

SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE

May 2016

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Encourage Kirk Sessions to have Safeguarding as a standing item of business at their meetings and to receive reports from their Safeguarding Coordinator(s).
3. Note the plan to engage with the systemic review of Safeguarding in the Church.
4. Instruct Kirk Sessions to ensure that everyone engaged in Regulated Work is a member of the PVG Scheme.
5. Remind Congregations of the importance of ongoing Safeguarding Training and encourage the use of the valuable resource of Safeguarding Trainers within Presbyteries.
6. Acknowledge the work on Safeguarding aspects of Domestic Abuse and await a report in 2017
7. Note the resource being set up called 'keepingsafe.church' for encouraging children to be safe online.
8. Acknowledge the ongoing, complex work which is involved throughout the Church to keep vulnerable people safe.

REPORT

1. Introduction

1 Peter *"Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed."*

1.1 Safeguarding is at the heart of God's will for everyone and while it is sometimes challenging to incorporate its requirements into the life of the congregation, its foundations assure us that God's love requires us to place the most vulnerable at the heart of what we do and who we are. This ensures that in the Body of Christ, we encourage everyone to live fully, radically and in God's love and safekeeping. It is a necessary and permanent part of Church life. The Church of Scotland has founded and maintained its Safeguarding principles based on a strong theological underpinning. The Committee has produced an accessible plain English theology of Safeguarding which can be found in Appendix 1 (page 14/4). This is for

members of congregations as well as wider society, who can all be assured that what we believe in and what we practice is biblical, coherent, systematic and valuable.

1.2 Safeguarding is currently delivered through the work of 1,800 Safeguarding Coordinators, 93 Safeguarding Trainers, 40 Presbytery Safeguarding Contacts and the staff in the Safeguarding Service. The goal of Safeguarding activity in the Church is to minimise the opportunity for harm and abuse to occur, and when it is disclosed, to ensure protective action and effective multi-agency responses.

1.3 Safeguarding is constantly changing and there are new challenges emerging every year. Recently these include the increase in contact and non-contact sexual harm of children and adults at risk, facilitated and perpetrated online and through social media. There is new evidence which shows that there is an under-reporting of child sexual abuse. According to the UK Children's

Commissioner, (November 2015), only one in eight cases comes to the attention of the authorities. The Church will give evidence to the *Public Enquiry into the historical abuse of children in institutional care in Scotland*, when invited.

2. Safeguarding within the Congregation

"As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct."

2.1 Safeguarding is an important part of every congregation, which has members who engage with young people in Sunday School and Clubs and older people, who are frail, as part of our commitment to pastoral care. The Kirk Session should readily acknowledge their responsibility to ensure that the people who volunteer are both suitable and supported in their roles. Therefore, the Safeguarding Committee is asking that Kirk Sessions ensure that Safeguarding is placed on their agendas as a standing item. This ensures that the Safeguarding Coordinators, undertaking this important task are supported in their role, and the elders take their responsibility seriously, by ensuring that those who undertake regulated work are named on the Safeguarding Congregational Register and have been safely recruited.

3. Review of Safeguarding

"Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart."

3.1 It is the intention of the Safeguarding Committee to seek an External Review of the current Safeguarding practices and procedures throughout the Church, to make certain that this scrutiny ensures best ongoing practice. Valuable pointers can be found in the report by a former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Very Rev Dr Andrew McLellan, into Safeguarding Policies and Procedures and Practice in the Catholic Church (McLellan Commission Report, August

2015, <https://www.mclellancommission.co.uk/report>. As this is Church wide, any review and implications will require the support of the Council of Assembly and will have a significant financial outlay.

3.2 The Church's internal auditors, Deloitte, have recently considered how successful a number of sample congregations were in processing volunteers working with children and protected adults onto the PVG Scheme. The results indicate that there needs to be a more comprehensive communication between Congregation, Presbytery and General Assembly Committee, to ensure compliance and good practice. This may have an ongoing financial cost. We appreciate that the administration of this may seem onerous, but would remind the Church that the underpinning motivation for all of our safeguarding activity is the biblical imperative of caring for the vulnerable; we owe it to God's children. The Safeguarding Committee will undertake further consideration of this issue and report next year to the General Assembly.

3.3 The Church of Scotland is one of the largest Third Sector organisation processing PVG Scheme memberships. Successful applications have now reached 28,000 for 34,000 posts, since the beginning of the PVG Scheme in February 2011. However, as Deloitte have highlighted, it is unknown how many people have not yet joined the PVG Scheme. The Safeguarding Committee is asking the Church, as a priority to ensure that everyone who is in regulated work (paid and voluntary) is safely recruited and has a valid PVG Scheme Membership.

4. Safeguarding Training

"All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures forever."

4.1 Safeguarding Training in the Church is well established. In 2016 The Safeguarding Service will continue to take Safeguarding out to Presbyteries through the Safeguarding Roadshows. These Roadshows provide an opportunity to update and support Safeguarding

Trainers, Safeguarding Coordinators and Presbytery Safeguarding Contacts.

4.2 In the twelve months to April 2015, 3,920 people received Safeguarding Training on 235 courses across the Church. This includes the provision of training for CrossReach's Children's and Adults' Services; meeting the needs of members of the Deaf Churches; and providing refresher Safeguarding Training for Ministers, Candidates and Admissions to Ordained Ministry, Army Chaplains, the Girls Brigade and Mission and Discipleship Staff. For the first time, the Safeguarding Service delivered Safeguarding Training at three locations in the Presbytery of Jerusalem, including Tabeetha School, emphasising that we provide an international Safeguarding Service.

4.3 Mr Colin Robson, of the Safeguarding Service, is a Child Exploitation Online Protection (CEOP) Ambassador, who has cascaded this training to 29 Safeguarding Trainers. Those trainers can now deliver *ThinkUKnow* materials to children and their parents.

4.4 One-off Safeguarding training is not sufficient. Ongoing refresher training is needed for everyone engaged in Safeguarding. Training ensures the confidence to recognise and report abuse and practice Safeguarding in the Church. The Safeguarding Committee is asking that if you are offered Safeguarding Training and Refresher Training, please engage with it.

5. Domestic Abuse

"Let yourselves be built into a spiritual house."

5.1 The Safeguarding Committee has established a Domestic Abuse Working Group to consider this important issue and to work in partnership with other Church Councils. Domestic Abuse is now clearly on the Multi Agency Public Protection Agenda and as such, it is important that the Church addresses this challenging issue which affects men, women and children. The Group

will produce guidance, to try to address the needs of people affected by domestic abuse in the Church. The work will hopefully provide pathways for people affected by Domestic Abuse. The Group plans to report to the General Assembly in 2017.

6. Helping Children to Keep Themselves Safe

"Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation."

6.1 The Safeguarding Service, along with colleagues from CrossReach, Mission and Discipleship and Church and Society have been developing resources for young people in the Church to encourage and enable them to keep themselves safe. A domain name 'keepingsafe.church' has been created and this resource will be available to the young people in the Church in the next few months.

7. Ongoing Good Practice within Safeguarding

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

7.1 The Safeguarding Service continues to provide ongoing advice, support and guidance on all matters of policy and procedure to Congregations, Presbyteries, Councils and CrossReach Services. Most enquiries continue to be about PVG Scheme Membership and Recruitment. The Safeguarding Service is committed to supporting the Church and so if anyone needs advice or support, please contact the Service.

7.2 Realistically no organisation is ever able to eliminate the risk of harm or abuse, but by focussing energy on prevention the Church can minimise the likelihood of it occurring.

To this end the Safeguarding Service actively promotes awareness raising training and the use of *Safeguarding Audit Checklists* in Congregations and CrossReach Services.

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about_us/safeguarding_service/key-publications

7.3 Safeguarding Panels within congregations work with people who pose a risk to the public, to ensure that everyone in the Church is safe. This work is important and discreet and the Safeguarding Committee is grateful to the Panels who do this important task. The Safeguarding Service supports these specific panels and provides bespoke training to give them confidence. Individuals who may present a risk of harm and abuse are supported by the Panels and sign a Covenant of Responsibilities, to ensure their commitment to their ongoing discipleship. How we do this can be found in Safeguarding Handbook 5.

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/24638/safeguarding_handbook_5.pdf

7.4 The Safeguarding Service continues its good relationship with Public Protection Agencies as they refer individuals, who are assessed as presenting a risk and who also wish to worship within the fellowship of the Church. Most people in this situation are able to worship within a congregation. A small number of people are not able to attend worship safely, and so the Church comes to the person. The Safeguarding Committee refers to this a 'Christian Fellowship' Model. It is determined on a multi-agency basis and takes into account risks and concerns.

8. Conclusion

"Conduct yourselves honourably, so that they may see your honourable deeds and glorify God."

8.1 The Safeguarding Committee would like to thank everyone who is involved in Safeguarding for the committed work which they undertake in this increasingly complex area of the Church's service. The Church's Gospel commitment to protect vulnerable people releases us to serve the people of Scotland to the best of our ability.

It assures everyone who serves and worships within the fellowship of the Church, and the agencies with whom we work, that we place our commitment to the most vulnerable people, at the heart of our mission.

In the name of the Committee

KAREN K CAMPBELL, *Convener*
SHEILA RITCHIE, *Vice-Convener*
RICHARD CROSSE, *Head of Safeguarding*

APPENDIX 1

THE THEOLOGY OF SAFEGUARDING

The Theology of Safeguarding

Jesus had a very clear message about the most vulnerable people. It is a theme which is replicated throughout the whole Bible, with God portrayed in the 121st psalm, as the keeper of Israel. This Hebrew word can be translated as Safeguard, which is God's need and wish for the Church, not only that we are safe, but we all work for the safety of all people.

That is affirmed in the theological idea of Salvation. In both the Greek and the Latin version of the word, the root of the word is safekeeping. The theological imperative of God is the safety of his children. Jesus continues this theme in St Matthew 18, when he places a child in the midst of the disciples when they ask him:

"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

His reply is revolutionary when he says:

"Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven". (Matthew 18: 3-5).

The power of the Jesus' imagery shows us the strength of his teaching about the most vulnerable in our midst. Yet again, Jesus gives us the example that worldly power is not the most important thing in his world, and that Christians are called to replicate that radical hospitality and celebrate

Christ's Incarnation, by the love we have for the most vulnerable in our midst.

There are other examples in the Gospels of Jesus holding up the poor and vulnerable elderly as examples of great faith, as in the story of the widow, who brings her gift to the Temple. He holds her up as an example of humility and generosity.

Jesus teaches that, in the Kingdom, people are judged by what is in their hearts and how they put their faith into action, rather than the learned, like the Pharisees who know the Law, but fail to put it into practice. Theologically, the Church of Scotland has committed to trying to ensure that everyone is free from the risk harm and abuse. This stems from the Gospel imperative that Jesus loves everyone, particularly those who are the least, the last and the lost in society, and wishes everyone to be safe and cared for, particularly those who are vulnerable.

The other side of this coin is that we know there are some people who worship in our congregations, or who might wish to work for the Church, who present a risk of harm and abuse to vulnerable people. For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven Report 2009, is the Church of Scotland's understanding of our theological attitude to Forgiveness, and how we support and manage people who pose a risk to vulnerable people.

At its heart is an understanding that people who survive abuse should be cared for and not be placed in a situation, where the hurt they have experienced can be perpetuated, even inadvertently, by our actions. This means that in discipleship terms, someone who has abused, can no longer be allowed to be in a place of leadership within the Church and they must be accountable for their continued discipleship journey. Forgiveness can only be given by the survivor. The Institution of the Church, does not have the right to

forgive an individual on behalf of anyone, who has been abused. It may be that someone who has been abused may not be able to forgive the person who has abused them, and the Church should never make anyone feel obliged to forgive the kind of abuse they may have suffered. The Church should rightly leave that great responsibility and right to God.

It is also important to remember that forgiveness is not about forgetting. Jesus still had the scars on his body after the resurrection and everyone lives with their own scars. People who survive abuse have hidden scars, and the Church should ensure that, as an institution, we do not add to their scars.

The person who poses a risk of harm and abuse, and wishes to continue to worship within the Church of Scotland, is required, as part of their discipleship journey, to recognise they are under the authority of God. They, like everyone who seeks to live out their discipleship, must try to acknowledge what they have done and how they have done it, and seek to find ways to amend their behaviour and to repent of their sin. This acknowledgement may only be to God, but it is hoped that with the support of the local congregation, and by bible study, prayer and reflection with the Minister and others, they might find a way to live with what they have done and to live safely.

Safeguarding is at the heart of God's will for everyone and while it is sometimes challenging to incorporate its requirements into the life of the congregation, its foundations assure us that God's love requires us to place the most vulnerable at the heart of what we do and who we are. This ensures that in the Body of Christ, we encourage everyone to live fully, radically and in God's love and safekeeping.