

33. Safeguarding Committee

Contact name and details	The Revd Alison F Tomlin Chair of the Committee alison.tomlin@methodist.org.uk
Resolutions	33/1. The Conference receives the Report.

Summary of Content and Impact

Subject and aims	To update the Conference on safeguarding developments since the 2016 Conference.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight • Safeguarding casework • Training • District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) • Ecumenical working and survivor developments
Background context and relevant documents (with function)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2016 Conference received a report relating to the safeguarding work of the Church and a report on the Past Cases Review (PCR) and the 2017 Conference will be receiving a final report of the PCR Implementation Group. • Reports on the two resolutions approved by 2016 Conference on DSO hours and supervision arrangements are subject to separate reports to Conference. • The report of the Covenants of Care working group is subject to a separate report to the Conference.

1. Oversight

The Safeguarding Team has moved within the Connexional Team to be under the oversight of the Conference Office in order to improve joint working with complaints and discipline processes and greater coordination in joint planning.

- 1.1 The work of safeguarding is now subject to a strategic work plan that the team agreed with the Safeguarding Committee 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 as a full body and has now instigated a third meeting for training purposes. The first of these focused on risk assessments with the engagement of a number of District Safeguarding Officers. It afforded the opportunity to review the working of assessments and how learning from these and Safeguarding Panels could lead to greater clarity and improvements in how these are undertaken. As a result the Council has approved proposals for a revised process for risk assessments which are part of the revised standing orders on safeguarding coming to the Conference for approval.
- 1.3 Work has also been undertaken to improve the diversity of the Committee's membership as indicated in last year's Conference report.
- 1.4 Safeguarding does not cover one area of church life and the Church recognises it is everyone's business. This is reflected in a number of reports before this year's Conference and whilst they are presented separately because of the way they were commissioned, it is important that they are understood as part of a developing structure for how we increase and improve safe practices and responsiveness across the whole church community in our mission and work.

- 1.5 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 the Roman Catholic Church and the 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. 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.

2. Safeguarding casework and development work

- 2.1 Considerable work has been undertaken over the last 12 months to improve case management and recording processes. A new file management system is being introduced and significant work has been undertaken in reviewing our statistical data collection methods. As a result it is difficult to easily compare all categories of work with previous measures but the table below provides a good overview of where the work is now occurring.

Case work statistics for connexional year ending 31 August 2016

PCR cases open at 31 August 2016	565
PCR cases closed during this period	168
DBS cases open at 31 August 2016	30
DBS cases closed during this period	106
Non DBS cases open at 31 August 2016	362
Non DBS cases closed during this period	37
¹ Post PCR cases open at 31 August 2016	48
Post PCR cases closed during this period	10

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

Casework statistics for the *first six months* of the current connexional year ending 31 August 2017

PCR cases open at 28 February 2017	407
PCR cases closed during this period	158
DBS cases open at 28 February 2017	35
DBS cases closed during this period	66
Non DBS cases open at 28 February 2017	252
Non DBS cases closed during this period	50
Post PCR cases open at 28 February 2017	79
Post PCR cases closed during this period	22

Risk assessments during connexional year 1 September 2015-31 August 2016

Number of panels commissioned and held: 18

Outcome	Number	Appeals
Not cleared	2	0
Restrictions on role and Covenant of Care	8	3
Cleared with conditions	5	0
Resigned from role	1	0

- 2.3 The Strategy and Resources Committee, on behalf of the Council, is in the process of procuring a new provider for checking DBS applications, after many years of good service from the Churches' Agency for Safeguarding, and is seeking a body that can offer a balance of similar service and value for money. The new provider will take over from 1 January 2018.
- 2.4 The work of the Past Cases Review (PCR) Implementation Group is reported on separately. As can be seen from the statistics we are now counting new past cases as separate to the PCR in order to be able to complete the PCR work. It is very pleasing to report that almost 80% of the cases referred through the Past Cases Review have now been completed. The team has a target to complete the remaining case work by the end of August but it is very difficult to predict how involved or time consuming individual cases might be once contact is made and therefore there may be a need to continue beyond that point. This is being kept under review by the Safeguarding Adviser and the Connexional Secretary.
- 2.5 A new file management system is being piloted within the Safeguarding Team which will improve our reporting on types of cases being worked with and ability to report future trends.
- 2.6 Much time has been spent over the year, by the team and assisted by DSOs and other colleagues, in completely revising the 2010 *Safeguarding Procedures*. These were approved by the Council and are now online.
- 2.7 The working party to address the use of Covenants of Care in relation to Safeguarding (Memorial 35, 2015) is reported on separately.
- 2.6 The Safeguarding Adviser has contributed to the working party appointed by the Council on pornography in response to NM 2015/215. This is reported on in the report of the Methodist Council.

3. Safeguarding training

- 3.1 The 2016 Conference decided that the frequency of undertaking Creating Safer Space training should change from five to four years from September 2017 in order to make sure that training content can keep pace with changes in legislation and safeguarding practices. The refreshed and revised *Foundation Modules* are now being used and work is underway to revise the Leadership Module during this year.
- 3.2 Work is underway to produce a new training programme for house groups to use and investigations are taking place about how online training can be incorporated to support the training resources on offer.
- 3.3 Discussions have taken place with Mission Partners to look at safeguarding practice both for those working in other countries and those coming to Britain in order to make sure they are suitably prepared for working in a new legal and social context.

4. District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs)

- 4.1 The structure of DSOs across the Connexion is critical to the successful working of safeguarding. The connexional Safeguarding Team works with DSOs and District Chairs very closely and there is a very strong collaborative ethic in how casework is undertaken and agreed. DSOs now come together for three development and update days each year as well as the annual Safeguarding Conference and occasional consultation events (eg new training resources, etc). This has created an effective professional development route for individuals and helpful mechanisms for consultation and feedback.
- 4.2 The 2016 Conference asked the Council to produce information and data from current DSO activity, in conjunction with DSOs, District Chairs and District Safeguarding Groups and present a formula to the 2017 Conference to determine the minimum number of required hours. This will be reported separately.
- 4.3 The 2016 Conference also instructed the Council to bring forward costed proposals for achieving professional supervision for DSOs to this year's Conference. These are similarly reported on separately.

5. Ecumenical working and developing survivors' work

- 5.1 This year's annual Joint Safeguarding Conference with the Church of England took place in January but on this occasion was organised by the Methodist Church and was largely attended by DSOs and District Safeguarding Group members and one District Chair. This was due to the preoccupation for the Church of England with the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. The theme was to develop our response to survivors of abuse in the Church and the conference addressed this from different angles including awareness and understanding, hearing the voices, building our skill base and beginning to work on a clearer description of what the Church is able to offer to those who have been abused in any way.
- 5.2 Work from the Conference will now be further developed under the auspices of the Joint Safeguarding Working Group (JSWG) which is jointly chaired by the Revd Helen Cameron and the Bishop of Bath and Wells. The JSWG has also looked at the development of the Church of England Safe Spaces project for survivors and the Methodists have been assisting with these developments.
- 5.3 In keeping with resolutions from the Past Cases Review we have now established a Methodist Survivors' Reference Group that is meeting to assist learning and understanding of survivors' perspectives and insights into the ongoing development of practice and policy. We have also made arrangements to support individuals who may wish to take up the offer of professional counselling in a joint initiative with Action for Children, Barnardo's and the Children's Society.
- 5.4 Meeting with other denominational colleagues engaged in safeguarding has continued through the Christian Forum for Safeguarding and joint training on understanding and responding well to survivors.
- 5.5 Following on from last year's Safeguarding Conference the Church of England has commissioned further work on our understanding of spiritual abuse and we have been part of the working group led by Dr Lisa Oakley who is putting materials together to assist developing better practice in this area.

*****RESOLUTION**

33/1. The Conference received the Report.