

Safeguarding Coordinator Event Questions

Q1. Can Presbytery please inform the appropriate coordinator about volunteers who have attended a course?

This process differs across presbyteries and I would advise contacting your Safeguarding Presbytery Contact who can let you know more. It would make sense for volunteers who have attended the Introductory Safeguarding Training to show their coordinator their Certificate from the training course. The Safeguarding Coordinator can then mark the date attended training on the Congregational Register (SG7).

Q2. Can trainers spend more time at the Coordinators course on how to fill in the forms?

In 2017, the Safeguarding Coordinator course was updated, and amongst other things it has made more space for looking at how to fill in the forms. Trainers are also able to request PVG forms to use in these training courses.

In saying that, there is a lot of information to cover in the Safeguarding Coordinator Course. This is why the Safeguarding Service provides step by step guidance for both applicants filling in the forms and also Safeguarding Coordinators, along with some reminders about common mistakes.

The Safeguarding Service recommends:

- Following the step by step guidance sent with the PVG forms
- Checking the PVG form has been filled in correctly by the applicant before sending to the Safeguarding Service and
- Giving us a call if you are unsure about anything while you are checking or filling in the forms.

Q3. Could there be a greater geographical spread of training venues – difficulty of getting people who need training to courses?

A presbytery should ideally set their training calendar for the year in advance and in doing so endeavour to ensure a good geographical spread of training. However if you would like to have training in your

area, the best way to ensure that this happens is to contact your safeguarding presbytery contact and volunteer to host a training session.

Q4. What is the difference between Coordinator Training, Volunteer Training and Kirk Session Training?

You can find a good explanation of these three different types of training in the newly updated [Safeguarding Handbook 3](#) page 2. Click here to view.

Q5. Do Kirk Session members who have done Introductory Safeguarding Training for workers and volunteers have to also attend Kirk Session Training?

Yes. This training is targeted at all members of the Kirk Session and trustees, not in their role as workers but as trustees and the safeguarding responsibilities they have therein. There will of course be some crossover regarding the key messages of safeguarding which apply to all.

Q6. What should we do if volunteers won't attend mandatory training?

It is difficult if volunteers refuse to attend training. Firstly, volunteers should be given a fair and reasonable amount of opportunity to attend a suitable safeguarding training course. If volunteers continue to actively avoid safeguarding training after they have been asked to attend, the safeguarding coordinator should raise this issue with the safeguarding panel.

Q7. Risk assessment forms for outings and events: does it need to be completed every time? And for what events? Pastoral care and children's events?

As per best practice we would advise filling in a new risk assessment form for each outing and event. If the event or outing is repeated, then it would be acceptable to update the existing risk assessment. However, the exercise should be completed as, for example, often there will be different children attending an event/outing which might affect the risk assessment.

Q8. Data Confidentiality – how long should you keep records, personal information, records of incidents, contact details etc?

For all guidance on data protection and retention schedules you should refer to the following documents:

[Data Protection Guidance for Safeguarding Coordinators](#) and
[Retention Guidance for Congregations](#)

We are also finalising an ‘at a glance retention guide for SG forms’ in consultation with the Law Department. We will send to Safeguarding Coordinators as soon as it is ready.

Q9. How do we ensure that our congregations know when to speak to us?

This is a good question. There are a number of things that the Safeguarding Coordinator/Panel and Kirk Session can do to ensure congregations know when/how to speak to you. The Safeguarding Policy Statement should be displayed in a public place in the Church along with the Safeguarding Poster which has a place to input the name and contact details of the Safeguarding Coordinator. This, in conjunction with ensuring individuals attend the relevant safeguarding training would be positive steps to ensuring congregations know when/how to speak to the Safeguarding Coordinator.

Q10. Encouraging volunteers to attend training – tips please?

Firstly, we try not to make attending training too onerous for volunteers and as such have condensed the training to last about 2 hours 30 minutes, maximum. The Church of Scotland feel it is important for anyone working with children and/or protected adults to take the time to discuss safeguarding and their roles and responsibilities in this regard.

As I said earlier, hosting a training course in your own Church can be a good way of encouraging volunteers to attend training if appropriate. Some Churches/Presbyteries also try to organise volunteer crèche facilities to make it easier for parents to attend.

Q11. Should Safeguarding Coordinators oversee data protection?

Safeguarding Coordinators have duties in relation to the retention of documents related to Safeguarding as per the guidance stated in question 8. In saying that, Data Protection across the whole congregation is much broader and taking responsibility for it all, would have to be agreed with the Kirk Session. Many Churches have specific data protection officers to take on this role. If you are in doubt you could discuss this with your Kirk Session and the Law Department.

Q12. What is the role of the Minister in Safeguarding?

The Minister's role is to help the Kirk Session and Safeguarding Coordinator fulfil their safeguarding remit and to establish good pastoral practice for the care and support of Church members whose lives are (or have been) affected by harm and/or abuse. Ministers may also be members of Safeguarding Panels.

Ministers who have to manage disclosures of abuse (both current and historical) should initially discuss them with their Safeguarding Coordinator and Safeguarding Panel for support and advice. Similarly the Safeguarding Service must be contacted.

Details of all roles and responsibilities can be found on the website in [Safeguarding Handbook 1](#).

Q13. Refresher Training for Volunteers – when should this occur and how can we encourage people to do so?

We recommend volunteers attend refresher training every 3 years. This is a recommendation as per practice in other organisations and not a general assembly deliverance.

Q14. Whose responsibility is it to ensure that the Safe Recruitment process takes place? e.g. Interviews for volunteers, Job Descriptions etc

The Safeguarding Coordinator acting on behalf of the Kirk Session will have oversight of safe recruitment procedures in the Church. However, some tasks within the process can be undertaken by others.

For example, it makes sense that developing the job description is led by someone in the Church who has a thorough understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the post(s) under review. However, the Safeguarding Coordinator should ensure that a job description is developed and that copies of the forms are attached to the appropriate Application Form.

Likewise, an interview 'panel' of two or three people is ideal and this does not necessarily have to include the Safeguarding Coordinator. Interviewers should have an understanding of relevant legislation including the requirements of the Data Protection Act and the Equalities Act. All members of the interview panel need to be aware of the job description, person specification and see the applicant's application form and references.

Please see [Handbook 2](#) for more information in relation to the Safe Recruitment process.

Q15. What constitutes a reference or a referee? Who can it be?

Whenever possible, references should be provided by an individual or organisation out with the local church community. It is a good idea to include a copy of the job description (SG1) with the reference request so that the referee has an idea of the role being applied for.

If a reference is not forthcoming, the Safeguarding Coordinator should ask the applicant's permission to make contact with the referee or ask the applicant to provide details of another referee.

Q16. What form of identification is acceptable for people who have no passport or driving licence with a photograph?

There are many forms of ID which will suffice. Details of what is acceptable can be found [here](#) on the multiple coversheet.

Q17. With regard to point 5 on the safeguarding act what is the covenant of responsibilities?

A covenant of responsibilities is an agreement that can be put in place between a person who is known to have sexually harmed a child or other person *and* the Kirk Session/Safeguarding Panel to facilitate their safe inclusion. Full details of what this can be found in [Safeguarding Handbook 5](#).

Q18. What is the best way to store data?

Please see question 8 for more information.

Q19. Can you start someone under supervision before PVG check clearance comes through?

No. The Church of Scotland does **not** have a policy where an individual can be supervised until they have been cleared to do regulated work. An individual's PVG Scheme Membership through another organisation does not enable them to work in the Church of Scotland. These practices are also applicable to Boys Brigade and Girls Brigade posts.

Q20. Why can't forms be sent electronically?

It is indeed possible to send most forms related to Safeguarding electronically. PVG scheme forms (full applications and existing) as well as self-declaration forms are still sent in paper format. Disclosure Scotland are intending to go digital in the future which would mean PVG applications would be done online.

Q21. Is it essential for a longstanding safeguarder who trained with a worldwide and highly regarded organisation to also train in the Church of Scotland. How can such a person be persuaded to comply?

There a number of reasons the General Assembly have instructed us to be vigilant in relation to ensuring key people in the Church – i.e. Kirk Session members, Safeguarding Coordinators and Volunteers/Workers/Ministers etc. attend Safeguarding Training.

The training is specific to the Church of Scotland context. In the same way, such a person above would NOT be exempt from education/police/other voluntary organisations training, because they have done the church training.

With the high profile enquiries in recent years, we are made more and more aware of the importance of vigilant safeguarding policies and procedures. By 'exempting' individuals who work with children or vulnerable adults in the Church from training we risk diluting the bigger Safeguarding Message.

Q22. In an ecumenical situation where leaders may come from different Church organisations in PVG membership through Christian body acceptable?

No. This is not acceptable. In order for someone to do regulated work with the Church of Scotland they must complete an existing member form (if they are already a member). This will ensure that the Church of Scotland is 'an interested party' in the person's PVG scheme membership and if they are listed as unsuitable to work with children or protected adults or under consideration for listing the Church of Scotland will be notified by Disclosure Scotland.

The only exception would be in relation to a project or event that is done in partnership. In this case, an agreement between the partners should be drawn up and signed. For more details on this you can contact safeguarding@churchofscotland.org.uk

Q23. How often do coordinators, ministers, volunteers and elders need to be retrained?

As stated earlier, this is recommended every 3 years as per best practice and not per a GA deliverance.

Q24. Does the Coordinator have to interview every volunteer? One Church suggested that the youth worker can interview rather than the Coordinator?

Please see question 14 for more information.

Q25. Overseas Checks?

Please see the newly updated [Handbook 2](#) here which has clear detailed information on applicants and overseas checks. If you are unclear please call the Safeguarding Service for further help and support.

Q26. How often should Coordinators update their training?

The Safeguarding Service would strongly recommend safeguarding coordinators refresh their training every 3 years if possible. Since 2017, there is also a shorter coordinator refresher training available for trainers to use.