

# Paper R2

Safeguarding Advisory Group

Past Case Review Update





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## Safeguarding Advisory Group Past Case Review Update

### Basic Information

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<b>Action required</b>	For information
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	none

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Update on phases 1 and 2 of the Past Case Review
<b>Main points</b>	Emerging recommendations from phase 1 Data from phase 2
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper R2 March Mission Council 2016
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Cassi Wright, Safeguarding Officer Elizabeth Gray-King, PCR Project Manager Safeguarding Advisory Group Julie Ashby Ellis, external Safeguarding Consultant

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	none
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

# Past Case Review Update

## Phase 1 Update

1. All the files from Phase 1 have been read, however there is still a review and recommendation process underway, finishing the work from reading files which were held in Church House. Of the files which were read in Synods, there is a report with recommendations.
2. From Phase 1, Synods, there were 24 recommendations from the external safeguarding consultant in the following themes:
  - Record Keeping (9 recommendations)
  - Review regularly and map incidents (1 recommendation)
  - Adhere to policy (6 recommendations)
  - Investigate with no conflict of interest (2 recommendations)
  - Refer to Safeguarding Officers in case of any suspicion (1 recommendation)
  - Refer to outside agencies, including sharing information (4 recommendations)
  - Ensure ministerial supervision (1 recommendation)
3. Many of the recommendations indicate poorer practice in the past than safeguarding practice in place now, meaning that some of the recommendations have already been met, or that processes were in place to meet the recommendations before the recommendations were known. Notable is a recommendation that when a minister is faced with an allegation, the investigation is carried to its conclusion, no matter if the minister resigned.
4. Two key areas of work are significant and already on-going:
  - consolidate and update the way ministers' records are kept, including ensuring consistent information and single file records for each minister
  - ensure that the URC's good practice policies are updated and consistent, then that they are actively, effectively and consistently carried out

## Phase 2 Update

5. **Awareness and Publicity**  
Phase 2 was launched on the 4th of October, 2016. However, information was not shared as widely as anticipated and some URC members had still not heard of the PCR by January 2017. In February, a renewed publicity drive was supported by more sharable documents on the PCR section of the URC website.
6. **Extension**  
It had been agreed to bring the public advertising effort to a conclusion at the end of March 2017. As a result of the delay in information sharing, the Safeguarding Advisory Group (at its February meeting) agreed an extension of the public advertising to the end of June 2017.

7. **Cases**  
 There have been 19 cases in total, arriving from 8 synods. As not all cases have finished the listening stage, it is not possible to give figures which add up to the total of cases. Of that which is known so far, there have been 6 cases with an allegation against an organisation/group and 2 with an allegation against an individual. Enquiries about making a complaint have arrived relatively evenly across the methods of communications, with 11 contacts made by telephone, 12 made by email, and 10 made by web form. Not all enquiries continued in the process to make a complaint. October and November showed the most enquiries made in any one month, with numbers going down over December, January, and February then rising again in March.
8. **The types of cases are:**
- sexual/abuse of power
  - bullying/ harassment/ defamation of character
  - bullying/ harassment/ failure to execute procedure or process
  - financial/ abuse of power
  - sexual/ failure to execute procedure or process
  - failure to execute procedure or process
9. **The progress of cases varies depending on the time it takes to prepare and process a complaint. By the time of writing, no case is ready to refer to a synod. Progress is:**
- Cases to Listeners - 15
  - Cases returned by Listeners - 8
  - Case referred to Allegations Panels - 7
  - Cases referred to Allegations Reference Group - 4
  - Cases referred to External expert - 2
10. **Comments**  
 There is a need for more members of the Allegations Reference Group. To date, there are four members, all of whom have been clerks of synod. The role requires wisdom, knowledge of the URC structures and practice and professional empathy.

Many thanks are given to the safeguarding and administrative support in the PCR team. In the early stages, there were many issues to set up procedures and ensure that guidelines are understood. Particular thanks go to the many volunteers who make up our teams of listeners, allegations panels and the allegations reference group. None of them has an easy task and the URC is deeply grateful for their commitment to this review.

Finally, the PCR is grateful for the now assembled learning group, comprised of a church historian, a Bible scholar, a colleague denomination's safeguarding lead with a background in social work, and a professor of abuse studies. This group will review the findings of Phase 1, the complaints made in Phase 2 and historic Section O cases which have had safeguarding issues. We anticipate that systemic improvements that can be identified will be made as part of our attempts to prevent further distress/abuse.