



Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy for Starbeck Methodist Church

Purpose

The purpose of the church safeguarding policy is to check that procedures are in place and provide clarity about the roles and responsibilities of those trusted with promoting the church as a safe space for all its users.

This policy was agreed at the Church Council held on 26th March 2026.

The Methodist Church, along with the whole Christian community, believes each person has a value and dignity which comes directly from God's creation 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.

Starbeck Methodist Church is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults and affirms that the needs of children or of people when they are vulnerable and at risk are paramount.

Starbeck Methodist Church recognises that it has a particular care for all who are vulnerable whether as result of disabilities or by reduction in capacities or by their situation. 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.

This policy addresses the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It is intended to support the Church in being a safe, supportive and caring community for children, young people, vulnerable adults, for survivors of abuse, for communities and for those affected by abuse.

Starbeck Methodist Church recognises the serious issue of the abuse of children, young people 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, child sexual exploitation 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.

Starbeck Methodist Church commits itself to:

1. RESPOND without delay to any allegation or cause for concern that a child or vulnerable adult may have been harmed or may suffer harm, 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. IMPLEMENT the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, government legislation and guidance and safe practice in the circuit and in the churches.
3. PROVIDE support, advice and training for lay and ordained people to ensure that people are clear and confident about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable.
4. AFFIRM and give thanks for those who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults and also acknowledge the shared responsibility of all of us for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults who are on our premises.

Church Council

Legal responsibility for safeguarding rests with the members of the Church Council. The safeguarding officer should be a member of the Church Council or have the right to attend at least annually to report on implementation of the safeguarding policy. Where an individual covers the role in more than one location, they must be able to cover the activities identified in the relevant role outline and be facilitated to attend meetings to report on safeguarding in each location.

Starbeck Methodist Church appoints Pauline Mulholland as Church Safeguarding Officer (Adults) and Malcolm Binks as Church Safeguarding Officer (Children) and supports them in their role which is to:

- provide support and advice to the minister and the stewards in fulfilling their roles with regard to safeguarding.
- ensure that a suitable, signed church safeguarding policy is available at all times in the church along with names of current safeguarding officers, national helplines and other suitable information. This must be renewed annually.
- record all safeguarding issues that are reported to the church safeguarding officer, according to Methodist safeguarding policy.
- promote appropriate routes for reporting of concerns
- identify and inform those who are required to attend safeguarding training and maintain records of attendance. Work with the Circuit Safeguarding Officer (CSO) and Church Safeguarding Officer to arrange training.
- attend training and meetings relating to the role
- work in partnership with others including stewards and user groups to promote good safeguarding practice on church premises. This may include gaining written confirmation that hirers of church premises are aware of the church safeguarding policy or are using an appropriate policy of their own.
- check that safeguarding is included as an agenda item at all Church Council meetings and report to the Church Council annually.
- inform all those with responsibility for recruitment, whether paid or voluntary, of their obligation to follow Safer Recruitment procedures.
- advise the Circuit Safeguarding Officer and Church Safeguarding Officer of any issues with compliance with safeguarding training, policy or safer recruitment requirements and respond promptly to any request from them about audit of safeguarding activities.

1. Good Practice

We believe that good practice means:

- i) All people are treated with respect and dignity.
- ii) Those who act on behalf of the Church should not meet or work alone with a child or vulnerable adult where the activity cannot be seen unless this is necessary for pastoral reasons, in which case a written record will be made and kept noting date, time and place of visit.
- iii) The church premises will be assessed by the Church Safeguarding Officer with the property steward and/or the Health & Safety representatives at least annually for safety for children, young people and vulnerable adults and written risk assessment report will be given annually to the Church Council in written form. This will include fire safety procedures. The Church Council will consider the extent to which the premises and equipment are suitable or should be made more suitable.
- iv) Any church-organised transport of children, young people or vulnerable adults will be checked to ensure the vehicle is suitable and insured and that the driver and escort (where required) are appropriate. A record will be kept in the church file for each driver/car.
- v) Activity risk assessments will be undertaken before any activity takes place to minimise the risk of harm to those involved. Approval will be obtained from the event leader/minister. A written record of the assessment will be retained securely.
- vi) Promotion of safeguarding is recognised to include undertaking those tasks which enable all God's people to reach their full potential. The Church Council will actively consider the extent to which it is succeeding in this area.

These things are to safeguard those working with children, young people and those adults who may be vulnerable.

2. Appointment and training of workers in the church

Workers will be appointed after a satisfactory criminal records check and following the Safer Recruitment procedures of the Methodist Church. Each worker will have an identified supervisor who will meet at regular intervals with the worker. A record of these meetings will be agreed and signed and the record kept. Each worker will be expected to undergo safeguarding training, within the first 6 months of appointment. The other training needs of each worker will be considered (such as food hygiene, first aid and lifting and handling).

- (a) The Minister and Leader of the relevant Church organisation will arrange for a potential leader/helper to complete a Volunteer Application Form and then apply through the Disclosure and Barring Service for the appropriate level of Disclosure in respect of offences against children, young people or vulnerable adults. Details of the Disclosure will be kept confidential and retained by the Minister in accordance with the DBS Code of Practice. A new Enhanced Disclosure will be obtained after 5 years.
- (b) All persons offering to take up positions involving contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults must complete the "Volunteer Application Form" which will remain confidential. Details must be given of two persons/organisations from whom appropriate references can be obtained together with confirmation that appropriate training has been or will be undertaken.

- (c) Group leaders must prepare a Role Description for each person in their group working or helping with children, young people or vulnerable adults setting out the work to be undertaken and levels of responsibility. The Role Description must be attached to their Application form.
- (d) The Minister and the Leader of the relevant Church organisation will take up confidential written references and will also research the background of potential helpers through extended conversation or interview. A confidential record will be retained by the Minister.
- (e) The appointment of persons to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults will be subject to the approval of the Church Council and to an appropriate probationary period, normally one year.
- (f) Additional requirements apply in respect of leaders and helpers in The Boys' Brigade and Girls' Association who must also be registered with their organisation following DBS clearance and approval by the Church Council.

3. Guidelines for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults

A leaflet outlining good practice and systems should be given to everyone who works with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This leaflet should be reviewed annually.

4. Operational arrangements

- (a) Leaders will plan the work of their group so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children and young people may occur or false allegations arise. In particular, the following key procedures will be applied:
 - (i) No adult will be left alone with a group, child, young person or vulnerable adult where there is little or no likelihood of the activity being observed by others unless (v) below applies.
 - (ii) Leaders or helpers will not meet with a child, young person or vulnerable adult off Church premises without a parent or other adult being present.
 - (iii) At least two adults will be present with a group when it is the only activity taking place on Church premises otherwise the activity will be cancelled.
 - (iv) Where children, young people or vulnerable adults have to be transported by car or minibus as part of a planned activity or returning them to their homes then leaders will arrange for at least two adults to be present during the entire journey.
 - (v) Those who act on behalf of the Church should not meet or work alone with a child, young person or vulnerable adult where the activity cannot be seen unless this is necessary for pastoral reasons, in which case a written note of this will be made and kept noting date, time and place of visit.
 - (vi) All those working with children, young people or vulnerable adults are to read and comply with The Methodist Church Internet, email, texting and Communication Guidelines.

- (b) All leaders and helpers working with children and young people will be issued with and will follow the “Code of Safer Working Practice with Children and Young People” published by the Methodist Church. The Code sets out the procedure to be followed if abuse is suspected alleged or disclosed.
- (c) All those who hold keys to Starbeck Methodist Church will be required to complete a declaration confirming that they have not been convicted or cautioned concerning an offence against children, young people or vulnerable adults. (FORM D)
- (d) All members of the Church Council and office holders within Starbeck Methodist Church are required to complete a declaration confirming that they are aware of the Church’s Policy to Safeguard Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults. (Standing Order 010 Declaration).
- (e) The Boys’ Brigade and Girls’ Association will follow the policy of the Church and will in addition implement their own operational safety guidelines where they exceed the requirements of the Church. For the purposes of Safeguarding the procedures of The Methodist Church and The Boys’ Brigade shall be followed jointly when a safeguarding concern is raised as set out in APPENDIX 1.

5. Pastoral visitors

Pastoral visitors will be supported in their role with the provision of safeguarding training upon appointment. If they are undertaking tasks for which a criminal records check would be required, this will be undertaken prior to appointment.

6. Ecumenical events

Where ecumenical events happen on church premises, safeguarding is the responsibility of this Church Council.

7. Events with church groups off the premises

Adequate staffing, a risk assessment and notification of the event to be given to the Church Safeguarding Officer PRIOR to the agreement for any event or off site activity. Notification of the event will be given to the Church Council Secretary, Mrs Pauline Mulholland. If the activity is unusual or considered to be high risk the Church Safeguarding Officer will contact the Circuit Safeguarding Officer in order that it can be ratified or any queries raised.

8. Other groups on church premises

Where the building is hired for outside use, the hirer signing the letting agreement will be given a copy of that agreement and this Policy. The lettings secretary will consider the various users of the building in making lettings. All lettings will be notified to the Church Safeguarding Officer who will keep the records and take advice as appropriate from the CSO. Starbeck Methodist Church has a responsibility to groups who hire or use the Church premises under license and for whom the Church Council is not responsible or groups who hire the premises for regular or occasional use. Such groups must declare on the booking form that they have a safeguarding policy in place which is at least equivalent to the policy of Starbeck Methodist Church or agree to implement the Church’s Safeguarding Policy.

9. Complaints procedure

There is a formal complaints procedure within the Methodist Church, which allows issues to be raised about actions or behaviour by a member or officer of the Church. In addition, employed staff will be subject to relevant contractual procedures. All complaints will be responded to with care, diligence and impartiality.

A complaint should be addressed to the superintendent minister, the Revd. Ben Clowes. If a complaint is made to another person it should be referred to him. Meetings will be arranged with the person making the complaint and, usually, the person against whom the complaint has been made, in an attempt to resolve it. If the complaint is against the superintendent, it should be sent to the District Chair, the Revd. Leslie Newton at Yorkshire North & East Methodist District Office, 28 The Green, Acomb, York, YO26 5LR. Telephone: 01904 786275.

Safeguarding officers must be informed of any complaint or issue relating to the potential abuse of children or adults who may be vulnerable. They will support prompt action to respond to the circumstances of any safeguarding concern, whether or not any party involved wishes to make a formal complaint through the Methodist Church.

10. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Church Council. The date of the next review is March 2027.

11. Definition Of Key Terms

- i) A child is anyone who has not yet reached their eighteenth birthday.
- ii) Vulnerable Adults: Any adult aged 18 or over who, due to disability, mental function, age or illness or traumatic circumstances, may not be able to take care or protect themselves.
- iii) Safeguarding: protecting children or vulnerable adults from maltreatment; preventing impairment of their health and ensuring safe and effective care.
- iv) Adult/child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect children, young people and/or adults who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm, including neglect.
- v) Abuse and neglect may occur in a family, a community or an institution. It may be perpetrated by a person or persons known to the child, young person 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.
- vi) Worker: everyone working with children, young people or vulnerable adults in the name of Starbeck Methodist Church, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity.
- vii) Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for The Methodist Church in Britain July 2023 (updated September 2025). The complete document is available from <https://www.methodist.org.uk> . Policies and Guidance, Safeguarding
- viii) Appointment & Training is based on the Safer Recruitment Policy, Procedure & Guidance for The Methodist Church in Britain 2023 (updated January 2024)

Dated: 26th March 2026

Signed *L Taylor.*

Chair of Church Council



The Boys' Brigade and Methodist Church joint Safeguarding Procedures

The Boys Brigade and the Methodist Church have developed a strong partnership links over many years, sharing an ethos of Christian outreach towards young people. Each Boys Brigade company is partnered with a local church and a chaplain is appointed to support and nurture that relationship. Both organisations share a commitment to provide a safe environment in which young people can flourish and realise their full potential. For the purposes of safeguarding, The Boys' Brigade and Methodist Church are operating jointly in relation to reporting, sharing of information, referring to statutory agencies and ongoing case management. This will ensure that where safeguarding concerns or allegations arise, they are responded to appropriately and managed in line with the procedures and policies for each organisation, taking account of any statutory guidance and legislation.

The joint procedures should be followed when a safeguarding concern or allegation is raised about a

- Leader / helper, in relation to their volunteer role
- Leader / helper, in relation to their private life
- Parent
- Young person
- Chaplain, Minister or Church Officers, and the circumstances relate to a BB setting

Reporting Process and Initial Action

BB leaders and Church officers will report safeguarding concerns or allegations in line with The Boys' Brigade and The Methodist Church policies and procedures.

BB procedures can be found on the BB website [Safeguarding - The Boys' Brigade](https://boys-brigade.org.uk/safeguarding/)
<https://boys-brigade.org.uk/safeguarding/>

Methodist Church safeguarding procedures can be found on the MC website:
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/>

On receipt of the initial report, the BB Safeguarding Manager and the relevant Methodist Regional Officer for Safeguarding (ROS) will ensure:

- Information will be shared promptly, as soon as possible in emergency circumstances, or within 24 hours. This should include a written report.
- Initial action will be agreed via a joint case-planning meeting, which may be online. This may include gathering further information to establish if the threshold is met for statutory reporting; initial risk management of the person concerned; referrals to statutory agencies; agreeing responsibilities around ongoing case management and review.
- A written action plan will be developed and a casework record will be started
- Where required, a joint Media Strategy is agreed.

There may be circumstances where a leader has failed to comply with BB or Church procedures, BB Leaders Code of Conduct, or that areas of poor practice have been identified. To prevent this developing into a safeguarding concern it may be appropriate for the relevant ROS and BB Safeguarding Manager to have a case discussion to agree a means to address this situation.

Information sharing, records and record retention

Under the terms of the The Methodist Church and The Boys' Brigade information-sharing agreement (yet to be drafted), the two organisations will share all relevant information about safeguarding concerns and allegations. In emergency, this should be done as soon as possible or within 24 hours in receipt of information.

Each organisation will securely hold all electronic and paper safeguarding records in line with its own procedures. Each organisation will manage and retain data in compliance with their Data Protection Policy and GDPR. Where a subject access request is received, each organisation will respond separately and seek consent to share information that has been provided by the other. In respect of DBS (and PVG) certificates, The Boys' Brigade and The Methodist Church agree to inform one another when blemishes occur. This is so each organisation can carry out their duties with regards to safer recruitment in line with their policy and procedures.

Statutory Agency Liaison

As part of case management, The Boys' Brigade and Methodist Church will agree responsibilities regarding making referrals, ongoing liaison with Statutory Agencies and attendance at meetings arranged throughout an enquiry. Where one organisation takes responsibility for this, the lead agency representative will remind the professionals involved at any meeting or in any correspondence that relevant information will be shared between the BB Safeguarding Manager and the relevant Methodist ROS as part of the joint approach to safeguarding governed by local agreements and the overall Boys Brigade/Methodist Church partnership agreement. This information will be documented within the casework record management systems of both organisations.

Concerns about Adults in a position of trust.

In England, where it is alleged that a leader, helper or Church Official has

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, or
- behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- Behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children. (includes transfer of risk, risk by association)

a referral must be made to the Local Authority Designated Officer.

There is not a separate process for position of trust concerns in Scotland and Wales. When making referrals to statutory agencies in these regions it is important that the BB Safeguarding Manager and ROS emphasise the concerns relate to an adult in a position of trust.

Risk Assessment

Consultation will take place between BB Safeguarding Manager and the relevant ROS to agree responsibility for completing risk assessments, and the format. Where appropriate, consideration can be given to the completion of joint assessments. Methodist guidance will determine if the risk assessment will be undertaken at a District or Connexional level, according to the individual's role and the seriousness of the matters under consideration.

Where risk assessments have been completed separately, recommendations, outcomes, and any resulting contracts or conditions need to be discussed together and understood. Any subsequent actions and decisions will be under the provisions of The Boys Brigade and The Methodist Church partnership / SLA.



When a risk assessment concludes and it is determined by The Methodist Church that a leader is not suitable to undertake regulated work within their Churches, even if the BB Safeguarding Panel have not reached that outcome, the leader will be unable to continue within the denomination.

Conversely, where The Methodist Church finds that a leader is suitable, and The Boys Brigade disagree, the BB have the right to withdraw the Leaders membership from the organisation.

DBS Referrals

Where a leader/ helper or Church Official has left, or been asked to leave because of a Safeguarding concern, and the organisation believes the person has caused harm or poses a future risk to children and young people, a referral will be made to the appropriate vetting and barring authority. In England and Wales, this is the DBS. In Scotland, the referral is made to Disclosure Scotland.

The BB Safeguarding Manager and ROS will agree and document who will take responsibility for this. Ordinarily, where the concerns relate to a leader/helper in a BB setting, the BB Safeguarding Manager will undertake this action. Where the leader holds additional roles in the Church, both the ROS and BB Safeguarding Manager may be required to make the referral.

Charity Commission Referrals

Where there is a "Serious Incident to Report" the BB Safeguarding manager will make referrals to the Charity Commission for matters concerning BB leaders/ helpers and young people. The Methodist Church will also make a referral where the person concerned holds additional roles in the Church.

Conflict resolution

Where agreements cannot be reached regarding case management, decisions and actions, in the first instance attempts at resolution should be sought between the BB Safeguarding Manager and the ROS. Where this is not successful, the BB and ROS will need to escalate in line with each organisation's processes.

Provision of pastoral support

Pastoral support to those involved in a Safeguarding concern or allegation, whether they are the victim or perpetrator, will be provided by the local church. Ordinarily the Chaplain or church Minister will take responsibility for providing this.