



News release

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Methodist Church issues progress report on Past Cases Review

A year after the apology to survivors and victims of abuse, and the publication of *Courage, Cost & Hope* - the report on the Past Cases Review (PCR), the Methodist Church has given an update to the Methodist Conference, the supreme decision-making body of the Church, about its work over the past 12 months.

In May 2015, the Revd Dr Martyn Atkins, who was then serving as Secretary of the Methodist Conference and General Secretary, issued a full and unreserved apology to survivors and victims of abuse in response to the Past Cases Review report.

A huge amount of work has been undertaken so far by the Past Cases Review Implementation Group (PCRIG) on the report's 23 recommendations.

Survivors' Reference Group

The Implementation Group explored about how best to engage with survivors and victims of abuse within the Church, and how to ensure their voices informed the work of the group and the implementation of the report's 23 recommendations.

It was agreed to establish a survivors' reference group to ensure that all policies and guidelines or training materials that were produced in line with the recommendations would be informed by a survivor/victim perspective.

Engaging with survivors/victims is wider than just receiving their views on the PCR recommendations and to further develop understanding of their perspective, the Chair of the Implementation Group, the Revd Gwyneth Owen, and Tim Carter, attended a survivors' conference organised by the Liverpool District project Church Action on Sexual Abuse Issues (CASAI) in January.

There have also been extensive discussions with the Church of England's Safeguarding Team and others as to how support for survivors/victims can be improved and definite proposals will shortly be produced.

Supervision

Recommendation 7 of *Courage, Cost and Hope* stated that "a system of structured supervision for ministers be instituted to address the identified weakness in relation to accountability and support in terms of safe practice". Significant progress has been made on this.

A pilot programme of supervision for ministers in two Districts - Liverpool and South East - is expected to last until at least January 2017 in order to ensure that sufficient levels of feedback from the participants is obtained.

Resources and appropriate training in supervision skills have been offered to the District Chairs and deputy Chairs and the superintendents of the two pilot Districts.

The Implementation Group is also delighted to report that an excellent team of accredited senior supervision practitioners has been co-opted as supervisors of the District Chairs and will be co-ordinated by the Revd Dr Jane Leach and the Assistant Secretary of the Conference. Formal 1:1 supervision of all District Chairs will be in place from 1st September this year.

The pilot programme is also already offering insights into how attractive the prospect of group supervision might be but also evidencing how demanding in reality it is to do well.

Ministerial code of conduct

In April 2016 a working party was created to consider the creation of a code of ministerial practice. The draft code of conduct or practice will be presented to the Methodist Council in January 2017 in order that it might be presented to the 2017 Conference.

Recording pastoral practice

The Implementation Group recommends that records are kept of all pastoral visits to people in their own homes as best practice. Such a pro-forma or log can be used in hard copy or be made available electronically. Interest has been expressed in this record being available as an app, for example. The recommendation to the Conference is that a log of visits should be kept by all involved in pastoral visits especially when the person undertaking the visit is not accompanied.

Complaints and discipline

A significant number of the recommendations relating to Complaints and Discipline processes have been achieved including increased training, more legal guidance, and updated training resources.

Safeguarding training and policy

There have been discussions in a number of settings about producing materials for wider discussion within church communities about safe relationships.

It is hoped to start work on reviewing safeguarding policies shortly, and this will be done in co-operation and consultation with the Church of England Safeguarding Team who are also reviewing their policies.

Conclusion

The Implementation Group expects to be able to report to the 2017 Conference that all the recommendations of the report will be implemented in full or with a clear process and timetable for completing the implementation set out.

We again acknowledge the courage of the survivors and victims who relived exceptionally difficult, life-changing, experiences to participate in the review.

As the work of the Implementation Group progresses, we also remember the need for ongoing culture change throughout the Church, especially for its ministers and leaders, the lessons that continue to be learnt, and the commitment to improve safeguarding practice across the Connexion.

Our constant prayer is that this work ensures the Church is a safe place for all.

A prayer which we asked all churches to use close to the anniversary of the report's publication

For those who are abused and those who abuse;
for those who are careless about others and those who are careful;
for those who offer guidance through the dark
and those who endeavour to safeguard the vulnerable:
good Lord, we pray.

Good Lord, give hope to the hurt and a sense of your love and rightness.
May we all be led into safe and sound living.
Give us your strength for today,
your hope for tomorrow and the light of your love to guide us in all things.
Amen.