

## 30. Safeguarding Report

<b>Contact name and details</b>	Tim Carter, Safeguarding Adviser cartert@methodistchurch.org.uk
<b>Resolutions</b>	<p>30/1. The Conference receives the Report.</p> <p>30/2. The Conference approves the change in frequency for designated training for <i>Creating Safer Space</i> Foundation and Leadership Modules to every four years with effect from July 2017.</p> <p>30/3. The Conference directs the Methodist Council to oversee work on the practical and financial implications of increasing the minimum required number of hours worked by District Safeguarding Officers and to bring clear recommendations to the 2017 Conference.</p> <p>30/4. The Conference directs the Methodist Council to bring to the 2017 Conference, as part of the 2017/18 budget preparation, fully costed proposals for achieving professional supervision for all District Safeguarding Officers.</p>

### Summary of content and impact

<b>Subject and aims</b>	To update the Conference on safeguarding developments since the 2015 Conference.
<b>Main points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversight</li> <li>• Safeguarding Case work</li> <li>• <i>Creating Safer Space</i></li> <li>• District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs)</li> <li>• Ecumenical working</li> </ul>
<b>Consultations</b>	On-going discussions with District Chairs, DSOs and District Safeguarding Groups
<b>Impact</b>	<b>External</b> Recognition of the ongoing partnership with the Church of England and other denominations

#### 1. Oversight

Much of the safeguarding work of the Methodist Church is carried out in collaboration with the Church of England. The report to the 2015 Conference noted the creation of a new Joint Safeguarding Working Group (JSWG). The Council has appointed the Revd Helen D Cameron as the Methodist Co-Chair of that group.

- 1.1 The Methodist Church appointed a new full-time Connexional Safeguarding Adviser, Tim Carter, in November 2015. In order to meet the additional work demands of the Past Cases Review (PCR) the safeguarding team has been increased to four full time equivalent posts which will reduce as the PCR case work is completed. The new appointment has afforded the opportunity to review the current functioning of the team, workloads, and current processes and expected future demands. Some of this thinking is shared in this report.

- 1.2 The Safeguarding Advisory Panel has now become the Safeguarding Committee meeting twice a year as a full body for review of the work done through risk assessments. At other times members meet in small teams for review of individual cases. The committee discussions have a strong emphasis on improving practice and promoting consistency between individual panels. Work has continued to improve diversity in committee membership. The committee is keen to engage more fully in a review of training materials and wider safeguarding developments.
- 1.3 Within the work of safeguarding, the focus has inevitably rested largely on children and this continues to be the case. However, with the passing of the 2014 Care Act, there are new responsibilities for the Church and statutory agencies in relation to the care and protection of vulnerable adults. This will be an area of work that the Methodist Church will need to focus on and address the needs of Local Churches (and community engagement) which is often with a growing number of older and potentially vulnerable adults. During the course of the next year, the safeguarding team will be exploring this further and putting in place appropriate actions in order to be able to respond well. The Connexional Central Services Budget includes provision for an additional full-time case worker post, with the intention of introducing a greater focus within the team on vulnerable adults.

## 2. Safeguarding casework

- 2.1 There continues to be a growth in casework. The three main sources are greater numbers of new referrals requiring support to Districts and the commissioning of risk assessments, new enquiries/concerns emanating from the remaining PCR investigations, and a steady flow of new enquiries stimulated by the PCR publicity from people who were unaware of the original call for evidence. This has put considerable strain on the capacity of the team. More comprehensive statistics are now being produced to enable patterns and trends to be shared in order to help with the planning of resource allocations in the future to fulfil our responsibilities. At the same time reviews are being undertaken of the recording and filing systems to ensure that they are fit for purpose and enable efficient and secure way of working.
- 2.2 In the past year the safeguarding team has worked hard to manage the caseloads for PCR, Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS) and non-DBS cases. The Connexional Team also commissioned and facilitated a number of risk assessment panels, as shown below:

### Case work statistics for connexional year 1 September 2014 – 31 August 2015:

PCR cases still being investigated	733
PCR cases closed during this period	703

DBS cases closed	90
DBS cases still worked on	6

Non DBS cases open	362
Non DBS cases closed	15

### Case work statistics for the first six months connexional year 1 September 2015 – 31 August 2016:

PCR cases still being investigated	628
PCR cases closed during this period	105

DBS cases closed	43
DBS cases still worked on	28

Non DBS cases open	369
Non DBS cases closed in this period	1

These numbers represent approximately 1025 open case files.

**Risk assessments during connexional year 1 September 2014 – 31 August 2015:**

Number of panels commissioned and held: 25

Outcome	Number	Appeals
Not cleared	1	0
Restrictions on role and Covenant of Care	12	0
Cleared with Conditions	9	2
Cleared without conditions	1	0
Resigned from Role	1	0
Withdrawn	1	0

On top of case work case workers also spend an average of seven hours per week advising on safeguarding work more generally.

- 2.3 The safeguarding team is initiating a circular email to all DBS verifiers to give an opportunity to highlight issues that regularly arise. This will be sent out quarterly and will include relevant guidance as appropriate. This measure will increase compliance with current requirements.
- 2.4 The work of the Past Cases Review (PCR) Implementation Group is reported elsewhere in the agenda. It is worth noting that much work has been done to streamline different, yet related, church processes in relation to safeguarding. Key areas are the Complaints and Discipline process and Ministerial Oversight so that a more coordinated strategy is in place for working on cases that have elements of more than one connexional process.
- 2.5 The 2015 Conference approved the setting up of a working party to address the use of Covenants of Care in relation to safeguarding (Memorial 35, 2015). The Council has approved the terms of reference and appointed the group, which is convened by the Connexional Safeguarding Adviser. The Council will report to the Conference with any recommendations in 2017.
- 2.6 The Safeguarding Adviser is contributing to the working party appointed by the Council on Pornography in response to NM 2015/215. The Council will also be reporting on that work to the 2017 Conference.

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

- 3.1 Since the 2015 Conference, work has been undertaken to produce a revised version of the Foundation Module and a refresher version of the Foundation Module for use five years after the Module was first taken. Because of the regular changes and developments in legislation and public expectation in relation to safeguarding, it is proposed that the five-year cycle of refresher training for Foundation and Leadership courses is reduced to four years with effect from July 2017.
- 3.2 Additional sections of the Leadership Module are being written to cover social media and maintaining appropriate boundaries. This is being undertaken in conjunction with items required from the PCR recommendations and is expected to be published in the autumn of 2016.

3.3 Safeguarding training is also included in ministerial and superintendents training.

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

4.1 The work of safeguarding across the Connexion is carried out through DSOs working in collaboration, and with the support of, the connexional safeguarding team. The strengthening of the role of DSOs envisaged in the President's Inquiry (Report 20 to the 2012 Conference) continues. This established a recommended minimum commitment of 14 hours per week of (paid in the majority of cases) professional DSO time and two thirds of Districts have now implemented this. That report envisaged (page 202) that for some large Districts this would need to be increased. In some cases this need has been recognised, with some Districts achieving 17.5 – 21 hours as a minimum and others planning to do this. Given this experience, and the continued importance of robust safeguarding structures to support the mission of the Church, it is now thought necessary that Districts introduce a minimum number of hours based on size, current, and anticipated workloads. An expected increase in government regulation along with the public expectation of those working with children and vulnerable adults is an additional reason to review the current arrangements. The Methodist Council has determined that this matter should be considered by the Connexional Team in consultation with the Districts in order for a report to be made to the 2017 Conference.

4.2 DSOs are critical to promoting and ensuring that safeguarding practice is understood and delivered in each District. This meets our Christian obligation to take care of and safeguard the most vulnerable in our communities as well as ensuring that the Methodist Church's reputation with statutory agencies and the wider public is protected and enhanced as we demonstrate professional conduct in making churches truly safe spaces for all.

4.3 In order to achieve this it is important that DSOs are working to the same standards and behaviours across the Connexion. The Connexional Safeguarding Adviser has been visiting each District to meet with DSOs, district safeguarding teams and District Chairs in order to identify local challenges and achievements, assess individual job descriptions and supervision arrangements. What has emerged from this is a desire for professional external supervision for each DSO which could be provided through the connexional safeguarding team. This would enable greater standardisation and quality control of ways of working, undertaking of risk assessments and delivery of training etc without removing district management of 'their' DSO. It is recommended that the Conference instructs the Council to bring forward costed proposals for achieving this as part of the draft Connexional Central Services Budget that will be considered by the 2017 Conference. This will coincide with the report from the PCR implementation group and enhance the Church's further development of robust and future proof safeguarding provision.

#### **5. Ecumenical working**

5.1 The annual Joint Safeguarding Conference organised together with the Church of England in February 2016 provided an excellent opportunity for DSOs, Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers and members of District and Diocesan Safeguarding Committees to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding through both the formal programme and networking. The topic was cultural change and with some excellent key note speakers and workshops it was by many accounts the most successful conference to date. Representatives of the United Reformed Church (URC) and Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) participated in the Conference and this could lead to a more open invitation in future years to a wider conference.

5.2 Following on from the conference both the Church of England and Methodist safeguarding advisers have met with their counterparts in the URC, BUGB and Roman Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales. We are committed to exploring greater ways of working together.

- 5.3 One of the areas for collaboration is in work with survivors and setting up structures that can enable greater participation and access for victim and survivor perspectives on emerging policy and practice development. As both the Church of England and the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales are proposing initiatives it makes practical and financial sense for our churches to be working together on this – please see the report of the Past Cases Review Implementation Group for further detail on current developments.
- 5.4 Together with our ecumenical partners there is an over-riding area of common involvement which is the development of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (the government inquiry into institutions and child sexual abuse – the Goddard Inquiry). So far the Church of England and some entities accountable to the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales have been selected for investigation. There are also additional lines from the Inquiry into residential schools (this could involve some Methodist schools) and individual survivor hearings which may involve people who have experienced abuse in one of our churches. Support to colleagues in other denominations and learning from their experience will be very important during the lifetime of the inquiry which has an initial five year work programme with regular public reports.

### **\*\*\*RESOLUTIONS**

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