

30. Safeguarding Committee

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Resolution	30/1. The Conference receives the Report.

Summary of content and impact

Subject and aims	To update the Conference on safeguarding developments since the 2017 Conference.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight • Safeguarding casework and development work • Training • District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) • Ecumenical working • Developing survivors' work

1. Oversight

The last year has seen the Connexional Safeguarding Team and the Safeguarding Committee follow through the key decisions of the 2017 Conference, move towards completion of all past case reviews (PCR) and undertake the necessary preliminary work to restructure the team in order to be able to deliver the new professional casework supervision structure for District Safeguarding Officers.

- 1.1 The work of safeguarding is now subject to a strategic work plan that is reviewed by the Safeguarding Committee annually in order to guide work and set priorities. This report highlights some of the key areas by way of update to the Conference.
- 1.2 The Safeguarding Committee meets twice a year and has a further training event in order to update on practice developments. This assists with the work that is undertaken through safeguarding panels which consider risk assessments for those with blemished DBS checks and those where serious safeguarding allegation have been made.
- 1.3 The chair of the committee is stepping down at the end of this connexional year. Due to the increased activity in safeguarding and desire to deal with cases in as timely manner as possible the committee will now have a deputy chair as well. The Council has appointed the Revd Henry Lewis as chair of the committee, and the Revd Anne Brown will be joining the committee and become the deputy.
- 1.4 Last year's report to the Conference reported that *"There has been no reduction in society's on-going exposure to safeguarding matters whether they relate to past cases or current allegations and convictions of abuse. The more recent allegations arising from the world of football clubs have caused many to wonder which organisation might be next in revealing unsafe practices and behaviours from the past or in the present. The exposure of past allegations of abuse in football resembled much of the experience of the Methodist Church in revealing and then dealing with past cases. At the same time, last year has seen our colleagues in other churches, particularly Catholic and Church of England, answering questions about a series of (sometimes high profile) cases of clergy abuse. We have to assume that the Methodist Church cannot be immune to such a case or cases arising from our work, either from*

the past or in the present. Indeed, we have dealt with a number of cases that have gone to court and resulted in convictions this year but have generally only received local press coverage. Therefore, we cannot afford to reduce our efforts to take full advantage of the learning from our PCR and understand the steps we need to take now in order to continue to make our churches the safest environments and most nurturing places for members and users alike.”

This is reported in full very deliberately as it could have been written just as accurately for this year. Abuse in football has continued to be in the news with criminal convictions and we have now added the worlds of (Hollywood) filmmaking, theatre and most recently international development charities to the list of those institutions and organisations who find their activities, past records and current policies under the media and public spotlight.

- 1.5 Our colleagues in partner churches have been exposed in public hearings conducted by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and there are increasing calls from various quarters, not least groups representing victims and survivors of abuse in churches, for external inspection and regulation of safeguarding practices across the churches.

2. Safeguarding casework and development work

2.1 Annual statistics and the first 6 months of 2017/2018

Case work statistics:	Sep 2015 – Aug 2016	Sep 2016 – Aug 2017	Sep 2017 – Feb 2018
	<i>6 month</i>		
<i>PCR cases open at 31 August</i>	565	318	168
<i>PCR cases closed during this period</i>	168	208	99
<i>*DBS cases open at 31 August</i>	30	20	50
<i>*DBS cases closed during this period</i>	106	125	54
<i>Non DBS cases open at 31 August 2016</i>	362	68	86
<i>Non DBS cases closed during this period</i>	37	85	52
¹ <i>Post PCR cases open at 31 August 2016</i>	48	20	23
<i>Post PCR cases closed during this period</i>	10	38	20

¹Cases that related to past issues but have been received since the end of the PCR reporting period have been re-classified as Post PCR during this connexional year.

* there was an audit of open DBS cases during at the later end of 2015/2016 which resulted in a higher number of closures and decrease in open cases.

Risk assessments during connexional year*Number of panels commissioned and held*

Sep 2015 – Aug 2016	Sep 2016 – Aug 2017
18	22

Outcome	Number	Appeals	Number	Appeals
<i>Not cleared</i>	2	0	2	0
<i>Restrictions on role and safeguarding contract</i>	8	3	13	0
<i>Cleared with conditions</i>	5	0	7	1
<i>Resigned from role</i>	1	0	0	0

2.3 The new provider for criminal records checks, Due Diligence Checking, began work on 1 January 2018 following a competitive procurement process and the transfer from the Churches' Agency for Safeguarding has progressed well with minimum disruption as all checks have now moved online.

2.4 Significant work has been undertaken over the last year to review the remainder of the past cases referrals in order to be able to complete this piece of work. With the assistance of additional sessional time drawn from DSOs and members of District Safeguarding Groups it is pleasing to report that we are on target to finish the case work enquiries this connexional year. Learning continues to be gathered from this work and we will be further assessing this work in order to provide a greater statistical analysis of the overall picture of what has been uncovered in due course.

2.5 The 2017 Conference approved the introduction of safeguarding contracts to replace covenants of care and we have now introduced new procedures for undertaking safeguarding risk assessments. A new pool of approved risk assessors has been recruited for all connexionally commissioned risk assessments who will adopt consistent standards and approaches. At the same time we have introduced measures to reduce delays in the assessment process as much as possible in order to assist all parties in dealing with matters as efficiently and effectively as is reasonable.

3. Safeguarding training

3.1 The Leadership Module has been completely revised and launched as a new Advanced Module course incorporating some online learning and role specific reflections. Safeguarding and Learning Network colleagues have taken a lead in the production of this material.

3.2 A similar approach is underway to produce a learning module for those who volunteer to sit on monitoring and support groups of those on safeguarding contracts

3.3 Discussions with mission partners have continued during the year and a number of areas are being addressed to increase the preparation for mission partners before they undertake their placement and how they are supported when they are out of the country seeking to apply good safeguarding practice in cultures and legal systems sometimes very different to our British institutions.

3.4 Work has also begun to address improving the selection process and support for ministers from other countries and conferences who come to Britain in order that they are fully conversant with our safeguarding processes.

4. District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs)

- 4.1 The 2017 Conference adopted a formula to be used by all Districts in calculating the number of hours required for DSO work in order adequately to cover safeguarding demands. The feedback from using this has been overwhelmingly positive in giving districts a mechanism to look at current and future demands. In most cases it has resulted in increases in hours allocated either in this year or planned for next. The formula will enable Districts to revisit this calculation and enable resourcing to be kept under review.
- 4.2 The 2017 Conference also instructed that proposals should be taken to the Strategy and Resources Committee in order to introduce a professional casework supervision structure for all DSOs. This has been achieved and a new structure is being planned in order for implementation from September onwards. In order to deliver this there will be four supervising case workers in the connexional safeguarding team and a Planning and Development post working to a Safeguarding Director.
- 4.3 This year's annual safeguarding conference for DSOs and members of District Safeguarding Groups involved other safeguarding officers in the Church and took a focus of external partnerships, following up last year's conference led by the Revd Helen Cameron on 'what does apology mean in the life of the Church for survivors and victims of abuse?' This very helpfully kept this theme as a common focus as we reflected on the progress of safeguarding within the Church and how we share that with outside agencies and demonstrate our competence.

5. Ecumenical working

- 5.1 Our shared safeguarding forum, the Joint Safeguarding Working Group has been reviewed and renamed the Anglican Methodist Safeguarding Group with a refreshed terms of reference to reflect a greater regional focus and more thematic approach to shared conversations. Communication and liaison between the two safeguarding advisers has continued very effectively.
- 5.2 Support to the Christian Forum for Safeguarding has continued as has input into the URC past cases review and recruitment of their adviser post. Requests for information and learning from our past Cases Review have also been followed up with the Salvation Army, Society of Friends and United Synagogues.

6. Developing survivors' work

- 6.1 Taking a survivor focus has now become part of all our safeguarding practice
- 6.2 The Methodist Survivors' Reference Group has met during the year and been able to begin the process of establishing trust and confidence so that it can further help guide the Church in its safeguarding work and develop more informed practice towards those hurt by members of the Church. We are very grateful to all those who assist with this learning and work bringing their insights, personal stories and strategic challenges to the way we work.
- 6.3 We continue to offer support to individuals in a range of ways including individual casework, independent professional counselling and formal responses.

*****RESOLUTION**

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