

# Paper R1

Safeguarding Advisory Group  
Past case review

Church 2016  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** 2016



# Paper R1

## Safeguarding advisory group

### Past case review

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd Richard Church <a href="mailto:richard.church@urc.org.uk">richard.church@urc.org.uk</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council agrees the principles of the design of phase two of the Past case review as set out in paper R1 of Mission Council March 2016, and delegates authority to agree the finalised process to a group comprising the Safeguarding Officer, DGS (Discipleship), legal advisor, convenor and secretary of the ministries committee</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Report on the completion of phase one and the design features of phase two
<b>Main points</b>	Data on phase one as of January 2016 Design of phase two
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper R2 November Mission Council 2015
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Cassi Wright – Safeguarding Officer Elizabeth Gray-King

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	£10,000 has been set aside to facilitate this process.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Julie Ashby Ellis – external safeguarding consultant URC Trust has been made aware.

# Past Case review: progress report

## Nomenclature

Having previously referred to this as the 'Historic case review', we are now using the term 'Past case review', to accord with wider practice in the sector.

## Phase One: Report

1. Following on from our interim report made to the November Mission Council (Paper R2), this phase is now coming to a close.
2. The Church is indebted to synod readers, synod staff and the hard work put in by the Revd Elizabeth Gray-King, who has project managed this phase.
3. At the time of writing one synod has yet to complete reading, one synod has still to submit the reader's report and Church House has yet to complete reading files which are held there.
4. Out of 1162 files which have been read, two were deemed by our external safeguarding consultant to require immediate action and they have been referred into the Church's Ministerial Disciplinary Process. There were none in category two, 25 in category three and 15 in category four.

The four categories are:

One: immediate and significant concern, requiring urgent response;

Two: immediate and significant concern, requiring planned response;

Three: concern, but further information is needed to establish its level;

Four: no apparent current concern, notwithstanding the seriousness of the case and/or past risk.

5. In due course our external consultant will make her report including any recommendations which she feels that the Church ought to consider following her reading of referred files in less serious categories.
6. Colleges and Institutions associated with the United Reformed Church since 1972 have been contacted to draw attention to this triaging of ministers' files and asking that this matter be brought to the attention of their governing bodies. Westminster College and Northern Colleges have asked for guidance on how the Church has conducted the review and the terms of reference and readers' packs of materials have been sent to them.
7. To date, the cost of the review has been £4882.58; this includes readers' expenses and additional staff time in order to manage the project.

8. Early conversations with survivors' groups and a proposal that they share the reading with us have not been implemented as they were unable to come up with volunteers willing to do this by the commencement of the reading. We do however intend to contact them again as we work on the design of phase two.

## Phase Two: Design

9. This phase is open for anyone who believes that they have been inappropriately dealt with by the Church to be listened to. From April to October 2016 this phase will encourage those who feel they have been carrying a burden to share that with specialist listening teams.
10. There are four suggested frameworks for this second phase of the Review. At this stage, the review falls into four categories – Listening, Allegation handling, Pastoral Care and Learning.
11. Synod listeners: the synod-based people who will listen, gather and share the stories from those who raise allegations. Skills we are looking for in such people include:
- skills in objective and empathetic listening;
  - an ability to capture the reality of an allegation whilst maintaining integrity;
  - commitment to full confidentiality and data protection;
  - commitment to the safety and care of the whole church, as well as to the individuals involved.

The task of this group of people involves:

- establishing a safe situation in which to listen;
  - capturing stories into a framework which can be shared;
  - ensuring that the complainant knows the process;
  - sharing stories as appropriate with full confidentiality and data protection;
  - ensuring that the story is being held within the full allegation process;
  - closing the story with the complainant;
  - summarising the listening process for the learning group.
12. Allegations group: is an Assembly group to manage the whole allegation process from designing the templates and document flow, to supporting the allegations assessors.
- Skills needed include wisdom in legal mechanisms, including those processes of other denominations and other organisations; experience of shaping sensitive personal information into frameworks which can be used for assessment and legal interpretation.
  - The group's task is to design the individual elements of the processes for key actions, establish an allegation flowchart of the entire process, establish clear communications about processes and people remits, support allegations assessors, create and appropriately share final story closure.
13. Pastoral care group: the synod group to manage the whole pastoral care process from designing the relationship structures, to supporting companions and mentoring local leadership.
- Skills required include wisdom in caring for groups as well as individuals, able to understand organisational dynamics and conflict management.

- Task involves designing the individual elements of the processes for key actions, establish key communications links, support companions as necessary; listen for stories and their impact on congregations/synods; help shape local support as necessary. It is to be hoped that this group is that which already exists within synods as pastoral committees.
14. Learning group: the Assembly group to ensure that both the URC and the wider Church learn from the stories of the Past case review, and to ensure that the learning informs the further work of the URC.
- Skills include wisdom in analysis, knowledge of church structures, knowledge of historic boundary infringement research from other churches and organisation. This group may well involve those already engaged in learning activities within synods.
  - The task is to gather evidence, analyse, create recommendations.
15. Consultation has taken place with Synod Moderators and synod safeguarding Officers. Moderators had reservations about the people needed for such a project. A suggestion was made that a pilot scheme be launched. However, the need for advocacy of this phase to reach across the whole denomination and co-ordinate material received in response makes this difficult to implement. Additionally, a pilot scheme could substantially delay the process.
16. The safeguarding advisory group has met just before Mission Council and wants to recommend the draft scheme for phase two to the Council.

