

## **(b) Responding to disclosures of harm or abuse, or risk of abuse**

The Safeguarding Service:

- 1** Provides verbal and written advice in situations where harm or abuse is witnessed by, suspected or reported to, members of church congregations. This service is also provided for CrossReach Social Care Council services.
- 2** Advises and works alongside Safeguarding Panels working with convicted sex offenders to ensure their safe inclusion in worship. The Church has a rigorous system of support and monitoring in place based on the use of Covenants of Responsibilities – a written and regularly reviewed agreement between the offender and the congregation. Often this involves joint working with criminal justice social work services and/or the police.

## **What to do if you suspect or witness harm or abuse or it is reported to you**

If serious harm or sexual abuse is reported, immediately contact the police or social work service.

If you attend a Church of Scotland congregation, immediately contact your Safeguarding Coordinator. If you work for CrossReach, immediately report it to your line manager.

For more information about what you need to know and do see The Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service, *Safeguarding Handbook 1*, 2011.

## **How to contact The Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service**

The service is available 9.00am-4.45pm, Monday to Friday. You can leave a telephone or email message outwith this time. But if you suspect or witness serious harm or abuse, or it is reported to you, contact your local police or social work service.

## **The Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service**

The Church of Scotland  
121 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4YN

**t:** 0131 240 2256

**e:** [safeguarding@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@cofscotland.org.uk)

**w:** [www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk)

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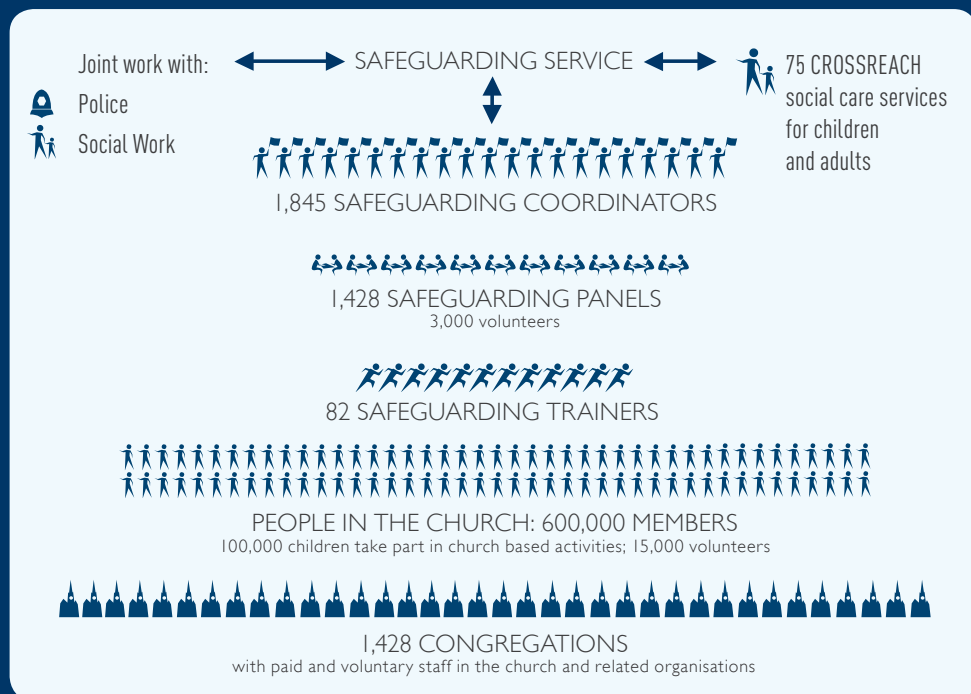
# The Church of Scotland **Safeguarding Service**

who we are  
what we do



The Church of Scotland  
Safeguarding Service

**Harm or abuse of children and adults at risk can happen anywhere** – even in Church communities. We have a duty to ensure a safe Church for all. This means safeguarding children and ‘adults at risk’. This activity is also known as child protection and adult protection.



The Church of Scotland has a zero tolerance approach to harm or abuse of people: any type or level is unacceptable. In practice, the following is a useful starting point for identifying harm or abuse: it is any conduct that you suspect or know is having, or could have, a significantly adverse effect on a person who is unable to protect themselves.

Abuse includes physical, emotional, sexual and financial. It can also mean neglect. Anyone can cause harm. It can happen anywhere.

The Church of Scotland has had a Safeguarding Service since 1997. The Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service is part of a comprehensive safeguarding structure, illustrated to the left, that includes 3,000 trained safeguarding volunteers. The Safeguarding Service is also provided for CrossReach, the Church of Scotland's Social Care Council.

The Safeguarding Service aims to ensure:

- best practice in **preventing** harm or abuse to children and ‘adults at risk’ and
- that the Church makes a timely and appropriate **response** when harm or abuse is witnessed, suspected or reported. This includes working with the police and social work services.

### (a) Preventing harm and abuse

The Safeguarding Service aims to prevent harm or abuse by ensuring that there is good recognition and reporting of abuse. The Safeguarding Service provides:

- Support and advice with every-day safeguarding matters where there is not an incident of suspected or reported harm or abuse.
- Advice and support for the safe recruitment and selection of all paid staff and volunteers. This includes the process of checking a person's suitability to work with children or protected adults via membership of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007, Scheme (PVG Scheme). Safe recruitment is about ensuring that only people suitable to work with children and adults at risk become part of the workforce.
- A Safeguarding Advisory Group to risk assess volunteers and paid staff, who have convictions on their PVG Scheme Record, being considered for work with children or protected adults. This process demonstrates safe recruitment practice. And it also ensures that those with criminal offences that do not affect their suitability for the particular post can be safely appointed.
- A comprehensive range of safeguarding training programmes to meet the learning needs of different groups of people in the Church e.g. for volunteers, Kirk Sessions, Safeguarding Coordinators, Ministries Council and CrossReach services.