

Report from the Safeguarding Committee

MC/23/70

Date of meeting	19-20 October 2023
Contact name and details	Judith Davey-Cole, Chair of Safeguarding Committee chairsafeguarding@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	70/1. The Council receives the report.

Summary of content

Subject of aims	The report provides the Council with important updates from the Safeguarding Committee
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Safer recruitment processes including the backlog of DBS checks and the process for electing the President and Vice-President- Visible leadership- Future work programme includes independence, greater focus on scrutiny, risk management, and potentially restructuring the Committee.

Summary of impact

Wider connexional	Simpler more reliable way of ensuring DBS checks are kept current.
Risk	Detail on risk in the report below

The Safeguarding Committee met on 18 July and brings the following concerns to the attention of the Council:

- 1 Although many institutions (eg, the Church of England) insists that office holders are subject to renewed DBS checks every three years, the Methodist Church has set the threshold for renewal at five years. The Safeguarding Committee reviews compliance to this policy regularly in line with its terms of reference. Despite a huge amount of chasing over the last two years, a significant number of ministers have not renewed their DBS checks. The Secretary of the Conference and the Presidents' Governance Adviser have met the District Chairs to discuss the situation.
- 2 Both the Chairs' Meeting and the Safeguarding Committee have discussed the possibility of subscription to the annual update scheme for DBS checks. The cost of this appears to be £13 per minister in the active work per annum (with no charge for supernumeraries and other volunteers). The committee would welcome a steer from the Council as to whether this should be explored further.
- 3 The Committee also discussed the process around the election of the President and Vice-President, noting that the current arrangement does not allow time to include safer recruitment checks for either post. Ideally, the Committee would want to see checks undertaken between nominations and voting, given that safer recruitment (including DBS) is an important element of our approach to ensuring that the Methodist Church is a safe place for everyone. The Secretary of the Conference has therefore drafted a paper for the Conference Business Committee asking for consideration of the matter.
- 4 The Committee has been pleased to see the roll out of the Theology of Safeguarding study material [The Theology of Safeguarding and Spiritual Abuse \(methodist.org.uk\)](http://methodist.org.uk). The Chair of the Committee encourages members of the Council to engage with the material, either individually or in a group, as visible leadership in relation to safeguarding in this way would have enormous benefits.

- 5 Further to an internal review to which all current and some former members of the Committee contributed, the Committee is currently exploring how to better to fulfil all aspects of its' terms of reference and operate more effectively. It is possible that a restructure of the Committee is required.

The Committee is also considering independence in governance of safeguarding and is identifying areas for improvement. A report has been produced and is currently being reviewed. Given both external and internal contexts, the Safeguarding Committee will share the report with the Council by the end of October 2023.

In addition, as discussed with the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Secretary of the Conference, the Safeguarding Committee is currently working on a safeguarding risk register using the connexional risk management policy and the standard risk register format. Moving forward the Safeguarding Committee will feed into the connexional risk register to ensure that risk management is more "joined up".

*****RESOLUTION**

70/1. The Council receives the report.