



The Methodist Church

Serving locally, connecting the county

Safeguarding in Lincolnshire District

Safer Recruitment - District Policy 2024

Introduction and context

This policy takes account of the principles of the Connexional Safer recruitment policy 2024 but made more practical and relevant to our work in local settings. In this sense, some of the general principles in the wider policy are defined a little more here, especially in terms of roles and responsibilities throughout safer recruitment processes.

Lincolnshire Methodist District remains committed to creating safer spaces for all, especially those who need help because they are vulnerable. So, those who are in roles within Churches, Circuits and at District level and who often find themselves needing to walk alongside and help people in such situations, need to be clear about expectations and responsibilities in those roles, especially when it comes to the duty to safeguard and protect everyone.

To this end, the District is committed to the safer recruitment of people into roles.

The first Safer recruitment Connexional policy came into force in 2013 and was last revised in 2024 (see the Methodist Church website). This District policy takes those changes into account. However, the main principles still remain:

- *Many lessons have been learned about people being in posts within local churches and circuits without knowing fully what that role involves and without having been properly recruited into it;*
- *Inquiries into cases within faith denominations, including Methodism, have highlighted the vulnerability of everyone when we think “church” is safe and that the usual procedures used by professional organisations do not apply or are not needed in the church setting. **Recruiting to roles being some of them.** This has been highlighted especially within the Methodist Past Cases Review (PCR) and more recently in the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) ;*
- *It is important that faith denominations work in such a way that they are respected and seen as “partners” alongside professional agencies, working together within a multi-agency approach. This therefore requires a more “professional” approach in relation to safeguarding and the procedures it adopts.*

Safer Recruitment is not only about the need for criminal record checks but is a wider process of taking into account all aspects of helping people to find their calling in a role within the church, Circuit or District and to support them in making sure they can fulfil that role effectively and safely, and enjoy it.

Therefore, whether a role requires a criminal record check or not, there still needs to be a recruitment process. There will, of course, be some roles that do not warrant such a full recruitment process because of the tasks they fulfil **but it will be for Circuits to decide carefully, use discretion and record in minutes which of these apply, as they should be exceptional. (e.g. flower arrangers, those making tea/coffee for an event etc.)**

The role of Circuit Administrators.

Learning over the last few years has shown that where a Circuit administrator is in place, they will be best placed to either in their own right or in conjunction with the Circuit Safeguarding Officer:

- Establish and maintain a central record of those who need a DBS, when they are applied for, completed and due for review;
- Hold safer recruitment packs which can be sent out when requested at the start of the recruitment process;
- Verify and receive back the DBS information of the applicant and finalise arrangements.

The safer recruitment process.

First steps

1. A vacancy should be notified to the church, Circuit or District in an accessible way (emails, newsletters, church notices etc). Equality, Dignity and Inclusion means the need to be sensitive to ensure all information is accessible and available to all.
2. The Circuit Administrators, where they are in place, or the Circuit Safeguarding Officer will be the central point for information and hold safer Recruitment packs which for at the start of any recruitment process. For District posts, this will be the District Officer's role.

3. The Administrator/Safeguarding Officer will make a note of the vacancy being requested to be able to ensure the process is completed and offer any assistance as required and ensure the process is completed fully.

Overseeing the recruitment process.

Overseeing the recruitment process when a role becomes vacant or is created is the responsibility of the **Appointer** (see Appendix (i) **and is someone who ensures that each stage of the process as outlined in this Policy is full adhered to**). This can, and is likely to, be the best person linked to the role that is being recruited to i.e. the appointment of a Sunday school teacher may be best overseen with the Sunday school leader as the Appointer. To avoid the role naturally falling to the Minister, it will be best to see if there is someone more linked to the vacant role.

However, the Minister will decide in each case who is the best to take on the role of Appointer.

Role outlines for within the Church, Circuit or District.

Role outlines do not have to be lengthy but will contain the essence of what the role involves. For posts for employed staff this will take the form of a full job description. For others, it will be a summary of the key tasks of the role to whom the person is accountable to and the relevant practicalities which the post involves.

Some role outlines are within CPD. Some other key roles will be defined at District level to bring a consistency of use and understanding. Many others, however, will be defined by the Church/Circuit/District as relevant and practical. They are necessary even more now because the activity of the role will define the type of criminal check and recruitment process needed.

They need to contain clarity about which group of people the person in role will work with, that is children/young people and/or adults (categories known as “workforce”). The role outlines will now have a standard statement within them about the need for those in the role to take safeguarding seriously and report any concerns.

Early discussions.

It is acknowledged that in some situations, especially for smaller churches, and even with the role being advertised, no-one may come forward. It may be that in such cases someone has to be approached to consider the role but this should be done by offering discussions about the role in the first instance and giving a clear indication of what the role involves and **issuing a role outline**.

Further, it may be that the Minister may feel someone has gifts and skills for a role that the person may not see in themselves and they may need encouragement to consider

the role. However, once again this must be within a context of discussion and role outlines.

The District is committed to creating opportunities for all people to offer their skills, talents and flair. It is right that by advertising the role people are given a chance alongside others. For some people, however, it will be helpful for them to have those early discussions to help them understand the role more fully and for Ministers to become aware of any issues that could affect suitability.

This is especially important for those wanting to be a Local preacher and/or Worship Leader where early discussions are essential.

Recruitment to the role.

Different roles will require different levels of recruitment. For Lay Employment roles, the District Lay Employment Officer will be consulted at some point to ensure compliance with necessary regulations.

- ***Application***

For paid roles, this will be by the appropriate application form or method of applying as indicated in the advert.

For voluntary posts, people interested should use existing **Forms A part 1 and 2 – see District website** - to apply for the role, as this requires all the relevant information, including their personal information and reference details.

It is important to have the role outline ready for anyone interested in the role.

- ***Interviewing.***

The word “interviewing” has different interpretations in the life of the church. It is part of the process of both ensuring someone’s suitability for a role and an opportunity for them to get more information about what it is likely to involve.

All paid roles must involve a formal interview of some kind. For volunteer roles, interviews might take the form of an **informal discussion** with interested parties or a more formal session to talk through expectations and what the person may bring to the post. Whatever the format, the interview is an integral part of the recruitment and should not be compromised. Notes should be taken of the interview.

- ***References.***

These must be taken up for the role to add to the information about the person’s suitability. Ideally, references should be from those who have some experience of the applicant’s ability to work in the role and another on personal character without reference to experience. Sometimes it is not possible to gain both as some referees will

simply have known the applicant for some time as a friend and would be more likely to give a character reference which will be appropriate in these situations.

- ***Self-declaration forms.***

These must always be completed for any role. Whether or not a role is eligible for a criminal record check, one should be completed.

- ***Applying for a Disclosure and Barring Check (DBS)***

Not all roles will need the same check and some do not need any. (See Appendix (ii)). The principal of the changes set down by Government is to restrict the need for checks to those who appropriately need them and that they should be very specific to roles and activity.

The check must now always be completed on-line and lasts for a period of 5 years. No check can be applied for without the verification by the appropriate person in the church/Circuit/District who will also make a note of the date when the application has been requested and the specific nature of the application.

No criminal check will be requested unless the person has been found suitable so far in the recruitment for the role. Final suitability will be agreed once the result of the check has been received back. It is not appropriate to request such personal information if the person is not felt suitable for the role.

If someone is felt suitable, they should **NOT** start until the DBS has been returned even if others are supervising them in their role.

Ideally, it is wise to ask the applicant at this stage if they are aware of anything that might come back as part of the criminal record check. This should have been declared on the self-declaration form but it is another opportunity to ask again. The District is committed to avoiding people being made more vulnerable by being exposed by such information later on in the process.

The appointed verifier will ensure that all DBS checks are done on-line and the application has been completed appropriately and will send the DBS off keeping a record of when this was sent and the registration details.

Only those who are registered with the Connexional Safeguarding Team are allowed to verify. This role is best undertaken by a lay verifier, especially the Circuit Administrator, but the Minister is automatically a verifier by the nature of their role should they need to verify.

- ***Receiving information back from the DBS check.***

The person applying for the check is the ONLY person who will receive the certificate back. This is called a single certificate.

The appropriate DBS body for the Methodist Church will be notified whether there is relevant information (known as a “blemish”) held on the certificate ***but not the detail*** of that information.

If the certificate is clear, the body responsible for Methodist checks will notify the verifier. This is sufficient for someone to proceed to a role. The verifier does not need to see the certificate if they have been notified it is clear.

If the certificate has a blemish on it, the Connexional Safeguarding Team will be informed along with the DSO to alert them to any possible assessment that may be needed. The verifier may then be informed by either the Connexional team and / or the District Safeguarding Officer who will advise about next steps.

The applicant will have to show the certificate along with its blemish **to someone agreed by the DSO and the Superintendent** so appropriate action can be taken.

If the verifier is told by an applicant of a blemish even before they receive a formal reply or is notified by anyone else, it will be important not to wait but ask for sight of the applicant’s certificate from them and then contact the District Safeguarding Officer.

If more than 2 weeks pass after the verifier is told of a blemish, the verifier must ask the applicant if the certificate has been returned to ensure the process is working. A further period of 2 weeks should mean the certificate has been returned. Therefore, a system for tracking the progress of the checks is important.

If an applicant refuses to show the certificate or tampers with it before showing it, the District Safeguarding Officer must be informed.

The District will not allow anyone to commence a role without sight of the appropriate DBS certificate or, if necessary, the conclusion of a risk assessment because of the information contained on that certificate.

It is important to recognize that some applicants MAY NOT want to show their certificate to the verifier if there is information on it which they deem private, possibly embarrassing and/or not disclosed before. The applicant should be offered someone else suitable to see the certificate. The person seeing the certificate must then inform the verifier that it has been seen without confirming the detail BUT the DSO must be informed of the detail.

Dealing with a blemished DBS.

It is the policy of this District that before sending the details of the blemish to the Connexional Safeguarding Team, which will be required at some point, the DSO will visit the person and speak with them about the circumstances of the blemish.

This is felt to be pastoral more sensitive than so that the DSO can explain the process that needs to be followed and if necessary help them to prepare a statement to send to the Connexional Safeguarding Team about the circumstances of the concerns.

This is done to offer support at what can be a troubling and confusing time and to ensure those in this situation understand fully the process that will follow.

The Connexional Safeguarding Team will receive the information and in liaison with the DSO determine what action needs to follow. There are several options:

- Bearing in mind the statement of the applicant and the thoughts of the DSO, the applicant is cleared to undertake the role;
- More information needs to be gathered and/or assessed before a decision can be made;
- An independent risk assessment is required to determine the risks of the applicant taking this role to others, themselves and the reputation of the church in general.

This decision is then relayed to the DSO, Minister and the applicant.

- ***Making decisions about suitability for the role where there is no blemish.***

The responsibility for the decision as to suitability is done by the **Safeguarder** and comes after all the relevant information has been received, especially the DBS check. The Safeguarders will be:

- ***For Church roles - The Church Safeguarding Officer with the support of the Church Council Secretary and a Senior or Church Steward (known as the Safer Recruitment Sub-Committee) – ideally all three but any two of these can make the decision;***
- ***For Circuit roles - The Circuit Safeguarding Officer;***
- ***For District roles - The District safeguarding Officer (DSO).***

The Safeguarder will make a decision which must be ratified by the relevant meeting at the appropriate level and when this is practicable. This may have to be done by calling together members of the meetings either for extraordinary meetings or via e-mail discussions. However, the Safeguarder will have the delegated authority to make a decision on behalf of the relevant meeting if endorsement could be delayed.

No applicant will be able to commence in a role until the Safeguarder has approved them finally for the role.

Recruitment for roles where CPD already outlines how they should be implemented.

Some roles, such as stewards and local preachers, are mentioned in CPD with instruction as to how they should be appointed. However, these instructions are more general in nature and do not mean that the instructions given cannot be compatible and complimentary to the safer recruitment process. In this sense, the safer recruitment of roles ensures more of the specific detail in aligning the requirements of CPD with the way the District wishes to fully implement its policy.

Roles for young people under 18 years of age.

A DBS can be applied for anyone over 16 years of age.

However, wisdom is needed when considering roles for those under 18 and especially as to whether it will put them in a vulnerable position given their age and capacity on fulfilling their responsibilities.

No-one under 16, given they cannot apply for a DBS, should be in role which would normally warrant one or place them in an “in charge” role.

Renewing DBS checks.

These will be done every 5 years and can be done using the Update service. The Update service is in use within the Methodist Connexion.

Once in post.

Depending on the role, it is important for the person to be offered on-going support in that role and every effort made to offer guidance and advice where possible.

The person should within the first **6 months** of the role undertake any required training, especially the Foundation Module 2016 and/ or Leadership Module if appropriate to that role.

Changing roles or taking on additional roles.

If someone wishes to change role at any level within the District it cannot be assumed that the person is automatically suitable for that new role just because they are in an existing one.

The Safer Recruitment process will only be required again if:

- The new role is with a different workforce – i.e. the previous role is with children and the new one with adults or vice versa;
- The existing role is “within” the church/circuit but the new role involves outreach etc and therefore a wider context;
- The new role is simply a very different role altogether in either workforce

Portability of DBS certificates – using existing ones.

Within a church or circuit.

If someone moves to another role within the church or circuit, a further DBS check will not be required if the change or additional role is within the same workforce. One will be required, however, if it is with another workforce not previously covered on the existing DBS i.e. if someone works with children and wishes to change to adults, a further DBS check has to be made.

It is possible to work in a role at a different level within the District within the same workforce without the need for a further DBS i.e. someone moves from a church role to a circuit role but within the same workforce.

Accepting external agency DBS's

If a person needs a DBS check but has one already from another organisation or activity from outside of the Church/Circuit/District, especially because of them being in a professional role elsewhere, their existing DBS certificate is acceptable if certain conditions apply (Appendix iii).

The person needs only to give the certificate number to the verifier who will check the accuracy of it and apply the conditions required.

The Update service.

At any first application for a DBS or renewal of one, the verifier should also register the applicant for the Update service.

If the person is already registered for the Update service, the verifier will be able to access with their permission their existing certificate on-line. The same conditions as in Appendix (iii) apply.

Annual re-election of roles.

It is not expected that each year at the annual re-election of officers a new recruitment process should take place to endorse someone continuing in that role. However, this is a valuable time when each role can be reviewed to ensure it is still effective and whether any additional tasks need to be added to, or removed from, the role outline. If someone new is suggested for a role, the appropriate recruitment process should be followed.

Storage of all recruitment information.

All information should be kept within a Safer Recruitment file pertaining to that individual applicant. The information should be stored in a secure, locked and fireproof cabinet in a designated and agreed venue and be accessible only by those who have the authority to do so. As mentioned, this is best done through the role of the Circuit Administrator or Circuit Safeguarding Officer within a central storage point ideally within a Circuit office.

How to use this Policy.

This Policy will be reviewed after 12 months of implementation.

The summary of this policy is suitable for display on designated spaces (noticeboards) and should be followed without amendment.

The Circuit Safeguarding Officer will assist the church/circuit to make the Policy work and to keep a record of issues needed for the review of it.

Appendix (i)

Roles and Responsibilities

District Council – oversee the implementation of Safer Recruitment in the District and review as appropriate;

The District Safeguarding Group (DSG) – ensure the Policy is being implemented and make recommendations to District Council for changes/review;

The Local Church, Circuit, District – ensure all roles are recruited to according to this Policy and do all it can to support people once in role but also confirm and have minuted those roles they feel exempt;

The Applicant – ensure that they take all steps to ensure a complete recruitment process; complete Form A as required and provide all necessary information for DBS on-line checks; show the DBS certificate to the verifier as soon as it arrives;

The Verifier – ensure a recording system to track criminal record checks; ensure on-line applications only. Receive back the clearance letter and record it or report any blemishes to the DSO.

The Appointer – the person/s who oversees the recruitment process and ensure/s all the relevant paperwork is completed and collected together for passing to the safeguarder. This is ideally done by an appropriate person linked to the vacant role to avoid the Minister having to undertake it.

The Safeguarder – ensure all information has been correctly received and form a view as to suitability once the process is complete

The Church Council/Circuit Meeting/District Council – endorse the recommendation from the Safeguarder when possible and by whatever means is practical;

The Minister/Super – ensure the recruitment process as outlined is in place and review it through Church Council/Circuit meetings as appropriate; feedback to the DSO any aspects which need further attention or review; offer Pastoral advice and support to those involved in the process as required and necessary;

The District Safeguarding Officer – to be available for any advice or support in ensuring the recruitment process is effective; offer support to Churches and Circuits in making things work practically; specifically advise on DBS certificates which contain information (a blemish); to be the link with Methodist DBS governing body and the Connexional team;

ensure those in a Safeguarding/Safeguarder role have the necessary training to fulfil their role on an on-going basis.

Appendix (ii)

Examples of those roles which need an Enhanced/Barring check

Those who undertake regulated activity with children and vulnerable adults.

Those who work with children once a week or 4 times in 30 days

Those who work between 2 and 6am

AND

Are not supervised in that role

Who?

- Ministers including ordained presbyters and deacons;
- Those candidating for ministry;
- Probationer presbyters and deacons;
- Supernumerary Ministers and deacons involved in preaching and/or pastoral ministry;
- Youth workers that work unsupervised;
- Children's workers that work unsupervised;
- Anyone who teaches children in any capacity and is alone with the children;
- Pastoral visitors who visit children and their families without supervision (see role outlines);
- Pastoral visitors who undertake personal care with vulnerable adults and/or attend to personal affairs of vulnerable people (see role outlines);
- Those who manage workers, in a leader or co-ordinating role and who themselves act without supervision;
- Those who drive children and/or vulnerable adults alone:
- District safeguarding Officers (DSOs)

Examples of those who need an Enhanced Check only (without barring)

Those who have substantial contact with children and vulnerable adults but with some supervision

Who?

- Those working with children in the presence of their parents, carers or supervisors;
- Children's workers who might at some point be alone with a child because of a particular activity;
- Those on a rota where they might not have contact each week but less frequent;
- Worship leaders;
- Local preachers;
- Youth workers;
- Those training for local preaching and worship leading;
- Senior church and circuit stewards
- Drivers where it is not as regular as group 1;
- Pastoral Visitors who have substantial and more regular contact with children and vulnerable adults (see Role outlines in District Good Practice Guidance available on District Website);
- At least three members of Church Councils;
- All least three members of Circuit meetings;

- At least three members of District Council;
- Church and Circuit safeguarding Officers;
- Members of DSG.

Basic checks.

These are for those role which have limited contact with children and Vulnerable Adults. It is acknowledged that these checks provide only limited information and may be used for some roles which warrant information about convictions or cautions but nothing further. However, for now the District is confining itself to the use of Enhanced/Barring checks.

If a particular role is felt that it may fall into this category, advice should be sort form the District Safeguarding Officer.

Those people who do not need a check at all.

There will be some roles which do not have contact with children and vulnerable adults and therefore will not require any check of any sort. This includes people in the congregation who have no role within the life of the church.

Appendix (iii) Conditions required for Portability of DBS certificates

Within the church:

- If someone takes on a further role in the life of the church or circuit at whatever level, there does not need to be a second check so long as the new role is within the same workforce;
- If the workforce changes, a new DBS check is required;

From a body outside of the District:

- The check must be clear;
- It is less than 2 years old;
- It is for a position within the same workforce;
- The applicants identity is verified;
- The applicant is still in the post for which the check was obtained;
- A reference from the previous employer is obtained to verify the check was done and the applicant was duly appointed;
- The issue date and serial number of the check is recorded together with the applicants name and DOB as usual;
- A confidential declaration from must be completed.

Howard Smedley, DSO.
1st September 2024