at their meeting in July.

The updated safeguarding policy outlines the role of the DSG in supporting the District Chair in the dispensing of their safeguarding duties. It is also an important part of the internal auditing process currently being developed by the SGC.

- 2.2 'A central aspect of keeping children safe in any organisation is the use of safer recruitment' (IICSA report, 2021). The revised safer recruitment policy aims to keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe from harm. The updated policy was developed in collaboration with the group of District Safeguarding Officers who form the DSO Policy Reference Group. The draft document was distributed among the wider group of DSOs for comment and feedback was incorporated into the attached document. The revised policy includes a foreword by the Secretary of the Conference. It includes an outline of procedures for undertaking Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks when working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. The updates to the policy reflect the amendments to the Sexual Offences Act (2003) which now includes sports and religious leaders in positions of trust.
- 2.3 The new Anti-bullying policy is based on the Conference approved training programme, 'Positive Working Together.' Discussions with the Complaints and Discipline worker were also held to ensure uniformity within the Church on how cases of bullying are responded to and to agree definitions in determining thresholds.

The Anti-bullying policy sets out the definition of bullying that is adopted by the Methodist Church and distinguishes between bullying and harassment. It also outlines the characteristics (Equality Act 2021) that protects individuals from discrimination. The policy elucidates the inter-relationship between safeguarding and anti-bullying and provides the categories under which bullying behaviour can occur.

3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 The Council is asked to receive this report and approve the suggested changes and amendments to the policy as outlined.

***RESOLUTIONS

80/1. The Council receives the report.

80/2. The Council adopts the standards and criteria in respect of District Safeguarding Groups.

80/3. The Council approves the revised safer recruitment policy.

80/4. The Council approves the addition of the new anti-bullying policy to the Safeguarding Policy.

APPENDIX I – DISTRICT SAFEGUARDING GROUP STANDARDS

Standards and Criteria

Introduction

The function of the Standards and their associated model criteria is to facilitate District Safeguarding Groups in:

- Having an overview of the profile of safeguarding in the district;
- enabling evaluation of safeguarding;
- assisting in determination of priorities;
- supporting the development of a strategic plan; and,
- enabling review of progress against the plan.

Each standard has a number of criteria linked with it to assist in the determination of whether a given standard is being reached. Discussions about the Standards across the Districts has raised four main issues:

1. That the approach of using Standards should be adopted.
2. The Criteria for each Standard should be promoted as model criteria.
3. The accountability of District Safeguarding Groups (DSG) needs to be clarified. In what ways is the DSG accountable and to whom? How is this accountability exercised?
4. The role of the casework supervisor needs to be considered and how they fit into the process.

From the initial work and subsequent discussions thirteen standards have been developed as listed below.

Standard 1: The DSG understands the context of the district and monitors the Safeguarding issues with which the Methodist Church is involved within the District.

Criteria:

The DSG is aware of the demographic and organisational profile of the District and has information on:

- Number of churches, by circuit across the District
- Number of Church Members and Circuit Meeting members, by circuit.
- The DSG receives periodic Safeguarding data from the DSO on:
 - The number of current Safeguarding contracts and a summary of the types of concern that resulted in the Safeguarding contracts.
 - The number of contracts that have not been reviewed within the last 12 months.
 - The number of referrals made to statutory agencies and the number of referrals received from statutory agencies.
 - Number of risk assessments undertaken by the DSO.
 - Number of Connexional risk assessments undertaken within the District.
- The DSG is advised of concerns arising from the data about the failure to implement Safeguarding policy within the District.

Standard 2: The quality of Safeguarding practice across the District is consistent with both Connexional Safeguarding Policy and Practice and relevant government guidance and legislation.

Criteria:

- The DSG is aware of the demographic and organisational profile of the District and has information on:
- Number of churches, by circuit across the District

- Number of Church Members and Circuit Meeting members, by circuit.
- The DSG receives periodic Safeguarding data from the DSO on:

Standard 3: Support is provided to all Circuits in implementing District and Connexional Safeguarding policies and procedures.

Criteria:

- Advice and support is available to Circuits and churches through the DSO.
- The role and availability of the DSO in providing advice and support is understood.
- Arrangements are in place for regular discussions between the DSO and Circuit Safeguarding Officers.
- The DSG is advised of issues arising from discussions with Circuit Safeguarding Officers.

Standard 4: The DSG through the District Chair requires churches to consider the needs of, and their response to, survivors.

Criteria:

- There is a prompt and respectful response to all concerns about abuse.
- Opportunities are taken to help churches to understand the experiences of survivors and consider how they are made welcome and supported.
- At Connexional, District, Circuit and Church levels consideration is given to how people are equipped to support survivors.
- People providing support to survivors are in turn supported and consideration is given to the appropriate level of supervision for them.
- The development of survivors support groups is promoted.
- Links are developed with other organisations providing support in this area of work.

Standard 5: Good practice in the Safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults across the District is consistently promoted. All necessary information is disseminated at a local level to support this work.

Criteria:

- All individuals, whether paid staff or volunteers with roles that bring them into contact with children or vulnerable adults have received Safeguarding training at foundation or advanced levels, appropriate to their role in compliance with Methodist Policy
- Church Council members and Circuit Meeting members who are not mandated to receive training are encouraged to attend training for the Foundation Module of *Creating Safe Space*. Numbers of those who have attended appropriate training are collated
- Safeguarding contact information is on display in each church premises and on church and Circuit websites.
- A programme of audits or other means of assessment is instituted to establish compliance, good practice and issues that require attention.
- Examples of good safeguarding practice are identified and shared across the district
- Any new or ongoing multi-denominational collaborative Safeguarding practices within District are identified and these developments are shared.
- A dip sample of a year's DBS checks is undertaken to confirm timeliness and follow up on application process.

Standard 6: The DSG, through the work of the DSO ensures that safeguarding contracts are in place for those in the church community who could pose a risk of harm to others or who have caused harm in either church or other settings.

Criteria:

- The DSO takes the lead in establishment, management and oversight of safeguarding contracts
- There is effective and appropriate communication between the DSO and churches where safeguarding contracts are in place.
- Monitoring and Support groups understand their role, have received training and ongoing support in this task.
- Safeguarding Contracts are reviewed annually as a minimum and amended as necessary.
- Risk assessments are undertaken where safeguarding contracts as per policy, are no longer required.

Standard 7: Changes to Safeguarding policies, practices and guidance are disseminated at all levels across the District.

Criteria:

- Processes are in place to ensure that changes in Safeguarding policy, practice and guidance are notified to:
 - Superintendent Ministers
 - Presbyters and Deacons
 - Circuit Safeguarding Officers
 - Church Safeguarding Officers
 - Circuit Meetings
 - Church Councils
 - Trainers delivering training of both Foundation and Advanced Modules
- Changes are posted on the District website.

Standard 8: The District Safeguarding Group is satisfied that safer recruitment procedures are being followed throughout the District.

Criteria:

- Periodic discussions take place with Superintendents and Circuit Safeguarding Officers on the use of safer recruitment procedures and the implementation of these procedures in recruitment to both employed and volunteer roles.
- Safer recruitment procedures are referenced in foundation and advanced module training.
- Safer recruitment procedures are adhered to for all roles.

Standard 9: The DSG promotes programmes of awareness and good practice are initiated and delivered.

Criteria:

- Periodic events focussing on good practice are organised that are open to Church Safeguarding Officers, Circuit Safeguarding Officers, Presbyters, Deacons and others with a commitment or interest in Safeguarding.
- Foundation and Advanced Module training takes account of new developments and reaffirms good practice.

Standard 10: Safeguarding training is promoted and provided in the District in accordance with statutory and Connexional requirements, working together with the regional Learning Network.

Criteria:

- The District has a plan to deliver Advanced Module training in a way that matches the training needs with the resources available.
- The delivery of the plan is monitored and the DSG is advised of necessary adjustments. The number of Advanced Module training event provided each year is reported on.
- Each Circuit has a plan for the provision of training for the Foundation Module, and information is provided on the number requiring training and the number of Foundation module events held each year.
- Circuit Safeguarding Officers provide periodic reports on the progress of Foundation Module training.
- All those who deliver Safeguarding training are properly equipped for the task.
- The quality of Safeguarding training is audited

Standard 11: The DSG promotes partnership work with other relevant groups (eg connexional, regional and ecumenical partners and professional agencies) on Safeguarding issues.

Criteria:

- Opportunities to develop projects in conjunction with other groups, agencies and Districts on key issues, are actively sought.
- The DSO is involved in ecumenical Safeguarding discussions with other denominations.
- Links are maintained with Safeguarding Children's Partnerships and Safeguarding Adults Boards
- The DSO maintains good links with key professionals in statutory agencies.

Standard 12: the expertise of the Group is maintained through both its membership and the delivery of a programme of training and development.

Criteria:

- The membership of the DSG is periodically reviewed and steps are taken to recruit members with relevant professional expertise in Safeguarding (eg Police, Probation, Children's Services, Health)
- A development programme for the DSG is in place, delivered and reviewed.

Standard 13: The DSG through the District Chair ensures that the DSO is supported and equipped for the role.

Criteria:

- There is a comprehensive induction programme for new appointments to the role of DSO, developed in conjunction with Connexion, DSG and the learning network.
- Casework supervision is provided for the DSO at a frequency that matches the needs. This includes the opportunity for reflective practice.
- New DSOs receive induction and the necessary resources to enable them to undertake their role. This includes office equipment and an organisational email address
- The DSO is supported in the role through casework supervision and effective line management
- The DSO has opportunities for professional development, provided by Connexion and also through the District Chair.

APPENDIX II – ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

New Anti-Bullying Policy

Karen Allen, casework supervisor, led the work to draft a Bullying policy to be included in our safeguarding policy. This has been based on the current 'Positive Working Together' Conference-approved training programme and has also been agreed with those working in the complaints and discipline area in order to make sure that we have one clear Church policy on how we should handle cases of bullying and definitions to assist in agreeing thresholds.

Proposed wording for approval:

BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND SAFEGUARDING

The Methodist Church offers a warm welcome to everyone and strives to be a safer place for all where all forms of bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.

Policy Statement

Bullying and harassment are unacceptable and never excusable. The Methodist Church holds that all forms of bullying and harassment are unacceptable, inconsistent and incompatible with the Christian faith and a Christian way of living. The Methodist Church is committed to being a safer space for all. This means ensuring that members of the Methodist Church have an understanding and awareness of harassment and bullying and know how to respond appropriately, and that there are processes in place to enable the issues to be addressed. Victims of bullying or harassment can expect to be listened to, taken seriously and supported when they disclose that they are subject to bullying or harassment. Local Churches can receive advice and support from their Church/Circuit Safeguarding Officer and the District Safeguarding Officer.

Definition of Bullying and Harassment

There is no single definition of bullying. The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) state that bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying or harassment may be carried out by an individual against an individual (perhaps by someone in a position of authority) or involve groups of people. It may be obvious, or it may be insidious. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual.

The Methodist Church offers this definition as follows:

Any behaviour, always involving a misuse of power, which an individual or group knows, or ought reasonably to know, could have the potential effect of offending, humiliating, intimidating or isolating an individual or group should be regarded as unacceptable.

'Unacceptable behaviour' changes its label to 'bullying' or 'harassing behaviour' when it causes actual harm or distress to the target(s), normally, but not exclusively, after a series of incidents over a prolonged period of time.

Lack of intent does not diminish, excuse or negate the impact on the target or the distress caused. The degree of intent is only relevant in terms of how the behaviour should be challenged and the issues subsequently resolved.

(Positive Working Together - A Short Guide 2015)

Harassment refers to poor treatment related to a protected characteristic (ACAS 2020). These are as follows:

- age
- sex
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership

- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation

While bullying itself is not against the law, harassment is. It is against the law to discriminate against someone on any of the above grounds under the Equality Act (2010). You are also protected from discrimination if:

- you are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic, for example a family member or friend
- you have complained about discrimination or supported someone else's claim

Bullying and harassment is behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated or offended ([Workplace bullying and harassment - GOV.UK 2020](#)). These terms are often used interchangeably and some definitions include bullying as a form of harassment.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the action the Methodist Church takes to promote a safer culture. This means we will:

- promote the welfare of children, young people and adults
- work to prevent abuse from occurring
- seek to protect and respond well to those that have been abused

The aim of the Methodist Church's [Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance](#) is to 'create Christian communities of love and care, where good practice to promote the welfare of children, young people and adults becomes a way of life.'

Types of Bullying

There are different types of bullying and some can be covert and therefore more difficult to spot, but others more obvious and therefore easier to identify. It is helpful to split these in to different categories:

Physical Bullying

This can include hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching, pushing or damaging property.

Verbal Bullying

This can include name calling, insults, snide remarks, teasing, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse.

Social Bullying

This form of bullying can take many forms such as the following:

- Lying and spreading rumours
- Negative facial or physical gestures, menacing or contemptuous looks
- Playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
- Mimicking unkindly
- Encouraging others to social exclude someone
- Damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance.

Cyber Bullying

This can happen at any time and be in public or in private and consist of the following:

- abusive or hurtful texts, emails or posts, images or videos
- deliberately excluding others online
- nasty gossip or rumours
- imitating others online or using their log-in.

Bullying and harassment can happen:

- face-to-face

- via a third party instigating by the 'primary' bully
- by letter
- by email
- via any digital platform
- by phone (mobile or landline).

What is not bullying:

- single episodes of social rejection or dislike
- single episode acts of nastiness or spite
- random acts of aggression or intimidation
- mutual arguments, disagreements or fights.

These actions can cause great distress, but do not fit the definition of bullying unless someone is deliberately and repeatedly doing them (National Centre for Bullying 2020).

The Methodist Church does have systems in place to deal with those within the church who are perpetrators of bullying or harassment. The Complaints and Discipline process is one route, but this does not apply to those who are not members of the Methodist Church.

To help ensure any allegations of bullying or harassment are dealt with in a timely, sensitive and comprehensive manner and that pastoral care for the victim is prioritized the procedures for any allegation or complaint are detailed in the flow chart (see appendix).

SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Bullying UK

<https://www.bullying.co.uk>

A leading charity providing advice and support to anyone affected by bullying

National Bullying Helpline

0845 22 55 787

Support and advice for anyone who needs help: <https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk>

Action: For approval

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