

# SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE

## May 2015

### PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

#### The General Assembly:

1. Receive the report.
2. Instruct Kirk Sessions to ensure that all volunteers and locally employed staff undertaking Regulated Work, as defined in the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act, 2007, join the PVG Scheme by 31 October 2015. (*Section 5.3*)
3. Instruct Kirk Sessions to ensure that all volunteers and paid staff who are members of the PVG Scheme attend safeguarding training. (*Section 6.1*)
4. Note that the Safeguarding Service will share appropriate recruitment information with Safeguarding Coordinators/ Safeguarding Panels, acting on behalf of Kirk Sessions, in specific situations. (*Section 7.3*)
5. Instruct the Safeguarding Committee to work with other Councils to raise awareness about recognising domestic abuse and providing an appropriate response to support the person affected and their family. (*Section 9.5*)
6. Instruct Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries to use the Safeguarding Audit Checklist for Congregations and Presbyteries, 2015, revised Safeguarding Service form SG11, for Annual Inspection of Records and Local Church Review. (*Section 11.1*)

## REPORT

### 1. Introduction

Psalm 139 *'O Lord, You have searched me and known me.'*

1.1 As Christians we affirm that all that we are and all that we do, is within the sphere of God's care and concern. Who we are under God, should direct and inform our thoughts, hopes and actions. Safeguarding is a responsibility of everyone in the Church to ensure as far as possible that everyone is free from the risk of harm and abuse.

1.2 Safeguarding exemplifies the Gospel imperative to care for the least, the last and the lost and demands that each person is valued as a child of God, made in the image of God. Everyone is entitled to enjoy dignity, well-being, equality and respect. Harm and abuse occur whenever a

person's dignity is eroded through the misuse of power or trust by a person in a dominant position. This is the common denominator of adult protection, child protection, managing those who pose a risk and domestic abuse.

1.3 In the last twelve months the Safeguarding Committee has ensured that best safeguarding practice has been consolidated, while at the same time identifying new challenges. One of these is how the issue of domestic abuse (part of the wider Violence Against Women agenda) fits within Safeguarding structures (see section 9).

1.4 The Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service supports 2,000 volunteers who deliver Safeguarding at the grass roots level in all Presbyteries. We are grateful to all

Safeguarding Coordinators, Safeguarding Trainers, Presbytery Safeguarding Contacts and CrossReach staff for their commitment to preventing harm or abuse and, when it occurs, ensuring a timely and appropriate response.

1.5 No matter how complex the safeguarding scene has become in the UK and within the Church, the key Safeguarding message remains a very simple one:

If harm or abuse is suspected or witnessed, or is reported to you, you must immediately report it to your Safeguarding Coordinator or line manager.

1.6 Effective Safeguarding within the Church continues to require ongoing work with Local Authority Social Work Departments and Police Scotland. The Safeguarding Committee is pleased to present this report which illustrates how the Church continues to work with other agencies to ensure a Safe Church for All and makes a

significant contribution to the national public protection agenda.

## 2. The Context

*'You discern my thoughts from far away.'*

2.1 Appendix 1, illustrates the structures, governance arrangements, customers and partners that constitute safeguarding in The Church of Scotland. This needs to be reviewed regularly to ensure that the Church is following best practice to the highest standard and guarding against complacency. See section 11 for details.

2.2 The range of activities that comprises Safeguarding is illustrated in figure 1. The structure of this report follows this same design.

Figure 1

Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service						
Child protection	Adult protection	Managing those who pose a risk (sex offenders)	Domestic abuse	Referrals and enquiries	Safe recruitment (PVG Scheme)	Training
<b>Multiagency working:</b> Police Scotland, social work, Disclosure Scotland						

2.3 The Safeguarding Service is dedicated to supporting the Congregations, Services within Crossreach, The Boys' and Girls' Brigades, in ensuring that Safeguarding is delivered to the highest possible standard. The Safeguarding Service is committed to supporting everyone in this important ministry within the Church and further information can be found at: [www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about\\_us/safeguarding\\_service](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about_us/safeguarding_service).

## 3. Improved Governance Arrangements

*'You hem me in, behind and before, and lay Your hand upon me.'*

3.1 The Safeguarding Committee ensures that governance is reviewed continually and has begun a process to ensure that the sub-committee structure remains appropriate. The former Safeguarding Advisory Group, which risk assesses applicants for safe recruitment, is now the Safeguarding Committee's Recruitment Subcommittee. Accountability and decision-making have

been improved. Similarly, an Historical Abuse Advisory Subcommittee has been established to consider issues of policy and practice and to oversee an appropriate response if historical abuse is reported.

#### **4. Managing Those Who Pose a Risk**

*'The darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day.'*

**4.1** Managing Those Who Pose a Risk is a relatively small but significant part of wider Safeguarding in the Church. The Church has robust arrangements in place to ensure the safe inclusion in worship of people who pose a risk to children or vulnerable adults. Two new publications, available to download only, underpin this work: Safeguarding Handbook 5, Managing Those Who Pose a Risk, October 2014; and a pocket guide Ensuring a Safe Church for All – A Guide for Congregations, Police and Social Work, 2014.

**4.2** The Managing Those Who Pose a Risk Subcommittee continues to act as the forum for discussion and joint consideration of developments, changes of practice or related issues within Police Scotland and the Local Authority Social Work Services. This, aligned with staff training and development, enables the Church of Scotland to keep pace with best practice in the management of offenders in the community.

**4.3** A bespoke service is provided for each individual and congregation. This means that appropriate time and effort can be spent where it is most needed. Looking ahead, the Service is currently well-positioned with strong links having been forged in particular with Police Scotland who are supportive of the Church's facilitating safe inclusion in worship.

**4.4** The Committee is continuing to consider appropriate ways to support Safeguarding Panels currently managing those who pose a risk. The Committee will continue to consult directly with Safeguarding Panels who have an active Covenant of Responsibilities.

#### **5. Safe Recruitment and the PVG Scheme**

*'For it was You who formed me in my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb'*

**5.1** Safe recruitment ensures that we recruit as locally paid staff or volunteers only those people who are safe for work with children and protected adults. A robust system of safe recruitment can prevent harm and abuse occurring in the first place. However, PVG Scheme membership is only one part of safe recruitment; congregations must also conduct interviews and follow up references for all locally paid staff and new volunteers.

**5.2** Nationally, the Church of Scotland is the largest 'employer' of volunteers in Scotland. We have therefore had a considerable challenge to transfer people from the former Disclosure Scotland process to PVG Scheme membership. The Safeguarding Committee remains on target to ensure that approximately 30,000 paid staff and volunteers transfer to the PVG Scheme by the deadline of October 2015. The Safeguarding Committee is grateful for the Council of Assembly's ongoing funding of 1.5 additional posts to ensure that the Church meets this statutory requirement.

**5.3** The Safeguarding Service Administration Team continues to make very good progress towards this target and is processing, on average, 685 applications per month. However we are aware that a significant number of congregations are still at an early stage with this process which started in February 2011. Kirk Sessions are instructed to check that plans are in place for congregations to meet the October 2015 deadline.

**5.4** The volume of PVG applications managed by the Team is approximately three-times the volume prior to the start of the PVG Scheme. The highest number of completed applications in one month reached 957. The total number of Boys' Brigade applications processed thus far is 2,315 and The Girls' Brigade total is 1,033. The Team continues to receive applications with numerous errors. This delays the safe recruitment process and costs a lot of unnecessary time and money.

**5.5** Since September 2013 the Safeguarding Service has been working in partnership with Ministries Council to administer the task of all Ministers becoming members of the PVG Scheme. This process is scheduled to conclude in October 2015. Unfortunately the response from Ministers has been disappointing to the extent that targets have not been met. This process has been managed on a Presbytery by Presbytery basis, to stagger the volume of work. It is essential that Ministers respond to emails from the Safeguarding Service so that the appropriate PVG Scheme paperwork can then be sent to them to be completed and returned within six weeks of receipt. 2011 Act 7, The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (as Amended by ACT XIV 2014) Edinburgh, 26 May 2011, Session VI, section 10, states that ‘...failure to comply with this Act shall constitute a disciplinary offence.’

## **6. Safeguarding Training**

*‘Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In Your book were written all the days that were formed for me.’*

**6.1** Training helps to prevent harm and abuse by enabling good recognition of suspected or witnessed harm, and instilling confidence in reporting to Safeguarding Coordinators or line managers. Kirk Sessions are instructed to ensure that all volunteers and locally paid staff who are PVG Scheme members receive the appropriate level of Safeguarding Training. The range of Safeguarding Training Programmes for Congregations is in Safeguarding Handbook 3, 2011. Continual awareness-raising, through safeguarding training, is the foundation of best Safeguarding practice.

**6.2** There are 92 Safeguarding Trainers currently providing training in Presbyteries. Twelve additional trainers have been recruited in the past twelve months and a further 21 are in the process of being trained in this role.

The volume of training is illustrated by statistics for one six-month period: to September 2014, 119 Safeguarding Training courses were held in congregations and 1,690 volunteers attended.

**6.3** The remit of the Safeguarding Training Officer includes the provision of four standard child protection and adult protection training courses in Congregations and in CrossReach Services plus bespoke training packages to meet particular staff needs. A programme of refresher Safeguarding Training for Ministers continued in 2014. Similarly there are further plans for Safeguarding Roadshows to take Safeguarding out to Presbyteries in 2015. The National Safeguarding Conference, in November 2014, was also an opportunity to provide information and enhance the practice and skills of Safeguarding Trainers, Safeguarding Coordinators and Presbytery Safeguarding Contacts. The Conference was a great success and will be followed up in 2016

**6.4** The Safeguarding Training Officer has also qualified as a CEOP (Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre) Ambassador to deliver internet safety training. In April 2015 Safeguarding Training was delivered for the first time in the Presbytery of Jerusalem including the provision of child protection training at Tabeetha School in Jaffa.

**6.5** Consideration is currently being given to the development of online Safeguarding training, via e-learning, for target audiences.

## **7. Safeguarding Enquiries and the Recruitment Subcommittee**

*‘How weighty to me are Your thoughts, O God!’*

**7.1** The Safeguarding Enquiries Service also helps to prevent harm and abuse. There are situations where a safeguarding event has not occurred, but guidance about policy and procedure is required to keep people safe. Again, this Service is an important part of the Safeguarding jigsaw. In 2014, 707 such enquiries were made. The range and type of enquiries reflect the content of Safeguarding Handbook 4, Safeguarding in Practice, 2013. The largest number of enquiries was about safe recruitment and the PVG Scheme.

**7.2** Currently, it is the practice not to share any information in regard to convictions on the PVG Certificate

with the employing Congregation or Organisation. However, in certain circumstances, by not sharing information we may have to turn down an application, which might be accepted if the information was shared voluntarily with the employer.

**7.3** The Safeguarding Committee is aware of the need for confidentiality. However, it is proposed, that in a minority of minor conviction situations it is appropriate to share such information with the employer to ensure that there is joined-up approach to safe recruitment.. This will allow safeguards to be put in place and certain risks to be reduced, if not eliminated. Failure to do so may be putting vulnerable groups, and the reputation of the Church, at risk. Again, we need to match best national safeguarding practices.

## **8. Safeguarding Referrals**

*'How vast is the sum of them.'*

**8.1** The Safeguarding Service continues to provide written and verbal advice about disclosures of harm and abuse within the Church, including CrossReach Services. Safeguarding referrals are about child protection or adult protection matters, concerns about an individual who may pose a risk to others in the Church, or reports of historical abuse. Adult protection referrals are predominantly from CrossReach Services and the majority of child protection referrals occur in congregational settings.

**8.2** The range and seriousness of such referrals can vary significantly, but most do involve onward referral to Police Scotland or Local Authority Social Work Services for further advice and consideration.

**8.3** All child and adult protection training throughout the Church stresses the importance of reporting to Safeguarding Coordinators and line managers when harm

is suspected, as well as reporting known incidents of such harm. The Church seeks to maintain this low threshold for Safeguarding referrals in this critical part of its Safeguarding work.

**8.4** The Safeguarding Service has worked with CrossReach, the Mission and Discipleship Council and the Church and Society Council to develop materials and approaches to helping children to keep themselves safe when using social media. This task stems from a deliverance from the General Assembly of 2014. To date, this joint initiative has researched resources which already exist and has consulted young people. The group aims to collate existing best resources in one place to be easily accessible by young people in the Church. A further consultation at the National Youth Assembly in 2015 is planned. The collated resources will be available to children and young people in the Church by the end of 2015.

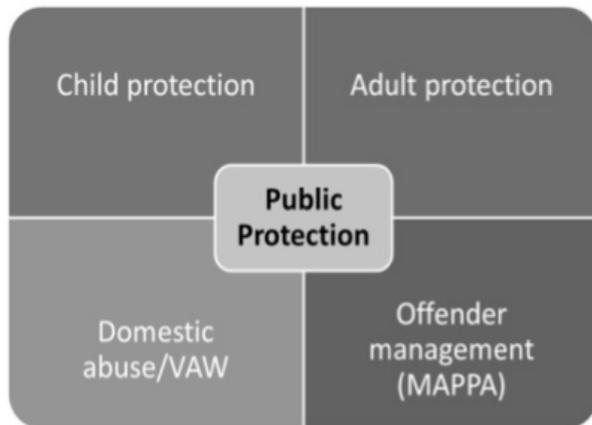
**8.5** In 2014 three new Safeguarding publications, including Safeguarding Handbook 5 referred to earlier, were added to the existing Safeguarding Handbooks 1-4: the new *CrossReach Child Protection Handbook*, 2014 replaced the 2005 edition and a revised *CrossReach Adult Protection Handbook* will be published in Spring 2015.

## **9. Domestic Abuse, Public Protection and Safeguarding in the Church**

*'I am still with You.'*

**9.1** Safeguarding in the Church has always sought to mirror best national practice in the statutory sector. Figure 2 illustrates the public protection model adopted by local authorities in Scotland.

Figure 2



**9.2** The one part of the Safeguarding jigsaw that is not fully in place within the Church is the needs of women *and* men affected by domestic abuse. There are obvious overlaps between child and adult protection and domestic abuse. The work of managing those who pose a risk within the Church dovetails with offender management (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) systems within the community.

**9.3** Domestic abuse includes all types of *coercive control*. The Guild put gender-based domestic abuse on the Church's agenda in 1998. A report went to the General Assembly in 2003. The Church and Society Council has recently taken a lead with their report *Living a theology which counters violence against women*, 2014, as summarised in section 12 of their General Assembly report, 2014. The Safeguarding Committee will address domestic abuse as part of the Gospel's demand to place the vulnerable at the heart of the Church's mission. This is an opportunity to recognise that domestic abuse is part of the Public Protection Agenda.

**9.4** The Safeguarding Committee and the Safeguarding Service welcome the opportunity to work jointly with

other Councils and Departments to ensure that the Church addresses this aspect of the protection of those at risk. There is a need for the Church of Scotland to produce a policy and procedure, and awareness-raising materials and clear guidance for Ministers and those in pastoral care positions about how to identify and respond appropriately when domestic abuse is disclosed. Already domestic abuse is increasingly an element in child protection (and some adult protection) referrals, which the Safeguarding Service manages.

## 10. Service Level Agreements

*'Search me, O God and know my heart.'*

**10.1** These formal agreements clarify the volume and type of safeguarding service provided for Councils *eg* CrossReach and Uniformed Organisations linked with the Church. Ongoing discussions are taking place with The Boys' Brigade and The Girls' Brigade to formalise arrangements for the provision of a Safeguarding Service by the Church for these two important youth organisations. In 2014 1,577 PVG Scheme applications were processed for these Church-related organisations.

## 11. Audit and Improvement

*'Test me and know my thoughts.'*

**11.1** The Church continually needs to be proactive, to ensure that what we think should be in place to protect people, actually is in place. Two Safeguarding audit checklists for Congregations and CrossReach Services respectively were published in 2014. From 2015 congregations will be asked, through their Safeguarding Panel, to use the Safeguarding Audit Checklist for Congregations and Presbyteries, 2015 (revised form SG 11) and attest to their Presbytery as part of their records inspection that it is up to date, and is being adhered to, for good Safeguarding compliance. As part of the Local Church Review, the Panel will also be required to confirm that this is also the case.

**11.2** Constant monitoring and review is required for all Safeguarding activity in the Church – see Appendix 1. This is a precaution to guard against the view that it can't happen here. This approach needs to extend to wider Safeguarding in the Church *ie* the Safeguarding Service and the associated Safeguarding structures at Congregational, Presbytery and Council levels. The critical question is: are we doing the right things and are we doing them well enough? The Safeguarding Committee is developing proposals for this formal review in 2015.

## **12. Conclusion**

*'Lead me in the way everlasting.'*

**12.1** The Safeguarding Committee and the Safeguarding Service are committed to enabling everyone in the Church to maintain a safe place for all. The commitment to maintain a place for the most vulnerable people at the heart of the Church's mission has led to the following strategic aims for the next year:

- Embed the revised governance arrangements for Safeguarding Committee sub-committees.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers undertaking regulated work with children or protected adults join the PVG Scheme by October 2015. Safeguarding Coordinators and individuals, who have not embarked

on retrospective checking, are strongly advised to do so immediately.

- Provide safeguarding awareness-raising and training in peripheral locations *eg* Presbytery of Jerusalem and, via Safeguarding Roadshows, to take Safeguarding out to Presbyteries.
- Further enhance support and skills development for volunteer Safeguarding Trainers. An annual Safeguarding Trainers' Conference is planned.
- Further enhance our response to those who report historical abuse by current or former office bearers in the Church.
- Develop plans for recognising and responding to domestic abuse as part of the wider Safeguarding agenda illustrated in figure 2, above.
- Explore the resourcing implications of Service Level Agreements with The Boys' Brigade and The Girls' Brigade.
- Through a review of existing Safeguarding in the Church, identify how our Safeguarding structures and processes can be further improved.

**12.2** The Safeguarding Committee and Service are servants of the Church and seek to ensure that support and development are delivered wherever the Church serves.

*In the name of the Committee.*

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

## APPENDIX 1

## Church of Scotland Safeguarding: Structures, Governance and Partners, 2015

