

How to Support Your Church Safeguarding Officer – Session 1: Safeguarding Officer Basics (19.10.21)

Section in the Model Safeguarding Policy	Practical ways for Church Council Members to offer support
<p>Church Council It is the responsibility of each Church Council to appoint a Church Safeguarding Officer and there should be no gaps in this crucial provision. The safeguarding officer should be a member of the Church Council or have the right to attend at least annually to report on implementation of the safeguarding policy. Where an individual covers the role in more than one location, they must be able to cover the activities identified in the relevant role outline and be facilitated to attend meetings to report on safeguarding in each location.</p> <p>It is not appropriate for the minister in pastoral charge to hold the church safeguarding officer role because of the potential conflict with their own responsibilities. It is acknowledged that to avoid any disruption in safeguarding provision, it may be necessary for the minister in pastoral charge to take responsibility for some or all of the activities temporarily while other arrangements are made. However, this should only be for a very short period to enable the sharing of the role with another church or the identification of an alternative person to take on the role .</p>	<p>Knowing how vital a Church Safeguarding Officer is how could you make sure that they know how much they are appreciated? Just as you do with Pastoral Visitors could 1 Sunday a year be dedicated to highlighting the work the Church Safeguarding Officer does? Could they be commissioned and prayed for? We have just had Safeguarding Sunday, would this have been appropriate occasion. Its important that people are not taken for granted. They should be sincerely thanked for their commitment and for the time they spend safeguarding everyone.</p> <p>Thinking about the fact that safeguarding officer don't need to attend every church council meeting. Would it take pressure of them if you offered to read out their written report rather than ask them to attend every meeting? Perhaps more people would volunteer to take up the role if they realised that they didn't need to attend all meeting?</p> <p>Thirdly, if your church safeguarding officer worships at a different church, is there anything you can do to help them feel more comfortable and supported? If they don't drive could you offer them a lift? Rather than them being expected to go to the church to pick something up could you drop it off instead.</p>
<p>c) Appointment and training of workers in the church Workers will be appointed after a satisfactory DBS disclosure and following the safer recruitment procedures of the Methodist Church. Each worker will have an identified supervisor who will meet at regular intervals with the worker. A record of these meetings will be agreed and signed and the record kept. Each worker will be expected to undergo Foundation Module (2020 Edition) safeguarding training, within the first 6 months (agreed by Methodist Conference in 2011 -Creating Safer Space Report) of appointment. The other training needs of each worker will be considered (such as food hygiene, first aid and lifting and handling).</p>	<p>Do you have someone in your church who oversees Safer Recruitment? Do you know who carried out the process for your safeguarding officer? Normally it would be the Safeguarding Officer who made sure safer recruitment was followed. Obviously, it would not be appropriate in this case so is this something you could do?</p> <p>Do you know if your safeguarding officer has an identified supervisor? Do you know if regular support sessions are happening? If there not is this something you could volunteer to do?</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check that safeguarding is included as an agenda item at all Church Council meetings and report to the Church Council annually. 	<p>As a council member you can help the safeguarding officer by checking council agendas to make sure safeguarding is down. If your safeguarding officer does not have anything to share they may forget to make sure that safeguarding is still on the agenda. If you notice you may decide to contact your safeguarding officer and just check they know the meeting is happening, and again ask if they would like you to present anything.</p> <p>If, at the meeting no one raises anything under safeguarding them this should raise alarm bells. So often safeguarding is reactive – something bad happens and then we work to make sure it doesn't happen again, but it doesn't have to be this way.</p> <p>For safeguarding to be effective it also needs to be proactive. For example, I recently wrote a newsletter about IICSA's investigation into Child Sexual Abuse in faith organisation. This should be brought up at a church council meeting, if for no other reason that to check everyone knows about it.</p> <p>The other point I would make, and this is just my thought, is to make safeguarding your first main agenda item. Leaving it to the end, when people are tired and desperate to get home, signals a lack of respect and appreciation for the subject. Placing safeguarding at the top of the agenda lets people know that its an important issue which should not be dismissed or ignored.</p>