

## Safeguarding Committee – General Assembly 2019

Moderator,

As I present my last report of the Safeguarding Committee, I do so, aware that while we have clear and appropriate policies in place, to ensure that the Church of Scotland is as safe as we can make it, we must all continue to ensure that these policies are put into practice. Safe Recruitment is part and parcel of the practice of The Church of Scotland, to ensure that people, who might present a risk of harm and abuse to children and protected adults in the Church, cannot be recruited.

Training is an important part of ensuring that we know what we are about, and if you are a volunteer, please take part in basic training and refresher training it is important.

But most importantly, if there are people who do present a risk of harm and abuse, then we can engage with them, to establish Covenants of Responsibility to keep both the person and the vulnerable safe.

The Safeguarding Committee have had a busy year, with 2 Reviews of Safeguarding of Safeguarding undertaken.

Best practice suggests that we must ensure that Safeguarding is embraced and practiced by the whole Church as well as it is at Congregational Level. Training and support is being given to employees at National Level to ensure that Safeguarding is practiced by everyone in their daily work and not seen as someone else's issue. The silo mentality of the national Church has to end.

In regards to tightening up practice, we are asking that Locums who engage in Regulated Work and Interim Moderators who supervise Locums, are required to be Safely Recruited. Equally, at the request of the Presbytery Clerks, the list of Ministry Posts undertaking regulated work, will be kept in a register at the Presbytery, in the same way that Congregational Safeguarding Registers are kept. We are asking that each Register will from now on be completed in an electronic form, which will be sent out soon and sent to the Presbytery for the Inspection of Records. After inspection both the Congregational and Presbytery Forms will be sent to The Safeguarding Service. This will mean that at both Presbytery and National Level the requirement for Training will be clearly seen, and the requirement to audit registers will be able to be completed in an easier fashion.

The second Review was as a result of the Oxfam Scandal and in considering what we do on the world platform, it is important to improve our practice. If individuals or groups are travelling abroad with children or vulnerable adults or to deliver a service to children or vulnerable adults; then it is incumbent upon the Congregation of Council who is supporting them, to ensure that they are safely recruited before travelling. Equally, if individuals or groups are hosting children or vulnerable groups from abroad, then they too must be safely recruited.

For the avoidance of doubt; safe recruitment is not a PVG Form; it is a 3 pronged process, which includes as well as a PVG Form, an interview and the completion of a self-declaration form.

In regard to Basic Disclosures, The Safeguarding Committee is asking that people in Positions of Trust within the Congregations, be asked to provide a Basic Disclosure. You will notice that we have changed the Deliverance, so that it will be clear, that what we are trying to do is work with the role, not the job title. The job titles do not always reflect what someone does within a congregation and a church officer may be an elder in one congregation, only present on a Sunday. This is not the people we are asking for a basic disclosure. It is someone, because of their role, means they are on their own in a building, during the week for a significant period of time and have contact with children or vulnerable groups as they come and go. This is a similar situation with organists, café workers and others. Each Kirk Session and Safeguarding Panel must decide what is proportionate and if there is any doubt, phone the Safeguarding Service for advice and support.

We can never eliminate the risk of harm and abuse, but through good practice and educated awareness, we can do our best to be the best disciples of Christ that we are called to be.

I would like to thank the people who give of their time and patience to the work of Safeguarding and to the staff of the Service who work hard to respond to the needs and questions of the Church as well as to give sensitive and professional advice in challenging situations, I say thank you, both personally and on behalf of those whom they serve.

Moderator, as I am not a Commissioner I would ask the Principal Clerk to move the Deliverances.