

34. Safeguarding Report

Contact Name and Details	Elizabeth Hall, Safeguarding Adviser (child and adult protection) for the Church of England and the Methodist Church Email: halle@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	<p>34/1. The Conference receives the Report.</p> <p>34/ 2. The Conference directs the Safeguarding Advisory Panel to review its terms of reference with specific attention to its membership, decision making powers and the process for appeals. The Conference further directs that any proposals for change should be brought to the 2015 Conference.</p> <p>34/3. The Conference expresses its thanks to the Revd David Gamble for his contribution to the work of safeguarding in the Methodist Church.</p> <p>34/4. The Conference directs that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Each Synod ensures that District Safeguarding Officers undertake a review of the implementation of recommendations of the 2011 President’s Inquiry, assessing the progress which has been made within the District. B) The outcomes of the review should be reported to Synods and the Connexional Safeguarding Adviser no later than April 2015.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To update the Conference on safeguarding developments since the 2013 Conference.
Main Points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Governance 2. Safeguarding casework 3. <i>Creating Safer Space</i>: the safeguarding training programme 4. Standing Order changes 5. District Safeguarding Officers 6. Past Safeguarding Cases Review 2013/4 7. Recruiting Safely Policy 8. Wider societal developments with an impact on the Methodist Church
Background Context and Relevant Documents	Agenda item 31, 2013 Conference.

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	Cross reference to the work of the Law and Polity Committee, see section 4.
External	Recognition of the ongoing partnership with the Church of England.

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1. Governance

- 1.1 Safeguarding responsibility at a connexional level continues to be shared with the Church of England. The Safeguarding Adviser post is a shared post, as is the role of team coordinator. There are two main bodies charged with oversight.
- 1.2 The Joint Safeguarding Liaison Group (JSLG) is co-chaired by the Revd David Gamble and the Right Revd Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham. The JSLG has representatives from around the regions for both churches, who cover between them responsibility for safeguarding work with children and young people and adults who are vulnerable. It scrutinises the strategic development of safeguarding policy and practice and identifies areas of work which can be developed jointly. The Revd David Gamble stands down at this Conference. The Methodist Council has appointed the Revd Dr Elizabeth Smith as the Methodist co-chair. The Conference thanks David Gamble for his huge contribution to the work of the JSLG and the progress of the Methodist Church in creating safer space more generally over a considerable period of time.
- 1.3 A proposal to re-focus the work of the JSLG and to rename it as a Joint Safeguarding Working Group has been circulated for consultation and will be considered by the Methodist Council during 2014/15. The proposed revised body will retain the ecumenical focus and will strengthen opportunities to develop and take forward policies; for joint learning and for the sharing of resources.
- 1.4 The Safeguarding Advisory Panel is a Methodist body whose role is set out in SO 232. It meets twice a year as a full body for review of the work undertaken through risk assessment. At other times members meet in small teams for review of individual cases. The Revd Ian White is Chair of the panel and has consistently carried out this role with thoughtfulness, wisdom and clarity. This has been appreciated by many including those who have been the subject of Appeal Panels and particularly by the connexional Safeguarding Team.
- 1.5 The Safeguarding Advisory Panel has been actively considering its role, responsibilities and title in the light of developments in safeguarding both within and outside the Methodist Church. In some respects it considers that the outline contained within Standing Orders does not sufficiently reflect its work and responsibilities. In particular Panel members consider it is important to review and clarify both the status of the decisions made by panels and the process of appeal made in respect of any disclosure or other matter considered by a panel. It therefore requests that the Conference makes arrangements to review the role of the Safeguarding Advisory Panel(s) - both the wider group and the small panels; the role of members; its advisory status and the process of appeal and to bring recommendations for any changes to the 2015 Conference.
- 1.6 The District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) and Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers meet for a two-day conference each year. This enables the successful joint working at connexional/national level to be replicated through good working relationships more locally. This year's conference held in Cardiff, jointly with the Church in Wales, was well attended and the evaluation was positive. The format was slightly different with more focus on facilitated learning and developing thinking in seminar groups after each plenary session. This opportunity to meet and share is very much appreciated by District Safeguarding Officers who, because of the nature of the role, often work in isolation.

2. Safeguarding casework

- 2.1 The growth in the casework held by the Team noted last year has been sustained. The factors identified in 2013 which appeared to fuel this remain current: greater awareness as a result of the implementation of safeguarding training; the increasing success of the Church in reaching out to people from troubled backgrounds, some of whom raise safeguarding concerns; and a wider societal focus on past abuse. Following the introduction of the single Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate in June 2013, issued only to the applicant, the steady flow of blemished disclosures became a trickle. Recently, following local efforts to increase understanding of the implications of the changed process, there has been an increase in this work. However it is still of concern that there is not a wholesale appreciation that connexional Safeguarding staff no longer routinely receive a copy of blemished disclosures.
- 2.2 Casework arising from the *Past Cases Review* (PCR) has increased as the project is implemented. The total number of responses received so far (28 February 2014) is 2,098, from the 14 Districts covered. Of these, 514 have been reviewed and 416 have required further work. Such work can include review and reconsideration of an open case (120 responses). In relation to previously unknown cases the work involved can range from simple checking out of information to complex investigations, risk assessments and referrals to statutory authorities. The awareness of the PCR has also contributed to an increase in other referrals relating to past harm and abuse.
- 2.3 PCR casework is often complex. The non-recent nature of the harm engenders a range of responses: the distress of reawakening past hurt and pain; sincere regret from a realisation that matters were not dealt with thoroughly at the time; puzzlement as to why these matters are being revisited; denial and re-writing of history; anger that the past has not been left behind. The work needs to be carried out with extreme sensitivity and care. We continue to learn lessons which should strengthen safeguarding in the Methodist Church.
- 2.4 The closer working arrangement between safeguarding and the Complaints and Discipline procedures continues to be productive.

3. *Creating Safer Space* (CSS): the safeguarding training programme

- 3.1 The CSS safeguarding training programme continues to be rolled out thanks to the commitment and dedication of the Districts. The updating of the Foundation Module has been delayed due to the high volume of casework but should be underway shortly. Minor revisions to update the Leadership Module are also awaited. Work continues with colleagues in the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network to ensure that safeguarding is embedded within learning programmes across the Connexion as well as for ministers in training.

4. Standing Order changes

- 4.1 The 2012 Conference approved in outline the proposal that there should be changes made to a range of Standing Orders, to ensure a) that where there are safeguarding elements in any given situation, there is cross-reference to those with safeguarding expertise, and b) that where other processes (ie Complaints and Discipline) are required for safeguarding cases, the Safeguarding Advisory Panel should be able to transfer cases across in a way that ensures that both processes can be respected. A need to strengthen Standing Orders in relation to adults who may be vulnerable has also been recognised. This work has been taken forward by the Law and Polity Committee during the past year and the recommendations are before this Conference in the report of the Law and Polity Committee Part 2.

5. District Safeguarding Officers

- 5.1 The work of connexional Safeguarding goes hand in hand with that of DSOs. The strengthening of the role of DSOs envisaged in a President's Inquiry (2011) has been moving ahead and increasingly it is becoming a paid role. The District Safeguarding Officers play a vital role keeping all aspects of safeguarding on the agenda and live within Districts including the successful roll out of the PCR; the implementation of CSS Training; ensuring the implementation of new policies and the development of effective links with local statutory agencies thus improving the standing of the Methodist Church.
- 5.2 A useful development over the last year has been the organisation by the connexional Safeguarding team of twice yearly DSO days which provide the opportunity for DSOs to update; reflect on their work; network; share experiences and receive training and support. We have covered topics such as the revised Safer Recruitment Policy; Equality and Diversity; the role of the District Safeguarding Group; and safeguarding in an online and digital society.

6. Revised Recruiting Safely Policy (June 2013)

- 6.1 As was indicated in last year's Conference report the two final strands of the *Protection of Freedoms Act* in relation to criminal record checks (the single certificate and the on-line updating service) were implemented in summer 2013. Unfortunately very little notice of this change was given. However, a revised joint Church of England and Methodist Church Recruiting Safely Policy was produced in June 2013. A final decision about whether to join the on-line updating service was deferred. This was mostly pragmatic as the provider of IT systems for the DBS changed in February 2014 and we wished to be confident of the new provider before taking this significant decision. That the policy is not yet finalised has presented the opportunity to 'road test' the June 2013 policy and a good deal of constructive feedback has been received. A final policy should be produced in summer 2014, and will be submitted to the Methodist Council for adoption during the 2014/15 year.

7. President's Safeguarding Inquiry 2011

- 7.1 In response to a President's Inquiry in 2011, the 2012 Conference directed in resolution 20/2 that a number of provisions relating to the roles of DSOs, safeguarding groups and circuit/church coordinators be implemented. Since each District is responsible for this, it seems appropriate that their Synods should be the body to monitor progress. It is therefore proposed that all DSOs undertake a review in 2014/15, of what progress has been made against the recommendations within their own District. The outcomes from these reviews should be reported both to District Synods in spring 2015, and to the Connexional Safeguarding Adviser.

8. Wider societal developments with an impact on the Methodist Church

- 8.1 Safeguarding and related matters continue to be in the forefront of public consciousness with mixed outcomes for the work of the Methodist Church. The greater attention to the harm and abuse caused to children, young people and adults who are vulnerable leading to improved awareness and recognition of the need for safeguarding is welcomed. This has been particularly true in relation to domestic abuse together with the continuing focus on non-recent abuse. However, the acquittal of high profile celebrities and the attendant publicity is distressing for survivors of non-recent abuse who have, or who still are, struggling to tell their stories and be heard.

- 8.2 Continuing advances in technology towards an online and digital society present new and different safeguarding risks. Connexional Safeguarding staff are working towards providing resources to develop awareness and understanding of these issues.
- 8.3 The constructive developments within the Church of England reported last year continue together with the consequent sharing of good practice, currently on issues related to risk assessment.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

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