

District Safeguarding Officers Annual Report
Presented to the District leadership Team on Wednesday 4th January 2023

District Safeguarding Policy for Connexional Year 2022/23

Please find the new policy attached. This is the model policy devised by Connexion, which was last updated in July 2020.

For the last few years the model policy has served as a summery policy, which was followed by a lengthy District created statement, which served to incorporate district, circuit and church safeguarding policies into one. This has not been included this year as it needs reviewing to ensure the contents are still accurate and reflect any recent changes. This review will take place once the new independent chair has taken up the role and the membership of the group has been renewed.

Independent Chair of the District Safeguarding Group (DSG).

The following is taken from the model District Safeguarding Policy:

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 DSO, the District Chair, or a close relative of those fulfilling these roles.*

In July 2022, Hilary Murden stepped down as the independent chair of the Sheffield DSG. I am pleased to report that, after a formal conversation with Rev Gill Newton and myself, Katy Spencer Madden has now taken on the role.

Written by Katy:

I graduated in 2008 with a degree in Youth Work and Ministry. I spent 5 years as a youth worker, largely based in churches, but also engaged with schools, colleges and community groups. In 2013 I began working in a school supporting children with special educational needs, before joining the Yorkshire West Methodist District as one of their District Safeguarding Officers. I spent 2 years as a District Safeguarding Officer for Yorkshire West District followed by another 3 years in Yorkshire North and East District. In July of 2022, I started a new career pathway, joining Lancashire Constabulary on a fast-track programme to become a detective. I have completed the college learning and am now on placement as a uniformed officer for four months, before I join a detective department later this year.

I have attended church throughout my life, starting off at a Baptist Church and later moving to a Methodist Church when my husband became a youth worker in a Methodist Church in 2012. I am an accredited worship leader and am currently training to be local preacher (although this has been somewhat on-hold whilst I have been adapting to a change in career).

During my time as a District Safeguarding Officer, I became enormously passionate about safeguarding being at the heart of our ministry and calling as a church to 'watch over one another in love.' A change in career hasn't deterred this passion in anyway, if anything it increases when I see the difficult situations people are in and what a difference safeguarding has on people's lives when effectively implemented.

It would be a privilege to carry out the role as the chair of the District Safeguarding Group, to use the knowledge, skills and experience I have gained to support the District and the District Safeguarding Officer in their safeguarding ministry, to make safeguarding practical, accessible and manageable for busy people in busy churches. I am aware of the responsibilities that safeguarding brings, and how overwhelming the

practicalities of safeguarding can be, however; I am convinced that if safeguarding is in the foundations of everything the District does, it paves the way for the church to truly be a refuge, a sanctuary, a safe space for all.

DSG Standards & Internal Safeguarding Audits.

Over the last few years, a team at Connexional level, have been working on the creation of a set of standards and criteria to guide the work of the DSG. These standards and criteria can be found on pages 4-7 of this report.

I can report that all the work I routinely carry out fits into the standards and demonstrates that, as a DSO, I am working hard at the right things.

The standards have however highlighted gaps in the District provision. The DSG is aware of the gaps and is working to develop new strategies etc which fulfil the standards but in a way that is practical and applicable to the Sheffield District. We are working on a 3-year action plan which will demonstrate progress is being made but in a sensible and thoughtful way.

With DGS standards in place and Connexional expectations made clear, Districts will now undergo an internal safeguarding audit.

The purpose of the audit is:

- To assess the effectiveness of safeguarding leadership in the district at church/circuit and district level.
- To provide information on how well the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance are being implemented in each district
- To extract learning from each audit so that best practice can be shared across the Connexion (including how to overcome obstacles to good practice).

The audit will be a mix of interviews and looking at relevant documents. It will also involve the circulation of an optional survey to circuit and church safeguarding officers.

Two distinct categories of interviewees will be included:

- i. Those with formal leadership roles in safeguarding at a district level, the District Chair, the District Safeguarding Officer, members of the District Safeguarding Group.
- ii. A small number of anonymised and randomly selected superintendents, presbyters and deacons.

All interviews will be by zoom. The members of the audit team will be a mix of senior and professional members of the Connexional Safeguarding Committee. There will also be a named link survivor representative from the Survivors Advisory Group for each audit who will be involved in discussion at the draft report stage. Two members of the audit team will be present for each interview, one primarily focussing on taking notes. It is expected the interview with the DSO will last 60-90 mins. The questions will be circulated in advance and are written to stimulate open conversations as much as possible. This is not an inspection process, it is about assessing where we are in terms of embedding safe culture, learning what helps and what hinders this.

The audits are expected to take place once every 4 years. The Sheffield District has been approached several times to ask if they wish to go through the audit process but I have asked that, in order to get an accurate understanding of the situation in Sheffield, we wait until the new DSG chair is in place.

Alison Hill
District Safeguarding Officer
3.1.2023

DSG STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

Standards and Criteria

Introduction

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

- 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.
- 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. These criteria are being suggested as model criteria which may need to be modified in the light of the local context.

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 briefed about legislative changes and new guidance.
- The Safeguarding data arising from Standard 1 is reviewed by the DSG.
- The DSO advises the DSG of any issues with regard to the implementation of policy or procedures.
- The DSG notes policy or procedural issues raised by the DSO and subsequently reviews any agreed action to ensure appropriate Safeguarding actions are understood and in place.
- A quality review of a sample of cases involving the DSO is undertaken on an annual basis.
- The DSG has a scrutiny function and a strategic plan for the development of practice in line with these Standards and Criteria.

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 survivor's 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 on-going 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 re-affirms 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 (e.g. 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 DSO's 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.