

Safeguarding:

Audit Checks

Detailed guidance for churches

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Introduction: Why we need audit checks

The Church is one place in British society where five different groups of people have a rightful place:

- children and young people
- adults who may be vulnerable
- those who have experienced abuse
- those who may be a risk to others
- church leaders, staff and volunteers

It is therefore essential to ensure arrangements reflect the importance of safeguarding in all of these groups and communities.

In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis placed on safeguarding within a wide variety of organisations, and this has seen growth in organisations and churches held accountable for their activities, processes and reporting structures.

Transparency and accountability are key to best safeguarding practice; the District is committed to ensure London achieves this throughout all layers of the Methodist Church and that consistency is achieved across all churches and circuits.

Auditing is an essential part of good safeguarding policy, because the risks of having an ineffective policy are considerable, the whole process can be complex, and requires significant effort to get right. Without regular auditing of procedure, it can be difficult to establish whether safeguarding policy is working. Quality assurance encourages safeguarding to be embedded into everyday life, creating good safeguarding habits.

Methodist Policies

Each circuit is required to annually complete an audit confirming policies are in place in each circuit and church and that these have been annually reviewed. These are to be shared with the District Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and District Safeguarding Group (DSG) for scrutiny.

The 'Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church in Britain' states it is committed to promoting a safer environment and culture and in part, quality assurance processes will achieve this.

To date, there have been significant gaps in audits completed and returned to the District.

Past Cases Review

Having robust quality assurance processes in place, enables the Methodist Church to address the key themes identified as part of the Past Cases Review (Read more [HERE](#)):

- Quality assurance assesses what and how information is being shared and to who. The District can promote and inform churches and circuits on how to achieve this, leading to fewer safeguarding issues not being shared or responded to as they should be (Theme 5)
- Quality assurance assesses recording practices, enabling the District to promote and inform churches and circuits on how to achieve consistency, accountability and transparency (Theme 8)
- Quality assurance addresses church relationships with other agencies and encourages fostering positive working relationships, this in turn grows our knowledge and understanding of the breadth of safeguarding themes, whilst also developing a network of support (Theme 9)

Strategic Plan

The Safeguarding Strategic Plan 2020-2025 outlines the vision: **London District to be at the forefront of safeguarding, enabling all church communities to feel safe from harm.**

Our Focus areas for the 2020-2025 period include Quality Assurance:

- Objective 4 - Ensure quality assurance audits are completed annually (self-auditing by each church with tri-annual District review)

The following objectives will also form part of the audit process:

- Objective 5 – Ensure GDPR compliance
- Objective 6 – Ensure consistent recording
- Objective 7 – Setting high standards

Increasing our quality assurance processes assists us to meet these objectives and elevate safeguarding, bringing consistency throughout the District.

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)

Due to serious concerns that some institutions had failed and were continuing to fail to protect children from sexual abuse, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was created. IICSA launched fifteen investigations into a wide variety of organisations; this includes the Roman Catholic Church, Church of England, and recently the Methodist Church under the umbrella of 'Child protection in religious organisations and settings'. (Read more [HERE](#)).

As of April 2021, the Methodist Church awaits the final report. However, reviewing reports from the Roman Catholic Church and Church of England, along with our own self-reflection, enables the Methodist Church to anticipate recommendations for areas to improve upon. One of these areas includes the independent oversight, scrutiny and auditing of safeguarding practices. In the future, there is a possibility for external scrutiny to take place with some regularity. With this in mind, the District will be in a better position to respond, demonstrating high, consistent safeguarding standards.

The quality assurance vision

By instigating the auditing process, the District aims to take the first steps into demonstrating transparency and accountability with a view to improving safeguarding across our church communities.

The District has recruited an Assistant District Safeguarding Officer (ADSO) who will focus on Quality Assurance and the audit process. The ADSO will help guide churches and circuits, not only to complete assessments, but also to nurture and assist in implementing better safeguarding practices where shortcomings are identified through audit reviews.

The District is keen to understand the individual characteristics and qualities for each church. Therefore, a 'tick box' or 'yes/no' format of questioning will not provide the qualitative information required in order to truly ensure safeguarding is understood and embedded into everyday life of the church.

The vision for quality assurance within the District will therefore follow a three-year cycle, as outlined in the stages below:

Stage 1 – Full Audit

Each church answers a series of questions contained within the 'Full Audit' spreadsheet. This provides the opportunity to reflect upon the practices within the church, identify areas for improvement and celebrate areas working well.

Where areas for improvement are identified, the church will develop an action plan to target these areas.

The full audit spreadsheet and handbook will, in the first instance, be sent to Superintendents and circuit safeguarding officers, who will distribute to church safeguarding officers or others identified by the church/circuit for completion.

Church safeguarding officers, are then asked to return the completed spreadsheet to their circuit safeguarding officers for review. All churches and circuits are to forward the completed spreadsheet and policy to the ADSO, this can be completed by the church themselves, or the circuit safeguarding officers. The circuit safeguarding officer should maintain oversight for this process and assist churches in reviewing and implementing actions identified. Circuits and role holders within churches are encouraged to work together,

rather than one person taking sole responsibility. Discussions in Church Council/Circuit Meetings are encouraged to help facilitate this process and trustees are reminded of their responsibilities around safeguarding.

Stage 2 – ADSO Meets Circuits

Once audits have been reviewed by the ADSO, they will then meet with circuits. This will be prioritised in order of those identified as needing most support first. Prioritisation will be based upon responses within the Full Audit spreadsheet, prior District knowledge and those circuits where there are concerns over levels of safeguarding engagement.

The ADSO will request to meet various role holders within the Circuit:

- Church Safeguarding Officers (or the person fulfilling these duties)
- Circuit Safeguarding Officers
- Ministers
- Superintendents
- Others, who the ADSO identifies or those who request to speak with the ADSO as part of the auditing process.

These meetings are an opportunity for the ADSO to discuss the audit form responses and to review supporting evidence to corroborate the information supplied. The ADSO will request to review areas, such as, records relating to cases, recruitment, DBS processes or training. This meeting will enable the District to be able to offer clarity on best practice and provide support to empower those at a local level.

Due to the volume of churches and audits to be reviewed, there may be a delay between submitting the form and the ADSO meeting circuits. This is an opportunity for churches to implement actions identified.

On meeting with churches, the ADSO will re-score churches based on lack of supporting evidence or the actions implemented improving safeguarding standards.

Stage 3 – Annual Review 1

Churches will review their safeguarding practices. The Full Audit form completed in Stage 1 is to be referred to, with churches confirming if they are still achieving the same levels of safeguarding.

Churches will be asked to review their previous scoring and evidence. Churches will identify areas for improvement or that have declined over the year, setting an action plan to address these factors. They will also be able to re-score for areas approved upon.

Annual reviews are to be returned for reflection by the ADSO.

The District will identify circuits in most need of support and hold meetings. The ADSO will use similar criteria for prioritisation as in Stage 2.

Stage 4 – Annual Review 2

This will follow the same process as Stage 3.

Estimated timeframes

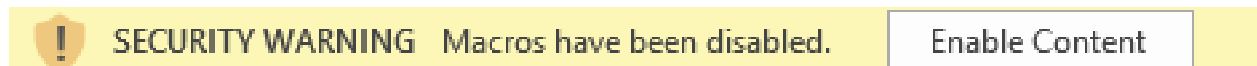
Year 1	05/04/21-30/05/21	8 weeks	Churches to complete 'Full Audit'
Year 1	31/05/21-04/07/21	5 weeks	ADSO reviews 'Full Audits'
Year 1	05/07/21-05/12/21	22 weeks	ADSO meets wave 1 circuits
Year 2	10/01/22-10/04/22	13 weeks	ADSO meets wave 2 circuits
Year 2	11/04/22-22/05/22	6 weeks	Churches to complete annual audit review ADSO meets wave 3 circuits
Year 2	23/05/22-03/07/22	6 weeks	ADSO reviews annual audit reviews completed by churches ADSO wave 3 meetings continue
Year 2	04/07/22-04/12/22	22 weeks	ADSO meets wave 1 circuits
Year 2	09/01/23-09/04/23	13 weeks	ADSO meets wave 2 circuits
Year 3	10/04/23-21/05/23	6 weeks	Churches to complete annual audit review ADSO meets wave 3 circuits
Year 3	22/05/23-02/07/23	6 weeks	ADSO reviews annual audit reviews completed by churches ADSO wave 3 meetings continue
Year 3	03/07/23-03/12/23	22 weeks	ADSO meets wave 1 circuits
Year 4	08/01/24-07/04/24	13 weeks	ADSO meets wave 2 circuits
Year 4	08/04/24-19/05/24	6 weeks	Churches to complete 'Full Audit' ADSO meets wave 3 circuits

Please note: The District will endeavour to keep to the timetable and stages outlined above. However, the impending IICSA report, Connexional requirements and the natural reactive nature in safeguarding may affect this plan. We will publicise any significant changes of auditing plans.

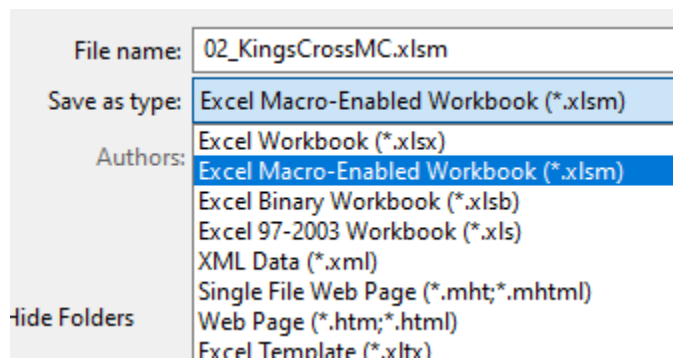
What do I need to do? A step-by-step guide

Full Audit – Opening and Saving

1. Open the Excel spreadsheet named 'Full Audit 2021'.
2. At the top of the screen, below the tool bar ribbon, you will see a security warning, shown below. You will need to click on the button that states 'Enable Content'.



3. In the 'File' menu, click 'Save As', and select the location you'd like to save the file.
4. Change the file name to your circuit number, underscore, church name, i.e. Kings Cross Methodist Church would be saved as: **02_KingsCrossMC**
5. When saving the file, you will need to ensure you select the correct dropdown option in 'Save as type': **Excel Macro-Enabled Workbook (*.xlsm)**



6. If you need to save, close and then re-open the file at a later date, the 'Enable Content' security warning may reappear. It is important to click 'Enable Content' whenever this appears.

Full Audit – Completing and moving around the form

1. Following the 'Opening and Saving' section above, you will see a series of tabs across the base of the screen. The first tab is an introductory page outlining the document.

Introduction	Church Details	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Action Plan	Score Summary
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Safeguarding Audit

Introduction

This self-assessment tool is made up of 8 worksheets covering a range of safeguarding issues.

Each worksheet focuses on a separate theme and outlines how churches can evidence if the standard has been **met**, **partly met** or **not met**.

Click on each tab, where you can enter your score against each of the statements and are required to provide further details and evidence to support your scrutiny.

The 8 themes are made up of the following:

1. Policies and Information	5. Groups
2. Recruitment	6. Safeguarding Concerns
3. Training and Growing Knowledge	7. Record Keeping
4. Leadership and Confidence	8. Support for Safeguarding Officers

After you have completed your scoring please review the 'Score Summary' to see an evaluation of your responses and where appropriate review the 'Action Plan' to see your generated action plan.

2. Click on the 'Church Details' tab. Please do not leave any box blank.

Church Details

Full name	
Role	
Email	
Telephone	
Circuit name	
Church name	
Date completed	
Date of District review	To be completed by the District

If you have queries relating to the use of this form, please contact the ADSO / DSO:

London District of the Methodist Church
Methodist Central Hall,
Storey's Gate,
SW1H 9NH

www.methodistlondon.org.uk

ADSO
Karen Stapley
07949 325 531
karen@methodistlondon.org.uk

DSO
Becky Skinner
07960 877 740
safeguarding@methodistlondon.org.uk

Remember to fill in the blanks

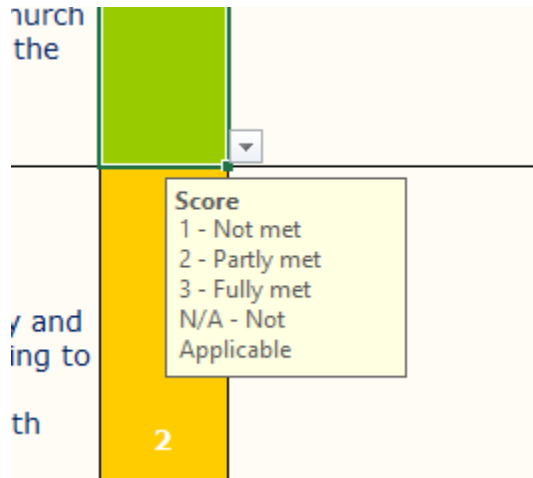
3. Complete tabs 1-8, working through each one.
 a. Read the numbered statements on the left.

1. Policies and Information				
Please read the statements below and decide if your church has				Rating
	1. Not met	2. Partly met	3. Fully met	
1.0 A clear agreed safeguarding policy is in place within the church.	There is no safeguarding policy in place within the church.	You're in the process of putting together a safeguarding policy. There is a policy in place, but is has not been updated, reviewed or agreed at Church Council within the last 12 months.	A clear safeguarding policy is in place and a copy provided to the District. The policy is in date and agreed at Church Council within the last year. The policy is displayed on the church noticeboard and, if applicable, the church website. The policy contains the Church SO's name and contact details. The policy, as a minimum, contains all the information included in the 'Model Church Safeguarding Policy' as provided on the Methodist website.	Score 1 - N 2 - F 3 - F N/A App
1.1 Staff are made aware of the policy and the importance of listening to children, young people and vulnerable adults.	Staff are not aware of the policy or the importance of listening to children, young people and vulnerable adults.	You're in the process of putting together a safeguarding policy. There is a policy in place, but is has not been updated, reviewed or agreed at Church Council within the last 12 months.	Staff read and understand the policy and understand the importance of listening to CYP and VA. Staff keep themselves up to date with changes in the policy, or the church notifies staff when updates are made. Staff attend FM / AM training which highlights the safeguarding policy.	

- b. Using the **"NOT MET"**, **"PARTIALLY MET"** and the **"FULLY MET"** boxes for guidance, decide which box best fits your church arrangements for each statement. Please note; these are only a guide to assist you.

	1. Not met	2. Partly met	3. Fully met	F
	There is no safeguarding policy in place within the church.	You're in the process of putting together a safeguarding policy. There is a policy in place, but is has not been updated, reviewed or agreed at Church Council within the last 12 months.	A clear safeguarding policy is in place and a copy provided to the District. The policy is in date and agreed at Church Council within the last year. The policy is displayed on the church noticeboard and, if applicable, the church website. The policy contains the Church SO's name and contact details. The policy, as a minimum, contains all the information included in the 'Model Church Safeguarding Policy' as provided on the Methodist website. LINK TO MODEL POLICY	

- c. Click on the **Rating** column of the statement you are working on and a drop box will appear, click on the relevant number for your statement. It will auto fill for you.
 Alternatively, you can simply type the number '1', '2', '3' or 'N/A' in the box.



- d. As you move across the row. There is a box to type in how your church has **"FULLY MET"** or **"PARTIALLY MET"** a rating, or how this statement is not applicable to your church.
 All churches should be able to answer the questions throughout the audit, but should there be the rare question that is not applicable, give an extensive reason why.

<p>If your rating is 'Fully met' or 'Partly met', please provide detailed evidence of how your church is meeting this statement</p>	<p>If your rating is "N/A", please provide full details as to why this statement is not applicable to your Church</p>
<p>Write your evidence or reasoning here.</p>	<p>Write your reasoning here.</p>

- e. If your answer to the rating is **"NOT MET"** or **"PARTIALLY MET"**, complete the last box in the row showing how this will be addressed. Remember to include 'Action' to be taken, the 'Lead person' responsible for the action and 'Date by' for when you hope to achieve the action.

ly	<p>If your rating is "N/A", please provide full details as to why this statement is not applicable to your Church</p>	<p>If your rating is 'Not met' or 'Partly met' please provide details on plans in place to meet or improve current standards</p>
	<p>Write your reasoning here.</p>	<p>Action:</p> <p>Lead person:</p> <p>Date by:</p>

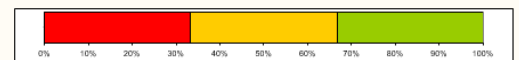
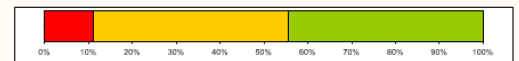
- f. Complete all the rows. Once you have finished sheet 1, move to sheet 2. Work your way through sheets / tabs 1-8.

4. Sheets named 'Action Plan' and 'Score Summary' automatically fill. After you have completed sheets 1-8, please review the 'Score Summary' to see an evaluation of your responses. You can view the 'Action Plan' to see and print your generated action plan. You can also input the date actions have been completed.

Score Summary

Totals for each area

Standard	No of questions	Not met	Partly met	Fully met	N/A	Unanswered
1. Policies and Information	9	1	4	4	0	0
2. Recruitment	6	2	2	2	0	0



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Question

Action Plan Summary

Church: Somewhere Church

Date: 19/03/2021

Question	Actions transferred from each sheet to Agency Action Tracker		Date task completed
1.0	Action: Lead person: Date by:	Write a policy, Bertie Basset to complete, by 01/04/2021.	13/04/2021
1.1	Action: Lead person: Date by:	0	

Once your audit is complete, save the spreadsheet and email it to the circuit safeguarding officer and ADSO, whose contact details are in the Introduction section of the spreadsheet and at the end of this document.

The ADSO will then reply to acknowledge receipt and be in contact with your circuit at a later date to arrange a meeting.

Let us celebrate

Let us celebrate the great people and work in our churches and circuits.

The District would like to celebrate someone or a team of people who have made an outstanding contribution in some way. It may be helping an individual, or charitable work or something within the family of the church. Please put the details in statement 8.4.

The District would also like to identify any best practice that already exists within a church or circuit. Where appropriate, this will be shared with other churches to enhance and strengthen their safeguarding procedures. Please put your contribution in statement 8.5.

The 'Gold Standard'

Each year, churches with the highest quality safeguarding standards will be recognised by receiving 'Gold Standard' or Silver Standard'. These churches, will receive a certificate to display, including a format for online use. Those yet to achieve the highest of standards will be guided by the ADSO in how to make the appropriate changes.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who needs to complete the audit forms?

Ideally, the Church Safeguarding Officer should complete the audit form, with assistance and oversight from the Circuit Safeguarding Officer.

Due to the differences between churches and the breadth of questions asked, it may be helpful for the person completing the form to seek assistance from others within their church or circuit.

For example, not all church safeguarding officers hold records relating to DBS checks, they therefore may not be best placed to answer questions related to this topic and will need to gather information from other sources.

Can I include any confidential information? i.e. provide names or addresses.

No. Do not include ANY information, which may identify individuals.

I don't understand some of the abbreviations, what do they mean?

SO Safeguarding Officer

CYP Children and young people

VA Vulnerable Adults

CSE Child Sexual Exploitation

FM Foundation Module, Creating Safer Spaces Training

AM Advanced Module, Creating Safer Spaces Training

Does 'staff' also include volunteers?

Yes, staff also means volunteers and any other person who holds a role.

Does 'parents' only refer to biological parents?

No, 'parents' also includes carers and anyone else with legal responsibility for children/young people.

Completing in the timescale is going to be difficult, especially due to churches being closed, what happens then?

The district understands the strains the pandemic has caused. We have extended the initial time period to assist with this and will be flexible wherever we can. We also acknowledge that safeguarding documents should always be accessible and as churches begin to reopen, this will become easier. The most crucial element is to speak with the ADSO; we can only help with what we are told about.

We don't have a church/circuit safeguarding officer, so who will do it?

It is crucial to have a church and circuit safeguarding officer in place and there are various ways this can be achieved. It is not the role of the circuit safeguarding officer to complete the forms, but to support and maintain oversight of this process within the circuit. Each circuit will vary, but typically, there are key roles who will be able to complete the spreadsheet, this could be the church safeguarding officer, circuit administrator, circuit stewards. We advise churches and circuits to read the statements on each tab carefully and decide who is best placed to answer the questions. The form can be saved and forwarded to other role holders who may be able to complete other areas of the form. We recommend a collective effort and discussions to be held at Church Council/Circuit Meetings to facilitate this process.

The form refers to a Critical Incident Plan, what does this mean?

A critical incident may be defined as an incident or situation involving trauma, fatality or serious injury to an individual, group of people or serious damage to property.

By its very nature such an incident is sudden, unpredictable and outside the range of normal human experience. Such events are normally very distressing to all those involved.

Infrequently, a serious crisis may affect your church. It can happen on the premises or may involve congregational members and / or staff when they are away from the church. Sometimes, an incident affecting the wider community may have a significant effect on your church.

Examples of some of the critical incidents that have occurred over the last few years include:

- A stabbing of a member of public outside the church entrance
- Deaths of members as a result of long-term illness or COVID
- The sudden, unexpected death of a church or staff member
- Terrorist attacks
- A serious, accidental injury of a member on church premises during a service or event
- Major fire in, or close by to the church premises

A good plan may include the following information:

- Who to contact, list of a wide variety of services
- Critical incident rapid checklist
- Resources list
- Lockdown procedures
- Scenarios as examples
- What to do after the event, or, 'Recovery'

The District plans to develop a Critical Incident Plan, which can be used by churches and circuits.

Statement 2.1 refers to Pastoral Visitors having received the Advanced Module, but they are not on the 'required list' for training, please explain?

This is correct. The required list for training is considered a minimum level for training. The district believes in striving to achieve higher levels of understanding and knowledge, therefore this is an 'ideal' for training.

Are there any links or information that may be able to help me?

Policies and guidance including safeguarding, recruitment and model policies:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/policies-procedure-and-information/policies-and-guidance/>

Complaints and Discipline information:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/governance/complaints-and-discipline/>

Whistle blowing information:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/coun-MC14-67-whistleblowing-policy-april-2014.pdf>

https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/10268/counc_mc19-27_whistleblowing-policy-review_jan_2019.pdf

Equality, diversity and inclusion information:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/>

Social media information:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/17148/children-and-youth-social-media-guidance-060520.pdf>

Code of working practice with children and young people:

https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/18267/code_of_safer_working_practice_with_children_and_young_people_july_2020.pdf

Recruitment information:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/recruitment-dbspvg-forms-etc/>

Example role outlines and job descriptions:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/recruitment-dbspvg-forms-etc/example-role-outlines-job-description-and-personal-specifications/>

Creating Safer Spaces, Foundation and Advanced Module training pages:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/training/>

I have a concern, contacts:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/i-have-a-concern-contacts/>

Model policy key points for external user groups of premises – checklist:

https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/18269/model_key_points_for_external_users_of_premises_july_2020.pdf

Users and hirers of Methodist premises:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/users-and-hirers-of-methodist-premises/>

<https://www.tmcpc.org.uk/property/letting-property-and-third-party-use>

Data protection policy and guidance:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/data-protection/>

<https://www.tmcpc.org.uk/about/data-protection>

Privacy notices:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/policies-procedure-and-information/forms/>

Past Cases Review:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/courage-cost-and-hope-past-cases-review/>

ADSO Contact Details

ADSO

Karen Stapley

07949 325 531

karen@methodistlondon.org.uk