

Safeguarding Resource and Structure

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	For information
Resolutions	13/1. The Council receives the report. 13/2. The Council adopts the model for casework supervision of District Safeguarding Officers including the funding of the additional permanent Casework Supervisor posts and Policy and Training Officer post as set out in the report. 13/3. The Council directs the Strategy and Resources Committee (pursuant to SO 213(5a)) to ensure that a review takes place of the role and job description of the Connexional Safeguarding Adviser.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To inform the Council of the proposals for professional supervision of District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs)
Main Points	Proposal that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the connexional Safeguarding Team (CST) takes on all the professional casework supervision of the DSOs. • each member of the CST will supervise all the DSOs for a collection of Districts • changes to the structure and job roles of the CST be made in support.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	Report to the Conference of 2017 on Professional Supervision for DSOs
Consultations	District Chairs, Safeguarding Committee, Strategy and Resources Committee

Summary of Impact

Personnel	Proposals identified in report
Wider Connexional	Framework intended to be used across the Connexion
Risk	Safeguarding processes are key control measures for reputational risks

Safeguarding Resource and Structure

1. The 2017 Conference received a report concerning the supervision of District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs). The Conference directed as follows:

The Conference directed the Council to proceed with producing detailed and costed proposals for professional supervision of District Safeguarding Officers based on the approach to supervision as set out in paragraphs 3.0 – 8.12 of the report.

2. In response to this, an Independent Safeguarding Consultant, Jean Pollard¹, from Itemkey Safeguarding Services was commissioned to prepare a report outlining proposals for professional supervision of District Safeguarding Officers. The Safeguarding Committee and the District Chairs were consulted as part of this process, and having also been agreed by the SRC, the content of this report and recommendations are now presented to the Council in this paper.

Introduction and Context

3. The Methodist Church has been working positively for many years to address its safeguarding practice, both in acknowledging its history; and in strengthening the way safeguarding is understood and prevented; and where necessary is dealt with, in the present.
4. The Conference in 2017 received five reports on various aspects of safeguarding and it is clear that the Conference is devoting considerable time, focus and commitment to this area. The recommendations from those reports were agreed without dissent.
5. However many organisations, both statutory, faith, and voluntary, are living with a legacy of mistrust, as a result of poor practice in dealing with past cases. Sometimes it is evident that practice was unacceptable by the standards of the time, driven by the wish to protect the reputation of the organisation. But also understanding of abuse is continually updated and refreshed by research, national policy and legislation; so that best practice is always developing and improving. So even the best-intentioned practice has not always fully grasped the way abuse operates, or the needs of victims and survivors who continue to live with the abuse they have suffered.
6. In order to ensure a rigorous approach for the future, the Church has recognised that more work is needed to further professionalise its current approach, and ensure that the confidence of survivors of abuse in the church can be strengthened or rebuilt. Because of the historical failures that many organisations including faith ones, are addressing, there will be a period where efforts need to be even more demonstrably robust than if starting with a blank sheet.
7. Furthermore, the safeguarding workload is likely to increase into the future. Creating a safer culture that enables disclosure of current, and maybe further past abuse, will generate more work. The last year has seen real effort to engage with and hear survivors so that they can have meaningful impact on the way safeguarding is understood and developed, but doing this well requires time. Additionally, the Care Act 2014 brought a spotlight to the area of vulnerable adults and the responsibilities of organisations in their regard. In Britain there is a growing ageing population and the demographic of church membership is also ageing. This requires a proactive

¹ Jean Pollard has had 40 years' experience in safeguarding services, predominantly in Children Services but also working with Adult Services for older people and those with learning difficulties. She has held Service Director posts in two local authorities.

preventative approach involving the development of further policy, and potentially of additional training for the organisation.

8. It is therefore timely to take stock of the way safeguarding support and services are delivered. While recognising the progress that has been made, the question remains as to whether safeguarding is yet at the heart of the Church and seen as the whole Connexion's business, or is still seen as the domain of the Connexional Safeguarding Team or dispersed into the Districts. Is the current localised approach to casework practice and supervision acceptable, or is greater organisational rigour, with consistent standards across circuits needed? Is there adequate capacity available in the right place to make this happen; and do the current arrangements ensure that the church can exercise its responsibility to be in touch with practice enough to be aware of problems as they arise and have assurance that that they are dealt with quickly and effectively?

Safeguarding Reports to the 2017 Conference

9. The report from the Past Cases Review Implementation Group showed the considerable work that has been done to progress the Past Cases Review and implement the lessons from it. The review of individual cases is almost complete and has required temporary resource to finish that work.
10. The report from the working group reviewing Covenants of Care – now to be called Safeguarding Contracts – recommended changes for these arrangements to ensure they do not drift leaving both perpetrators or alleged perpetrators, and victims / survivors, with uncertainty. Implementing an annual review will require additional Connexional Safeguarding team time to keep track of the contracts as well as capacity for the commissioning of more risk assessments.
11. Two further reports specifically focused on the work of District Safeguarding Officers (DSO) who are pivotal in ensuring the quality of safeguarding work on the ground. One outlined a way of evaluating the number of hours of DSO time needed in any District with a commitment from Conference to move towards achieving that capacity.
12. The second of these concerning DSOs (which resulted in the commissioning of this report), described a standardised approach to the provision of casework supervision for the DSOs. While those working in DSO roles are eminently able and qualified, the report provided very clear reasons why they should have access to professional casework supervision, as do safeguarding professionals in other organisations, to provide support, challenge and reflection in making what are sometimes very difficult judgments. Currently District Chairs provide line management and many have indicated that they do not feel qualified to provide proper casework supervision. Ad hoc advice can be sought from the Safeguarding Team but the team is not resourced to offer systematic casework supervision.
13. The work was commissioned by the Conference in 2016 and was originally intended to include proposals for the provision of casework supervision and costings. The Connexional Secretary advised the Conference that it became clear during the course of the year, that this was a bigger piece of work with wider implications that needed longer and broader consideration, as there are implications for the structure and capacity of the Connexional Safeguarding Team.
14. Arguably the wider factors about increasing demand outlined above also need to be noted as part of the same process, if safeguarding is to be managed in a holistic and sustainable way for the future.
15. This report therefore proposes changes to the Safeguarding Team specifically for the provision of casework supervision for DSOs but also recommends further consideration is given to accommodate the increasing impact of these other demands.

The Provision of Casework Supervision

16. A model of casework supervision including frequency was agreed by the Conference in 2017. The supervision proposed should not be confused with the supervision that has been agreed for ministers. This is professional safeguarding supervision to address district safeguarding cases. A much more structured approach was agreed whereby casework supervision takes place at a regular frequency, and covers a range of more standardised issues, including equality and diversity; professional development and learning needs of the DSO; as well as progress of casework, ensuring that work has been actioned effectively and in a timely way. Inevitably in some districts it will result in DSOs receiving more casework supervision than they currently receive from District Chairs or line managers, and therefore additional capacity will be required.
17. As previously outlined not all District Chairs feel qualified to provide casework supervision even under the current approach, and most are not qualified to provide it to the professional standard now being planned. Additionally District Chairs have wide responsibilities and many, even where professionally qualified, will not have the time to offer the structured sessions that have been agreed.
18. In preparing this report consideration has been given to a range of approaches for the provision of casework supervision. In some Districts casework supervision is provided by external consultants. While it is understood that this support is highly valued by some DSOs, this approach raises some concerns. There does not appear to be a robust contract which covers the issue of data protection in connection with sensitive personal information that may need to be discussed. There is no way of assessing the quality of the supervision provided to ensure it meets the standards now being aspired to (as outlined in 3.1) or to ensure that advice leads to similarity of thresholds and standards across Districts. Additionally, Church resources are being used to outsource expertise which does not then benefit the whole church community. Should the proposals in this paper be adopted, the provision of this external support could continue to be sustained as providing a reflective space for the DSOs who use it, alongside any new arrangements, if the issues of concern were addressed; and assuming the districts still wanted to fund it.
19. Key factors for success in promoting safeguarding practice through the provision of casework supervision, will be a model that heightens safeguarding awareness throughout the Connexion; delivers consistency of approach to cases, and consistency of thresholds for action so there is no postcode lottery in the way individuals are dealt with. Additionally, there must be minimization of duplication, or worse, competing advice. The most effective way of delivering this is the provision of casework supervision from the Connexional Safeguarding Team.

Provision of Casework Supervision from Connexion Safeguarding Team (CST)

20. This paper proposes that the Connexional Safeguarding Team takes on all the professional casework supervision of the DSOs.
21. It further proposes that each member of the CST will supervise all the DSOs for a collection of Districts (probably grouped into four to begin with, thereby developing 'area' teams of DSOs).
22. The rationale for this recommendation is that:
 - It focuses ownership of safeguarding within the Connexion with a clear line of accountability through to the Secretary of Conference
 - It allows the CST to formalise much of what they are already doing informally, reducing duplication or competing advice

- It brings safeguarding support closer to the circuits and will assist with safeguarding in recruitment locally
 - The team are full time and therefore contactable outside of formal casework supervision meetings, and able to support and advise as cases unfold and develop
 - The model supports consistency and standardisation of approach as members of the CST can check their practice and thresholds with each other and the Safeguarding Adviser unlike the use of external consultants where learning and expertise remains localised
 - It supports standardised record-keeping
 - It supports team-working for DSOs in the areas, building peer to peer support and cover for sickness, holidays.
 - It enables better management of DSO casework workloads with the area team being able to share the load more equitably
 - The area team approach facilitates joint work, where there is a particularly complex case.
 - The model provides the opportunity for area-based training and continuous professional development for DSOs and encourages a learning culture in the work.
 - The additional capacity being proposed will allow for some quality audit work to be undertaken across areas
23. The Safeguarding Adviser will provide casework supervision to the members of the CST, and therefore be in a position to comprehensively overview safeguarding quality across the Church.
24. The employment responsibility for DSOs will remain with the line manager (generally the District Chair) on behalf of the District. Casework supervision will be distinguished from the employer's legal responsibilities for the DSO. To ensure the necessary role clarity it is proposed that a standard agreement is used setting out the different responsibilities and accountabilities between the Casework Supervisor, District Chair / line manager and DSO.
25. Professional casework judgements will be overseen by the Casework Supervisor. In the event of a dispute about appropriate actions the Casework Supervisor will refer to the Connexional Safeguarding Adviser who will discuss the matter with the Assistant Secretary of Conference and agree the best way forward with the District Chair.

Changes to Connexional Safeguarding Team

26. These proposals, both to strengthen safeguarding in the organisation, and specifically for the provision of casework supervision, involve significant change to the structure and job roles of the CST.
27. There are 25 DSOs in total with varying hours and geographical spread. It is proposed they are grouped into four areas, each one with c.6 DSOs, and each with a Casework Supervisor who will oversee all the safeguarding work within that area. In order to bring this support closer to the Districts it is proposed that the Casework supervisors are themselves located in the areas.
28. They will also retain a lead role as part of the Connexional Safeguarding Team, including:
- Supporting the development of policy and procedures
 - Provision of training
 - Work with survivors
 - DBS blemish management

29. It is anticipated that this connexional work will require about 20% of their time. The CST will need to come together as a team to work on these areas and for their own support and professional development.
30. The Connexional Safeguarding Team have had informal consultation about these proposals and are broadly in support of the approach. They have already raised their own current concerns about data protection, and variability of practice across districts. They also support the notion of area-based posts to bring the support as close to the DSOs as possible.
31. If this model is adopted, a formal change process will be initiated with support from HR & Development.
32. Consultation has also taken place with the District Chairs about the proposals for casework supervision. The response is predominantly favorable with more questions in areas where external supervision is already being purchased.
33. Consultation has been undertaken with the the Safeguarding Committee and positive feedback has been recived on the model along with some helpful points in implementation.
34. Strengthening the whole-Church approach to safeguarding has wider implications than simply the provision of casework supervision. There is some ambiguity in the Safeguarding Adviser Job Description and the way the post appears to function, Currently the post has a 'lead' role in safeguarding work but it is unclear at times what responsibility is incorporated into the role,. In keeping with the thrust of this paper to ensure safeguarding is given appropriate priority in the Church's business, it is proposed that the post is renamed to Director of Safeguarding and the job description is amended to clarify these issues. It is envisaged that this post-holder directly supervises the Casework Supervisors, sometimes in their areas, making this role more accessible to the circuits.
35. This report has outlined (at paragraph 7) some further safeguarding challenges in the Church where it can be anticipated that the work of the CST will increase:
 - increasing demand as a result of increasing awareness both in reporting of current new cases, and past cases that are still unknown
 - supporting survivors of abuse and specifically the Survivor Reference Group
 - new work with vulnerable adults especially those with mental health needs, drug abuse issues and dementia involving:
 - direct casework
 - developing policy and practice
 - clarifying working approaches with Police and Local Authorities
 - training
 - assisting the Conference Office with the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
 - it is still possible that the Methodist Church will become a future line of inquiry creating a hugely demanding amount of work
 - recommendations from the Inquiry (irrespective of the church's direct involvement) will need to be put into policy, practice and training
 - recommendations are likely to become regulation e.g. record-keeping
 - further national reports or emerging historical events in the vein of Savile and the recent sport revelations will produce learning that will require the Church to undertake its own internal assessment
 - Data Protection and information-sharing legislation requires updating of policy and practice
 - work associated with changes to Covenants of Care and new Safeguarding Contracts

36. Some of this work, particularly the casework elements, will be accommodated by the proposed increase in the Casework Supervisor establishment to four posts.
37. However, a new type of role is needed to address aspects of this work, and it is proposed that a Policy and Training Officer post is developed.

Recommendations

- a. Instigate the proposed model for casework supervision of DSOs including the funding of the additional permanent Casework Supervisor posts, and associated expenses.
 - b. The role and Job Description of the Safeguarding Adviser post is reviewed to fully reflect these changes.
 - c. Creation of a Policy and Training Officer Post to support the work.
38. The recommendations pertaining to changes to the Safeguarding Team will be found within the existing staffing budget of the Connexional Team.
 39. These recommendations are now commended to the Council.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 13/1. The Council receives the report.**
- 13/2. The Council adopts the model for casework supervision of District Safeguarding Officers including the funding of the additional permanent Casework Supervisor posts and Policy and Training Officer post as set out in the report.**
- 13/3. The Council directs the Strategy and Resources Committee (pursuant to SO 213(5a)) to ensure that a review takes place of the role and job description of the Connexional Safeguarding Adviser.**