

One year on – a progress report (Methodist Recorder)

A year after the apology to survivors and victims of abuse, and the publication of *Courage, Cost & Hope* - the report on the Past Cases Review (PCR), the Rev'd Helen Cameron, Assistant Secretary of the Methodist Conference, and Andy Jackson, Director of Publishing and Communications, share the progress that has been made over the past 12 months.

In May 2015, the Revd Dr Martyn Atkins, who was then serving as Secretary of the Methodist Conference and General Secretary, issued a full and unreserved apology to survivors and victims of abuse in response to the Past Cases Review report.

A huge amount of work has been undertaken on its 23 recommendations since the report was published. The following is a snapshot of that work, and the full report of the Past Cases Review Implementation Group will be presented to the forthcoming Methodist Conference.

Listening to the voices of survivors and victims

The first meeting of the Implementation Group began with an exploration about how best to engage with survivors and victims of abuse within the Church, and how to ensure their voices informed the work of the group and the implementation of the report's 23 recommendations.

It was agreed to establish a survivors' reference group to ensure that all policies and guidelines or training materials that were produced in line with the recommendations would be informed by a survivor/victim perspective.

Progress in this area has been made by the new Safeguarding Advisor, Tim Carter, and a number of individuals who are willing to contribute to the process have been identified and a meeting arranged.

Engaging with survivors/victims is wider than just receiving their views on the PCR recommendations and to further develop understanding of their perspective, the Chair of the Implementation Group, the Revd Gwyneth Owen, and Tim Carter, attended a survivors' conference organised by the Liverpool District project Church Action on Sexual Abuse Issues (CASAI) in January.

There have also been extensive discussions with the Church of England's Safeguarding Team and others as to how support for survivors/victims can be improved and definite proposals will shortly be produced.

Supervision

Recommendation 7 of *Courage, Cost and Hope* was one of the most far reaching. It stated that "a system of structured supervision for ministers be instituted to address the identified weakness in relation to accountability and support in terms of safe practice". Very significant progress has been made on implementing this recommendation.

A pilot programme of supervision for ministers in two Districts – Liverpool and South East - is expected to last until at least January 2017 in order to ensure that sufficient levels of feedback from the participants is obtained. It is possible that, in consultation with those Districts, the pilot is could be extended until the 2017 Conference in order to maximise the learning.

Resources and appropriate training in supervision skills were offered to the District Chairs and deputy Chairs and the superintendents of two pilot Districts.

An early and positive piece of feedback from the superintendents who are part of the pilot programme has been that it would be beneficial for superintendent ministers to be well established in supervision of their

own practice before being asked to supervise others. The Implementation Group welcomes the wisdom of this insight and expects to incorporate such a suggestion into the proposals which will come to the 2017 Conference regarding the implementation of the supervision programme for the whole connexion.

The Implementation Group is also delighted to report that an excellent team of accredited senior supervision practitioners has been co-opted as supervisors of the District Chairs and will be co-ordinated by the Revd Dr Jane Leach and the Assistant Secretary of the Conference. Formal 1:1 supervision of all District Chairs will be in place from 1st September 2016.

This structured programme of regular supervision will connect to, and be supportive of, the existing Ministerial Development Review (MDR) provision for each Chair of District.

The pilot programme is also already offering insights into how attractive the prospect of group supervision might be but also evidencing how demanding in reality it is to do well.

A circuit ministerial team is a complex group to work with in terms of group supervision and it expects a lot more exploration of the skills required to facilitate group supervision to be needed before group supervision can become a reality.

The training of superintendent ministers in skills of supervision for working with probationers will continue in its current four day course format. It is envisaged that this specialist work will be required for at least three to five years.

Ministerial code of conduct

The Methodist Council in April 2016 agreed to establish a working party to consider the creation of a code of ministerial practice. The draft code of conduct or practice will be presented to the Methodist Council in January 2017 in order that it might be presented to the 2017 Conference.

Recording pastoral practice

The Implementation Group recommends that records are kept of all pastoral visits to people in their own homes as best practice. Such a pro-forma or log can be used in hard copy or be made available electronically. Interest has been expressed in this record being available as an app, for example. The recommendation to the Conference is that a log of visits should be kept by all involved in pastoral visits especially when the person undertaking the visit is not accompanied.

Daily log of pastoral ministry

Name of person visited
Date of visit
Venue
Reason for the visit
Necessary action, if any, who it involves
Date of next visit

Complaints and discipline

A significant number of the recommendations relating to Complaints and Discipline processes have been achieved, including:

- Annual training for members of the Connexional Complaints Panel;

- The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice ensures training and guidance is given to new superintendents in their responsibilities as Local Complaints Officers, and ongoing guidance and updating is offered in the annual superintendents' courses;
- All members of the Connexional Complaints Panel will undertake both the Foundation Module and Leadership Module of the Creating Safer Space Safeguarding training;
- New sections of the Leadership Module to cover the impact of abuse on victims, training resources for all those hearing complaints relating to a safeguarding concern.

Changes to Standing Orders

The mapping of the work around the potential changes to policy and standing orders has been started by the Law and Polity Committee and the Complaints and Discipline Liaison Group.

Safeguarding training and policy

The Safeguarding Adviser is working closely with staff in the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN) and it is hoped to implement a new framework from September this year which will include the PCR lessons material.

There have been discussions in a number of settings about producing materials for wider discussion within church communities about safe relationships.

It is hoped to start work on reviewing safeguarding policies shortly, and this will be done in co-operation and consultation with the Church of England Safeguarding Team who are also reviewing their policies.

Recommendation 6 that the findings of the PCR be incorporated into the training of ministers irrespective of the pathway they are following has been implemented.

Further learning after the PCR

When *Courage, Cost and Hope* was written there were a significant number of past cases that still required follow up and Recommendation 21 was included to ensure that any important learning from this material was not lost.

This additional learning is being reflected in the revisions of the safeguarding training materials.

When the report was published, with extensive media coverage, it triggered the submission of a further 60 cases.

Follow-up work is being carried out regarding the numbers of those ministers who failed to make a return to the PCR.

Culture audit

An audit of progress on the cultural change recommendations of the *Courage, Cost and Hope* will take place in the autumn of 2016.

Conclusion

It was recognised that the implementation task of the Past Cases Review would be far reaching because the report was calling for significant culture change in the life of the church and in ministerial and pastoral practice.

In some of the key areas of culture change, such as the development of a programme of structured supervision, excellent progress has been made. In most other areas, despite resource challenges, progress is well underway.

The Implementation Group expects to be able to report to the 2017 Conference that all the recommendations of the report will be implemented in full or with a clear process and timetable for completing the implementation set out.

And as we approach the anniversary of the apology on May 28, we must again acknowledge the courage of the survivors and victims who relived exceptionally difficult, life-changing, experiences to participate in the review.

As the work of the Implementation Group progresses, we also remember the need for ongoing culture change throughout the Church, especially for its ministers and leaders, the lessons that continue to be learnt, and the commitment to improve safeguarding practice across the Connexion.

Our constant prayer is that this work ensures the Church is a safe place for all.

Prayer

For those who are abused and those who abuse;

for those who are careless about others and those who are careful;

for those who offer guidance through the dark and those who endeavour to safeguard the vulnerable:
good Lord, we pray.

Good Lord, give hope to the hurt and a sense of your love and rightness. May we all be led into safe and sound living. Give us your strength for today, your hope for tomorrow and the light of your love to guide us in all things.

Amen.