

# SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE

May 2017

## PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

### The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Note the scoping exercise being undertaken by the Committee to identify possible areas for review and development in order that current systems and practice are robust and fit for purpose.
3. Instruct Presbyteries to ensure that all Kirk Sessions within their bounds keep a record of the number of people who have undertaken all types of Safeguarding training and submit an annual return to the Safeguarding Office by January 31 each year indicating numbers who have done so in the preceding calendar year.
4. Affirm the work undertaken by the Committee in the field of dementia and safeguarding, following the National Safeguarding Conference held in October 2016.
5. Commend the Report of the Domestic Abuse Working Group and affirm the Domestic Abuse Policy Statement set out in Appendix 1.
6. Note the Committee's ongoing work in the area of Managing Those Who Pose a Risk of Harm.

## REPORT

### 1. Introduction *You are the salt of the earth*

1.1 Safeguarding is a Gospel imperative; to care for the most vulnerable in our midst. Safeguarding in the Church is an organic process. There will never be a time when it will be said that the work is complete. Each person in the Church is called to ensure that everyone is as safe as possible. This takes robust planning based on up to date good practice. In the event that harm does occur, a swift and clear response is necessary. In 2017 the Church will celebrate the journey taken by the Church of Scotland over the past twenty years as it has developed the work of the Safeguarding Service in protecting children and adults at risk.

1.2 Safeguarding has evolved from a focus on criminal record checks for those working with children to the

inclusion of training, multi-agency working and extending the remit to protecting adults at risk. However, the fundamental goal of Safeguarding remains: to ensure a Safe Church for all. In 2017 we follow the Public Protection Model incorporating child protection, adult protection, managing those who pose a risk and preventing domestic abuse. All this is underpinned by well-established multiagency working with Local Authority Social Work Services, Criminal Justice, and Police Scotland.

1.3 The Safeguarding Committee and the Safeguarding Service ensure that the Church has robust systems in place to prevent harm and abuse and ensure a timely and appropriate response is made when it is disclosed. With a heightened awareness in the media about child sexual abuse, non-recent abuse and harm to adults at risk, 2017

is an opportune time to take stock of how well we are meeting the Gospel imperative.

1.4 It is widely recognised that external scrutiny is a key component in ensuring that systems are robust and fit for purpose. The Safeguarding Committee is keen to ensure that current Safeguarding systems and practice are meeting the needs of the whole Church and that they are understood and embedded across all forms of ministry and witness. To this end, a scoping exercise will start in the early summer of 2017 and will identify areas for review and development as well as areas that are working well and need little change.

## 2. Safeguarding Training

2.1 Safeguarding training is the key to increasing knowledge and preventing harm and abuse. It is therefore essential that the Committee can be sure that all those involved in Safeguarding within congregations have attended appropriate training. To achieve this, the Committee invites the General Assembly to instruct Presbyteries to collate statistics from congregations to evidence this and to send an annual Return to the Safeguarding Service. The Social Care Council have also agreed to share the information they collate on the safeguarding training provided to Crossreach staff, by making a similar annual Return.

2.2 The Safeguarding Service continues to take information and training about Safeguarding out to the Presbyteries. Further Safeguarding Roadshows are planned for 2017. Additionally the programme of Safeguarding refresher training for ministers will resume in 2017.

2.3 Every year new Safeguarding challenges emerge. In 2016 the Introductory Safeguarding Training programme for volunteers and Kirk Session training were updated to reflect these developments. A Kirk Session e-learning course is also being pursued as part of the Church-wide, Ministries Council led, e-learning initiative.

2.4 On 29 October 2016, the national Safeguarding Conference explored developments in Safeguarding practice. Professor Alexis Jay OBE, currently Chair of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (in England and Wales) spoke about her Independent Report into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham. Professor June Andrews, an international authority on dementia, gave a presentation about dementia and safeguarding. Safeguarding trainers and CrossReach staff in attendance indicated that these were of immense benefit to them.

## 3. Safe Recruitment and the PVG Scheme

3.1 The Safeguarding Committee has overseen a major national Safeguarding achievement: 38,000 posts and 35,000 individuals have joined the PVG Scheme since February 2011. Through its commitment to the PVG Scheme, the Church of Scotland has ensured the safe recruitment of more volunteers than any other Third Sector organisation.

3.2 The Recruitment Sub-Committee risk-assesses and decides on *blemished* PVG applications from across the Church, to ensure that all appointments to paid or voluntary roles are made safely.

3.3 The Safeguarding Service Administrative Team continues to lead on improving our PVG Scheme systems. For advice and support please do not hesitate to contact them.

## 4. Safeguarding Referrals

4.1 If someone has a concern about harm or abuse and contacts the Safeguarding Service this is called a 'referral'. As part of the process, written advice is provided about reported or suspected harmful situations. This also includes non-recent (historical) abuse. Over the last 12 months referrals have also included requests for advice about domestic abuse, particularly where it impacts on children in the family.

## 5. Domestic Abuse

5.1 In 2015 the Safeguarding Committee formed a Domestic Abuse Working Group to consider how the Safeguarding Service can best meet the needs of domestic abuse victims in the Church. Having a clear policy and guidance in this area completes the Public Protection model for the Church and is in line with current good practice within statutory agencies. The aim of the Working Group was to prepare a document which would allow the Church to create clear pathways between victims of domestic abuse and appropriate resources.

5.2 The Working Group has produced a guidance document, *Safeguarding Handbook 6, Responding to Domestic Abuse 2017*, which is available on the Safeguarding Service's web pages. It has also produced a Domestic Abuse Policy Statement which can be found in Appendix 1 of this Report. Expertise in the field of supporting those affected by domestic abuse can be found in many children's, women's and men's aid agencies. Churches often do not have that expertise. Therefore, the Handbook includes information on how to support survivors and empower them to seek professional care from the relevant agencies. The Safeguarding Committee records its thanks to the members of the Working Group.

## 6. Named Person

6.1 The Scottish Government's "named person" scheme for supporting children has been delayed for a year after the Supreme Court ruled that certain of its data sharing provisions were not in accordance with the law. A small group of staff representing Church of Scotland Councils, along with the Convener of Safeguarding, met with a Scottish Government official in November 2016 as part of a wider engagement exercise, and shared areas of concern. Following the consultation, it was expected that an amended scheme would be implemented by August 2017. However, no specific proposals have yet been brought forward by the Scottish Government. It is therefore not possible for us to comment in more detail at this stage. The Committee will continue to monitor the progress of

the Named Person Scheme and update the Church in due course.

## 7. Safeguarding Enquiries

7.1 The Safeguarding Service continues to provide advice, support and guidance on all aspects of policy, procedure and safe recruitment. Disclosure Scotland recently introduced changes around what conviction information applicants need to disclose and when. These new Disclosure Scotland rules have resulted in the updating of our self-disclosure application form, and the Committee's Recruitment Sub-Committee risk assessment procedure.

7.2 The Recruitment Sub-Committee reviewed its governance arrangements and its Safeguarding risk assessment methodology at a development half-day in October 2016. Again the emphasis was on improving practice and protecting people.

## 8. Managing Those Who Pose a Risk

8.1 Managing those who pose a risk of harm and abuse and who seek to worship in congregations, remains an ongoing challenge. The Committee's *Managing Those Who Pose a Risk* Reference Group ensures that our procedures for keeping the Church, its congregations, and those who are managed under Covenants of Responsibilities, safe and in keeping with best practice by Police Scotland and Social Work Authorities. In August 2016 an Information Sharing Protocol between Police Scotland and the Church of Scotland was signed to facilitate the sharing of relevant information between Police Scotland and the Church. This is a good example of the Church's commitment to joint working and contributing to the public protection agenda.

8.2 The Reference Group continues to meet regularly to maintain a professional overview of this high-risk area of work for the Church and to keep the Committee advised of any developments. Recent discussions have focussed on questions such as:

- How proportionate is the Church's response to convicted sex offenders and how long should Covenants of Responsibilities last?
- Should serious offenders, other than those currently on Covenants, be considered for Covenants of Responsibilities when Police Scotland and Criminal Justice professionals identify them as a risk to the public as suggested by the 'extension' to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements?
- How does the Church manage individuals who wish to access Church activities, but not attend worship?

**9.3** Advice, support and the reporting of any decisions, alongside any others will be added to *Safeguarding Handbook 5 'Managing Those Who Pose a Risk'* ([http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/24638/safeguarding\\_handbook\\_5.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/24638/safeguarding_handbook_5.pdf))

## 9. Ongoing Work

**9.2** In consultation with the Legal Questions Committee, the Committee has identified the need for a new Safeguarding Act. It is proposed that all relevant deliverances of the General Assembly will be collated and incorporated into a Safeguarding Act to clarify what is required of congregations, Presbyteries, Councils and others and thus help to ensure that Safeguarding standards are achieved, monitored and reviewed. It is hoped to bring a new Act to the General Assembly of 2018.

**9.3** The Committee continues to work cooperatively with the Boys' Brigade and Girls' Brigade at national and local level in providing advice and support to them. Work has been ongoing to put in place a Service Level Agreement with the Boys' Brigade.

**9.4** The past few months have seen key personnel changes in the Safeguarding Service, with the departure of Richard Crosse after 7 years as Head of Safeguarding, and Jennifer Milligan after 14 years as National Advisor and Assistant Head of Safeguarding. The Committee records its thanks to them for their significant contribution.

**9.4** As always, new challenges come to the fore, not least those arising out of having an aging population, with people living longer, but with correspondingly increased levels of dementia and debility. We need to ensure that the Safeguarding systems in both Church and society respond positively to this changing demographic.

## 10. Conclusion

The Committee reiterates its thanks to all volunteers and professionals involved in delivering Safeguarding in the Church, and to the General Assembly for its visionary support over the last 20 years. We look forward to celebrating these 20 years of Safeguarding in the Church and building on the solid foundations set by the people at the grass roots, in congregations and CrossReach services, who deliver Safeguarding face-to-face as we move in faith into the future.

*In the name of the Committee*

KAREN K CAMPBELL, *Convener*  
SHEILA RITCHIE, *Vice-Convener*  
RANALD MAIR, *Safeguarding Advisor*

## APPENDIX 1

### The Church of Scotland Domestic Abuse Policy Statement, 2017

The Church of Scotland recognises that domestic abuse is part of the Safeguarding and public protection agendas. It is also a component of the wider societal issue of Gender Based Violence.

Domestic abuse can happen in any part of society, including in faith communities. Domestic abuse is an issue for the Church of Scotland too.

**We aim to:**

- Raise awareness in local Congregations, Presbyteries, Councils of the Church and Crossreach Services about domestic abuse.
  - Encourage Church communities to create safe pathways to support services for those affected by domestic abuse.
  - Increase awareness of and access to support services for those affected by domestic abuse and where appropriate, for perpetrators.
- Facilitate suitable training from appropriate agencies for key staff and relevant church leaders and encourage church members to undertake basic training.
  - Encourage collaborative working with other denominations and agencies.

Safeguarding Handbook 6, May 2017, sets out the procedure for how the Church plans to implement this policy in practice.