

SAFEGUARDING

Annual Report 2020



In 2020, we responded to a particular outcome of the Provincial Safeguarding Audit Report – namely, the hugely-concerning statistic, across the whole province, that **62% of vestries** could not give a satisfactory answer to the question:

“if an allegation was made within your congregation, would you know what to do?”

On 11 January 2020, at St John’s Princes Street, Ley-Anne Forsyth, the Youth & Children Officer for the Diocese of Moray, Ross & Caithness, delivered an engaging training session, attended by over 80 people, covering 26 of our charges. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and we had hoped to arrange more training sessions during the year. With the lockdown in March, this clearly became unfeasible. Nevertheless, one of the major safeguarding gaps identified in the Audit had been addressed, and attendees felt more confident in handling an allegation and the onward reporting process to enable the Provincial Protection Officer to investigate. Going forward, those Charges with Audit responses generating ‘Red Flags’ are being contacted individually by The Dean and myself, to discuss the areas identified, and to provide support in helping to address them. Claire Benton-Evans is supporting us in doing that, particularly where there is a youth and children aspect.

The work in charges was, of course, almost entirely unconventional in 2020, and the focus for safeguarding quickly switched to an emphasis on online safety. Claire Benton-Evans, our Youth & Children Officer compiled some excellent resources for keeping young people safe when engaging in online activities within congregations.

The questions in the Province Office’s Annual PVG Checklist were therefore somewhat different to those in 2019. Results from a few of the key questions were:

- Has your Church building re-opened for public worship at any point since lockdown? **44 “Yes” [88%]**
- Has your Church been involved in any community outreach projects during lockdown? **25 “Yes” [50%]**
- Has your Church developed any other new initiatives because of Covid-19? **38 “Yes” [76%]**
- Does your Church have a pastoral visiting team? **36 “Yes” [72%]**
- Does your Church provide youth & children's activities? **34 “Yes” [68%]**

One important question was:

- Would you/others in your church be able to take part in Safeguarding Training by Zoom? **48 “Yes” [96%]**

Clearly, there is both a need and an appetite for more training, and online delivery seems feasible. At the October 2020 meeting of the Diocesan Protection Officers, it was confirmed that Daphne Audsley was working on a training presentation which focused on the new safeguarding policy. As soon as we have any dates for that training, they will be widely publicised.

At the time of compiling this report, the return rate of the PVG Checklists was 94% (2019: also 94%) with only 3 charges not submitting a return. This, is a huge improvement on 2018 when it was only 69%.

During 2020, I was pleased to confirm (on behalf of the Bishop) the appointments of new PVG Coordinators at:

1. Edinburgh, St Fillan's
2. Edinburgh, St James' Leith
3. Edinburgh, St Michael & All Saints
4. Edinburgh, St Ninian's
5. Jedburgh
6. Musselburgh
7. North Berwick
8. West Linton

I am very grateful to all the PVG Coordinators, who take on this critical coordination work voluntarily. Nevertheless, it remains a whole-Vestry responsibility, and the PVG Coordinator is just that – the coordinator.

Simon Filsell
Diocesan Protection Officer