NORTH WEST ENGLAND
METHODIST DISTRICT

# North West England District Safeguarding Policy

## Connexional Year 2026 – 2027

**For review before September 2027**

NORTH WEST ENGLAND METHODIST DISTRICT

## Document Management

| Version | Year | Amendments Made |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 2025 – 2026 | Change of name of DSOs to ROSs<br>Formatting |
| 3 | 2025 – 2026 | Updates from District Policy Group |
| 4 | 2026 - 2027 | Annual update –<br>Minor changes and correcting grammatical errors<br>Updated links<br>Update of section 3.1 to include those nominated representatives<br>Addition of new section at 3.5 identifying the responsibilities for Circuit Superintendents |

### Other information contained herein

- Appendix 1 - Key concepts and definitions
- Appendix 2 – Local and National Governance Structure for Safeguarding
- Appendix 3 - Safeguarding Training
- Appendix 4 - Further Guidance relating to Safeguarding Training

NORTH WEST ENGLAND METHODIST DISTRICT

# District Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy for North West England District (NWED)

## *Connexional Year 2026 – 2027*

***It is to be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church (most current)***

## 1. The Policy

NWED is committed to safeguarding and protecting all children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable (henceforth referred to as *those who may be vulnerable*) and firmly believes that the needs of any person when they are vulnerable are paramount.

**1.1** NWED fully agrees with the Connexional Team statement reiterated in Creating Safer Space 2007:

> *As the people of the Methodist Church we are concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God's purpose for everyone. We seek to safeguard all members of the church community of all ages.*

**1.2** NWED acknowledges that vulnerability can affect any of us at different times. However, particular care must be given to those whose vulnerability is increased due to circumstances, disability, or diminished capacity.

**1.2.1** This increased vulnerability may be temporary or permanent, visible or invisible, but does not define or diminish a person's humanity, and we remain committed to affirming the gifts and graces of all God's people, ensuring that each individual is valued and supported.

**1.3** NWED acknowledges the serious issue of abuse affecting those who may be vulnerable, recognising that it can take many forms, including physical, emotional, sexual, financial, spiritual, discriminatory, domestic, or institutional abuse and neglect. Additionally, abuse may occur through social media or human trafficking and modern slavery.

**1.3.1** We acknowledge the profound effects such experiences can have on individuals, including their spiritual and religious development.

**1.3.2** We acknowledge our responsibility to ensure that all individuals in our care are safe, their dignity upheld, and their right to be heard respected and remain committed to supporting, listening to, and working toward healing—whether with survivors, offenders, communities, or those who care for them.

**1.3.3** Above all, we take seriously our role in promoting the welfare of all, so that each person may flourish and reach their full potential in God's grace.

**1.4** NWED commits to:

**1.4.1 RESPOND** without delay to any allegation or cause for concern that a child or vulnerable adult may have been harmed, whether in the Church or in another context. Furthermore, we commit to challenging any abuse of power by those in positions of trust.

**1.4.2** Ensure the **IMPLEMENTATION** of Connexional Safeguarding Policy, legislation, guidance and safer working practices throughout NWED.

**1.4.3** The **PROVISION** of support, advice, and training for both lay and ordained individuals, ensuring they are informed, confident, and equipped to safeguard and promote the welfare of all who may be vulnerable and affirm the role of the District Safeguarding Group (DSG).

**1.4.4 AFFIRM** and give thanks for the work of individuals across NWED who support those who may be vulnerable, recognising that safeguarding is a shared responsibility.

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this safeguarding policy is to ensure:

**2.1 Clarity in Roles and Responsibilities** – Everyone within NWED understands their role in safeguarding and protecting those who may be vulnerable, including those we interact with, those participating in church activities, and those using our premises.

**2.2 Promotion of Good Practice** – We actively promote and facilitate good practice to ensure appropriate and timely action is taken to safeguard the wellbeing of all who may be vulnerable.

**2.3 Consistency in Safeguarding Procedures** – Robust and consistent safeguarding procedures are in place across the churches, circuits and church communities of NWED.

**2.4 Safe Recruitment and Accountability** – Office holders, employees and volunteers are recruited safely, properly trained for their roles, and held accountable for their activities.

**2.5 Empowerment of Survivors** – Those who have experienced abuse are accepted, empowered, and supported in maintaining control over their lives and making informed choices, free from coercion.

**2.6 Accountability of those who may pose a risk to others** – Individuals who may pose a risk to others are held accountable for their actions and supported and challenged in their engagement with church communities where appropriate through risk assessment and risk management processes.

**2.7** NWED is committed to learning from safeguarding concerns, incidents, reviews, audits and feedback in order to continuously improve safeguarding practice, culture and governance across the District.

# 3. Roles and responsibilities

## 3.1 District Chair

The District Chair, Deputy Chair or Secretary of the Administration & Compliance Hub attends DSG and, on behalf of NWED, should:

**3.1.1** Support the work of the ROSs by ensuring adequate administrative provision for the delivery of Advanced Safeguarding Module training across the district.

**3.1.2** Ensure that Superintendent Ministers are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and have access to appropriate skills training opportunities, facilitated through the Regional Safeguarding Officers (*ROSs*).

**3.1.3** Draw upon the expertise and advice of the ROSs, DSG, and, when appropriate, Connexional Team personnel.

**3.1.4** Ensure that all circuits, churches, and church communities establish and implement safeguarding policies, guided by the ROSs.

**3.1.5** Support the ROSs and DSG by appointing an independent chair and ensuring the group is equipped to promptly process reports of incidents and allegations in line with best practices.

**3.1.6** Guarantee the implementation of the district safeguarding policy at all district meetings and events.

**3.1.7** Require each Superintendent to complete, or delegate responsibility for completing, an audit/monitoring form, verifying that safeguarding policy requirements are met, including that safeguarding policies are in place across circuits, churches, and communities and have been reviewed annually.

**3.1.8** Ensure that each Superintendent submits a copy of the circuit audit of churches to the DST, along with the identified action plan, following the first Circuit Meeting of each Connexional year. This data will inform the DSG's report to the District Policy Committee.

**3.1.9** The District Chair, or their delegated representative, is responsible for ensuring the timely completion and renewal of DBS checks for all Circuit Superintendents within the District ensuring that there should be no period during which a DBS is lapsed.

**3.1.10** In accordance with the requirements of Methodist Conference, any Superintendent whose DBS renewal is overdue must not undertake duties requiring DBS clearance until compliance has been achieved.

**3.1.11** Similarly, and in accordance with the requirements of Methodist Conference, any Superintendent whose Advanced Safeguarding Module update is overdue must not undertake duties until compliance has been achieved.

## 3.2 Independent Chair of the DSG

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 establish a group to oversee safeguarding work with children and vulnerable adults. Furthermore, each district must appoint an Independent Chair[1] who should:

**3.2.1** Demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting the ROSs.

**3.2.2** Be well-respected within the church and safeguarding community.

**3.2.3** Serve as a critical friend, offering constructive challenge and ensuring robust accountability for the district where necessary.

*This individual must not hold the role of ROS, District Chair, Secretary of the Administration & Compliance Hub, or Deputy Chair, nor be a close relative of those fulfilling these positions.*

## 3.3 District Safeguarding Group

The District Safeguarding Group (*DSG*) is committed to promoting the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults across the district, in accordance with its agreed Terms of Reference (*TORs*). This responsibility includes ensuring that:

**3.3.1** The DSG is independently chaired, its business managed effectively, and its membership includes ordained and lay individuals with safeguarding experience and/or professional expertise from across all four Mission Areas.

**3.3.2** The group provides ongoing support and guidance to the ROSs.

**3.3.3** Any incidents or allegations are appropriately followed up or referred as necessary, with the support of the District Chair.

*Responsibility remains with the District Chair, Superintendent Minister or person in pastoral charge, as appropriate.*

**3.3.4** The DSG provides timely responses to requests for help, advice, information, and training related to safeguarding.

**3.3.5** The DSG ensures programmes to promote awareness, training, and good safeguarding practices are made available**.**

**3.3.6** Contact details for safeguarding support are publicly promoted to ensure accessibility.

**3.3.7** District and Connexional safeguarding policies and guidance are effectively implemented.

**3.3.8** The Chair, Superintendents and District Policy Committee are regularly updated on changes to safeguarding policy, practice, and guidance.

[1] conf2012-pc-20-presidents-inquiry-safeguarding.doc (live.com)

**3.3.9** Mission Area Leads, with the aligned ROS, ensure that annual meetings are organised to facilitate support and information-sharing on safeguarding matters with Superintendents, circuit and church safeguarding officers, other safeguarding leads, and safeguarding trainers.

**3.3.10** The DSG presents an annual report to the District Policy Committee/Synod to provide transparency and accountability.

**3.3.11** The DSG undertakes collaborative work with other safeguarding stakeholders, including Connexional, regional, and ecumenical partners, uniformed organisations, and professional colleagues.

## 3.4 Regional Officers for Safeguarding

The Regional Officers for Safeguarding (ROSs) play a vital role within NWED and are responsible for:

**3.4.1** Overseeing church, circuit, and district compliance with the safeguarding procedures of the Methodist Church.

**3.4.2** Being accessible to church communities for all safeguarding issues and actively overseeing situations of concern.

**3.4.3** Liaising appropriately with local authority officers, the police, and ecumenical colleagues as needed.

**3.4.4** Conducting safeguarding risk assessments, including those within the safeguarding contract process, in order to support the implementation of safeguarding contracts and the establishment of suitable Monitoring and Support Groups.

**3.4.5** Leading work on individual cases within the district, including representing the Church in external meetings.

**3.4.6** Discussing cases within supervision with the relevant Regional Safeguarding Manager (RSM).

**3.4.7** Understanding the unique challenges faced by faith communities as they seek to ensure their places of worship are safe environments for any vulnerable individual.

**3.4.8** Remaining committed to continuous professional development and supporting safeguarding training opportunities throughout the district.

## 3.5 Circuit Superintendents

As well as those requirements placed upon them by the District Chair within paragraphs 3.1.2, 3.1.7 and 3.1.8 Superintendents are responsible for:

**3.5.1** It is the responsibility of Circuit Superintendents to ensure the timely completion and renewal of DBS checks for ministers within their Circuit, ensuring that there should be no period during which a DBS is lapsed.

**3.5.2** In accordance with the requirements of Methodist Conference, any minister whose DBS renewal is overdue must not undertake duties requiring DBS clearance until compliance has been achieved.

**3.5.3** Similarly, and in accordance with the requirements of Methodist Conference, any Superintendent whose Advanced Safeguarding Module update is overdue must not undertake duties until compliance has been achieved.

**3.5.4** This is also the case for those ministers whose Advanced Safeguarding Module Training has not been updated within the specified 4-year interval.

**3.5.5** As the responsible officer for ensuring the establishment of circuit preaching plans[2] Circuit Superintendents must ensure that anyone named on the Circuit Plan (whether Methodist and non-Methodist preachers) meet the safeguarding expectations as laid down in NWED guidance[3].

## 3.6 Circuit meetings

**3.6.1** It is the responsibility of each circuit meeting to appoint a circuit safeguarding officer ensuring there are no gaps in this critical provision.

**3.6.2** It is not appropriate for any minister to assume this role in the absence of an appointed officer.

**3.6.3** If the position cannot be immediately filled, the responsibility will automatically defer to the Circuit Stewards until a suitable individual is appointed.

**3.6.4** Safeguarding must be a substantive agenda item at every circuit meeting.

## 3.6 Church councils

**3.6.1** It is the responsibility of each church council to appoint a church safeguarding officer ensuring there are no gaps in this critical provision.

**3.6.2** It is not appropriate for any minister to assume this role in the absence of an appointed officer.

**3.6.3** If the position cannot be immediately filled, it may be necessary to explore alternative arrangements, such as support from other churches. However, in the interim, responsibility will automatically defer to the Church Stewards until a suitable individual is appointed.

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[2] Superintendents_Handbook_2026_Uk7ASsP.pdf p57
Local arrangement services - The Methodist Church

[3] **Safeguarding guidance – expectations of those preaching within acts of worship in a Methodist setting (*Methodist and non-Methodist preachers*)** Guidance-for-Churches-and-Circuits-on-Visiting-Speakers-and-Preachers.docx

**3.6.4** Safeguarding must be a substantive agenda item at every church council meeting.

## 4 Local Definitions

**4.1 Active preaching ministry** - Active preaching ministry involves preaching at least once a quarter on the circuit plan, or in other circumstances (such as with ecumenical partners or filling in for 'local arrangement services').

**4.2 Active pastoral ministry** - Active pastoral ministry involves providing support and care to individuals on behalf of the Methodist Church, typically when assigned by a minister or pastoral committee. Responsibilities may include:

**4.2.1** Maintaining regular contact with a designated group of individuals, either by phone or in person.

**4.2.2** Attending a worship or social event at least once per quarter in a pastoral capacity, whether alone or alongside others.

**4.2.3** Carrying out occasional visits on behalf of the Church, including to homes, hospitals, or residential care facilities.

**4.2.4** Leading funerals or other pastoral offices on behalf of the Church at least once a quarter.

**4.2.5** Where a minister is no longer active the formal exemption form should be completed:

**ministerial exemption from dbs-information sheet and application-june 2023.pdf (methodist.org.uk)**

**4.3 Worship Leader *as required to complete Advanced Module Safeguarding Training***

**4.3.1** Worship Leaders who have been formally appointed by the Church Council and are therefore fully accountable for their responsibilities, including adhering to safeguarding obligations.

**4.3.2** Other individuals who lead worship but have not been formally appointed and instead assist in local arrangement services hold a different position. However, if they lead worship more than once per quarter and are taking overall responsibility for own arrangement services or assuming substantial leadership roles then the Church Council should actively consider formal appointment for accountability and consistency.

**4.4 DBS for Trustees of all levels of church meetings**

**4.4.1** Trustees serving on the governing body of charities that work with children and vulnerable adults are eligible to apply for an enhanced DBS check, provided the charity delivers regulated activities for these groups.

**4.4.2** Trustees should comply with Charity Commission guidance and Methodist Church requirements regarding safer recruitment and eligibility.

**4.4.3** The Methodist Church requires that trustees undertake an enhanced DBS check where their role involves regulated activity for children and/or vulnerable adults.

**4.4.4** All trustees are required to complete the Trustee Eligibility Form annually to maintain compliance.

**Trustee_Declaration_and_Eligibility_form_2_Jan_2026.pdf**

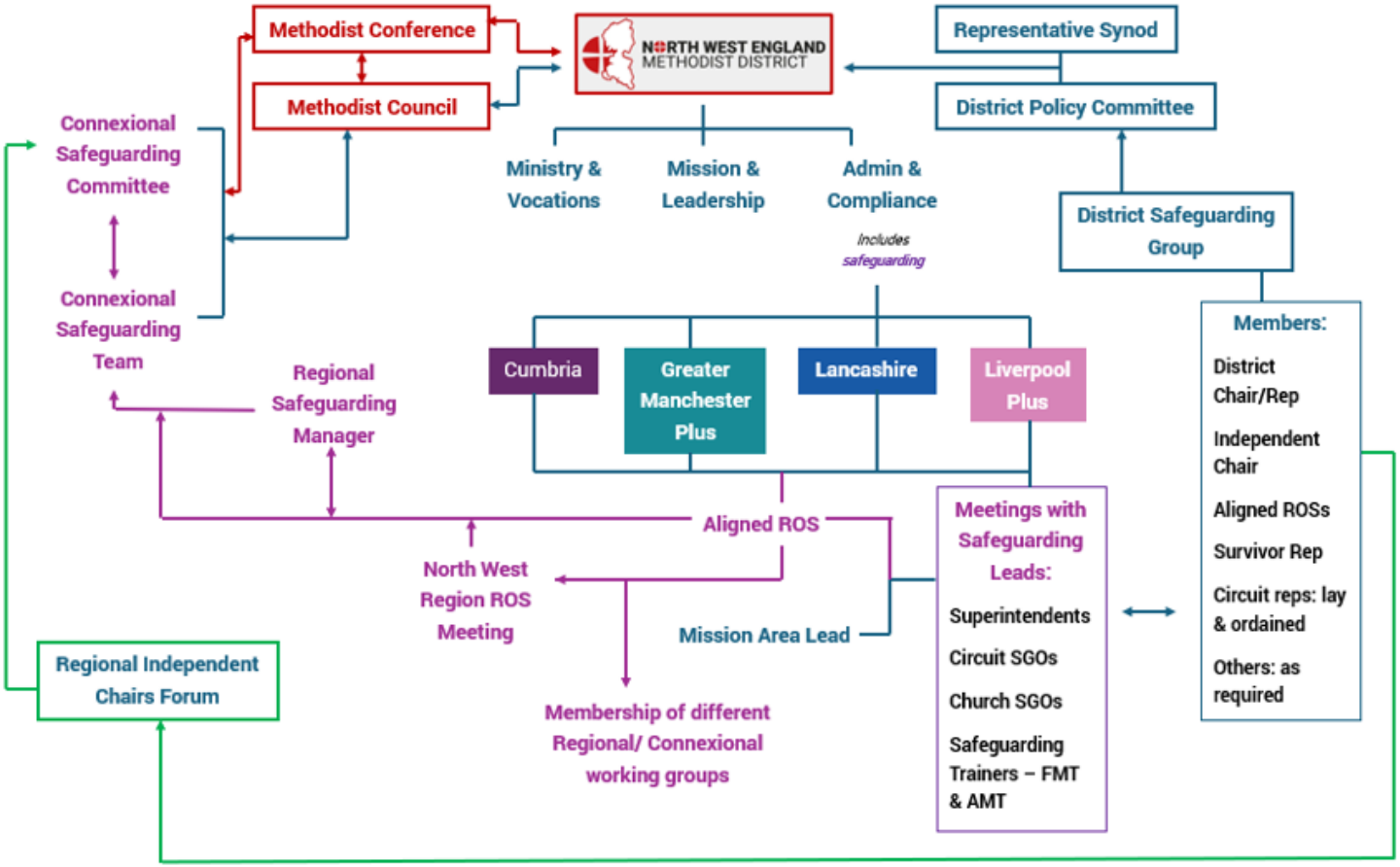
| | |
|---|---|
| **Signed:**<br>***District Chair/ nominated representative*** | |
| **Print name:** | Revd David Newlove |
| **Dated:** | 10th September 2026 |
| *Date for review: September 2027* | |

# Appendix 1

## Key concepts and definitions

- **A child** is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their eighteenth birthday. Their status as a child remains unchanged regardless of circumstances, including living independently, being in further education, serving in the armed forces, being hospitalised, or being in custody. Their entitlement to services and protection remains fully intact.
- **Vulnerable adult** is any adult who has needs for care and support and who may be unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect or exploitation. (*Thirtyone:Eight*).
- **Safeguarding and protecting** involves protecting children and vulnerable adults from maltreatment, preventing impairment to their health, and ensuring safe and effective care.
- **Adult/child protection** is a fundamental aspect of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This involves proactive efforts to protect those who may be suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, whether caused deliberately, unintentionally, or through neglect. Such harm may result from various forms of abuse, including but not limited to:
    - neglect
    - sexual exploitation
    - human trafficking
    - modern slavery
    - financial abuse
    - institutional abuse
- **Abuse and neglect:**
    - can occur in families, communities, or institutional settings
    - may be perpetrated by known individuals—such as caregivers or community members—or by strangers.
    - may be inflicted by adults or children, and by both males and females.
    - can manifest as direct harm or as a failure to intervene and prevent harm.

## Appendix 2 – Local and National Governance Structure for Safeguarding



# Appendix 3 – Safeguarding training

Safeguarding training must be completed by ministers, staff and volunteers as laid down as per [SafeguardingTraining - The Methodist Church]

In May 2026 the guidance was updated as below. Therefore, the training requirements shown below reflect Connexional guidance in force at the date of approval of this policy. Where Connexional guidance changes, the most recent guidance shall take precedence.

## What level of safeguarding training is needed?

Below is a list of key roles within the church community.

The training must be renewed every four years; this only applies to the highest level of safeguarding training required.

Everyone must attend Foundation Module once. However, for roles that then require completion of the Advanced Module, this must be completed within 6 months of starting in the applicable role. Renewing training will then only be at the higher, Advanced Module level, until the individual is no longer in an applicable role, when training requirements will be reviewed.

### Recognition of Church of England and URC Training

The Methodist Church recognises the Church of England and United Reformed Church (URC) safeguarding training as equivalent to the Foundation and Advanced Modules. Therefore, those who have undertaken the Church of England or URC courses at the appropriate level will have satisfied attendance requirements listed above for the Methodist Church.

| Those roles requiring only Foundation Level |
|---|
| Lay employees and volunteer workers with pastoral responsibility |
| Pastoral visitors |
| Anyone working in activities focused on adults who are vulnerable |
| Choir/music group/drama leaders where there are children or vulnerable adults in the group |
| District staff especially Policy Committee members, complaints and discipline mediators, District Resolutions Officers |
| Church stewards |
| Young Leaders (ages 16-18) |
| Church Trustees who do not fall into any of the above groups |

| Those roles then requiring Advanced Level | Comments |
|---|---|
| Presbyters or deacons with an active preaching, chaplaincy or pastoral ministry (*including supernumerary ministers unless they have an Exemption*). | Supernumerary ministers who do not have an active preaching or pastoral ministry are warmly invited to both or either. |
| Pre-ordination students and probationers. | They should enrol and complete both Modules at the earliest opportunity. after commencing the training. Both must be completed by the end of the second year of training. |
| Those with responsibility for delivering ministerial supervision. | Either training or trained and accredited under the Methodist Church Reflective Supervision Policy 2021-26. |
| Local Preachers | They should enrol and complete both Modules at the earliest opportunity after receiving a Note to Preach. Both must be completed by the end of the second year of training or before their second interview on trial, whichever occurs first. |
| Worship Leaders | They should enrol and complete both Modules at the earliest opportunity after commencing the training. Both must be completed by the end of the second year of training or before their appointment by Church Council, whichever occurs first. |
| Circuit stewards<br>Regional Officers for Safeguarding (ROS)<br>Circuit Safeguarding Officers<br>Church Safeguarding Officers<br>Members of the Connexional Council<br>Members of the Connexional Safeguarding Committee<br>Members of District Safeguarding Groups | |

Members of Connexional Complaint Panels, Discipline Committees, Pastoral and Appeals Committees

Members of District Policy Committee

Members of Monitoring and Support Groups

Evangelism / Mission Enabler

Coaches through God For All provision

Those in leadership roles involving pioneering, New Places for New People (NPNP), Fresh Expressions or evangelism

Lay Pastors, lay employees and volunteer workers who are appointed to exercise pastoral leadership within a local church

Those in paid employment or a voluntary role which includes leadership within the Methodist Church, involving direct work with children, young people or vulnerable adults

Methodist / Connexionally employed teaching staff at MCIB learning institutions

Mentors for the Young Adult Mission Placement Scheme

Chairs of Circuit Invitation Committees

Members of Connexional Complaint Panels, Discipline Committees, Pastoral and Appeals Committees

Members of Monitoring and Support Groups

Those who deliver Foundation and/or Advanced Module training

**This list is the minimum requirement – churches can use their discretion to include other groups where they feel that is appropriate.**

### Warmly invited to Foundation Module but not mandatory

- Church/Circuit meeting secretaries
- Property stewards and other key holders
- Any other group leaders within the church, who may have adults who are vulnerable within their group
- Other District and Connexional staff
- Caretakers
- Church/Circuit/District administrators
- Other teaching staff at Methodist Church Training Institutions
- Leaders of other organisations, working with children or vulnerable adults, who use church premises
- Other Choir/music group/drama leaders

## Appendix 4 - Further Guidance relating to Safeguarding Training

- People who have received safeguarding training in other roles (*e.g. as a teacher or police officer*) still need to attend because the training is specific to the church context. Their attendance is also valuable because of the expertise they can share with other attendees.
- A new office holder will be required to complete the Foundation Module successfully within six months of taking up such a post and subsequently, the Advanced Module as required.
- There is a requirement to renew training every four years but only at the highest level of safeguarding training undertaken. If the highest level of training is Foundation Module, then a repeat of this module will be necessary after four years.
- The DSG requires that each Circuit offer the Foundation Module at least once every six months, although this can be done in collaboration with other Circuits.
- Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Safeguarding Trainers must ensure Privacy Notices[4] are available to all attendees to explain why and how the Methodist Church will process their data. A signed consent form is not required as attendance records are processed in accordance with the Methodist Church Privacy Notice and relevant data protection legislation.

[4] Safeguarding Training Participants Privacy Notice (methodist.org.uk)