

## 19. Safeguarding Committee

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### 1. Oversight

The last year has seen three key achievements: completion of investigations into the remaining past cases, establishment of the new professional casework supervision structure for District Safeguarding Officers and creation of capacity within the connexional safeguarding team to develop resources and support for the whole Church in being able to promote a safe environment for all. Not only is this integral to the way we understand the mission of the Church, we also expect to be facing closer public scrutiny when the government's Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse reports next year. These measures will help the Methodist Church demonstrate how seriously it takes its duties and witness.

- 1.1 The work of safeguarding is summarised in an annual work plan that is reviewed by 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's membership has been strengthened with representatives from Action for Children and Methodist Homes and now has a greater overview of safeguarding implementation and developments across the whole Church. It meets twice a year and has an annual training session in order to receive updates 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 about whom serious safeguarding allegations have been made. Updated procedures for risk assessments and the operation of panels have been introduced and there is a continuous cycle of review and learning to ensure that reports and meetings are effective and achieve positive outcomes.
- 1.3 As with previous reports to the Conference, we understand the work of Church safeguarding within the wider context of current discourses within society about what we mean by abuse and acceptable relationships in light of ever new allegations and investigations across a range of organisations. Common themes emerge and public expectations develop and the Methodist Church has to be mindful of and responsive to this in order to act appropriately and offer a perspective of hope that we can work in ways which are safe, nurturing and gospel-oriented. The final report to the Conference from the Past Cases Review Implementation Group in 2017 talked of the ongoing process of cultural change across the Church and there is strong evidence to suggest that this is underway.

### 2. Safeguarding casework and development work

#### 2.1 Annual statistics and the first 6 months of 2018/2019

	1/9/16 – 31/8/17	1/9/17 – 31/8/18	1/9/18 – 28/8/19
DBS cases open	20	81	73
DBS cases closed	125	90	125
Non DBS cases open	88	61	68
Non DBS cases closed	123	78	52

## Safeguarding Panels

	1/9/16 – 31/8/17	1/9/16 – 31/8/17	1/9/17 – 31 /8/18	1/9/17 – 31/8/18
Outcome	Number	Appeals	Number	Appeals
Not cleared	2	0	3	0
Restrictions on role and Covenant of Care	13	0	2	0
Cleared with conditions	7	1	6	0
Resigned from role	0	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	22	1	12 *	0

\*One case has not yet been concluded so does not feature in these statistics.

- 2.2 The Safeguarding Procedures, Policy and Guidance are subject to regular update and the Committee continues to add guidance which can both inform and support churches. Over the course of the next year the Committee will be addressing further model job roles and revising the Safer Recruitment and DBS guidance.
- 2.3 New procedures for risk assessments undertaken by approved assessors are now in place and this has resulted in improvements to the clarity and structure of safeguarding panels following further training and discussion with the Committee.
- 2.4 Work with Mission Partners has continued to develop and the Committee is currently engaged in working with the World Church Partnership Coordinators to develop a safeguarding policy for all Mission Partners. There is now a system to ensure that all Mission Partners undertake safeguarding training before they leave the UK.
- 2.5 Support and input to ministers coming to serve in the Methodist Church from other countries has further developed with standard and bespoke safeguarding training provided to those transferring in as well as input to the candidating process. This is to ensure that every effort is made to induct those who come to serve this Connexion to be conversant with our safeguarding procedures and government legislation.
- 3. Safeguarding training**
- 3.1 The Committee established a Safeguarding Training Group made up of staff from across the Connexional Team. The group designed the Advanced Module which is now operational. The group has received early feedback which enabled small revisions to be made. Attention now turns to revising the Foundation Module which will be due next year.
- 3.2 Guidance and input for volunteers on Monitoring and Support Groups for those with Safeguarding Contracts is nearing completion and this will provide greater clarity of what this role requires.

#### **4. District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs)**

- 4.1 The 2018 Conference was informed that plans had been approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee to introduce a new structure whereby the Connexional Safeguarding Team would include four posts with the responsibility for casework supervision and increase the safeguarding resource available to support DSOs and Districts in their duties. This was achieved as planned and the new team began work in September 2018. A new Policy and Development Officer has enabled a much clearer focus on procedural developmental work and other members of the team have lead areas including work with survivors, children, vulnerable adults professional development opportunities for DSOs and training.
- 4.2 The annual safeguarding conference for DSOs and members of District Safeguarding Groups took a theme of working with mental health which was explored from different perspectives.

#### **5. Developing survivors' work**

- 5.1 A focus on learning from victims and survivors now affects all of our safeguarding work. The Committee is indebted to those who sit on the Survivors' Reference Group and the way they continue, gently, to share their experiences as we discuss policy and practice developments. The group has begun to produce a series of prayers which it is hoped may be published as part of a learning aid for the wider Church.

#### **6. Ecumenical working**

- 6.1 The Anglican Methodist Safeguarding Group has had a very useful series of regionally based meetings bringing DSOs and Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers together. This has given opportunities to engage in discussions about what is working well in each denomination and where there are gaps and areas we can collaborate in, for example shared training programmes and renewed Local Ecumenical Partnership guidance.
- 6.2 Work with the Christian Forum for Safeguarding has continued and the Methodist Church is leading on drawing together information sharing protocols. An all-parliamentary group for faith based safeguarding has also been established which, it is hoped, will raise the profile of work in churches.

#### **\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

- 19/1. The Conference received the Report.**