

Christian Forum for Safeguarding

Meeting held on 10th October 2007
at the Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, NW1 5JR

Present: Dean Juster (Chair), Adrian Child, Simon Bass, John Brown, Richard Foot, Aline Fynn, Stephen Haward, Sian Jones, Ron Ludgate (Minutes), Pearl Luxon, Jennifer McCreanor, Sheila Mitchell, Jill Steele;
Clive Sheridan, Nyasha Mapfeka, Alison Venner Jones (visitors)

Apologies for absence: Alan Elson, Mary Gandy, Chris Nickolay, Howard Nurden, David Pearson

1) Devotions

2) Independent Safeguarding Authority – a dialogue with Alison Venner Jones from the Department of Children, Schools and Families

Even though the implementation date is still November 2008, there is as yet no confirmed framework processes guidance or implementation schedule.

The only confirmed areas are the appointment of the Head of the Safeguarding Authority and some other appointments to the Authority.

Schedule for Implementation

It is proposed to implement over a three- or five-year period, registering in blocks of six months. Therefore, the first six months would be for new applications and those who have had CRB Disclosures dated five years ago. With at least 11.5 million applicants, the Forum considered this as totally unrealistic. There is also no assurance that the number couldn't be much higher.

The Forum advised that denominations need up to a year's warning to plan the roll-out, resource the infrastructure required and cascade guidance.

Cost

AVJ suggested the fee for paid roles would be no greater than the current CRB fee. This was difficult to accept as the fee covers the oncosts of the CRB. This expenditure will not change, so the additional cost of the ISA will also need to be passed on, as the whole scheme is proposed as self-funding.

The Faith Sector not only has to consider the cost of the paid role fee, but also the additional infrastructure cost of processing applicants within the phased implementation.

Next phase of Consultation

Launch on the 14th November for a 12-week consultation on definitions – for example, ‘regulated activity’, ‘controlled activity’, ‘harm’, ‘frequently’, ‘vulnerable adult’.

Relationship between Registration and CRB Disclosures

Registration will not give Churches sufficient information about an applicant. *Barring* in the context of prior consultation will be set at the very high end of offending, or in the light of clear information from third parties. If this alone is relied on or Government market registration as a panacea for Safeguarding, it will be creating a culture of a disaster waiting to happen.

AVJ indicated that with the initial registration, an Enhanced check would be provided as well, although this has not been confirmed.

At this point, the CRB have no legal right to update offence history as a revised Disclosure certificate without a new Disclosure application.

Registration of Interest

Once an employer registers an interest, how do they de-register? If they do not de-register an interest, they could be given updated information they have no right to. Will it be the Umbrella Body that is updated, or the individual church? Much of this area is unclear.

Reconciliation of Role Definition

The future definitions determining eligibility for registration on the scheme will not necessarily correspond to eligibility criteria for a CRB check. Will this cause difficulties?

England and Scotland

If there is to be operational harmony between the two systems, then we assume the same definitions etc will need to be used.

The Scottish Internet briefings are stating that there will no longer be any need for Enhanced Disclosures after the Barring Scheme is introduced. Is the Scottish proposal to update all new offences periodically, or are they presenting the scheme as a panacea which it is not? The Scottish scheme refers to ‘protected adults’ rather than ‘vulnerable adults’ – will the definitions be the same?

Volunteer / Paid Workers from Abroad

If applicants have little or no address history in this country, unless they come from one of the few countries with reliable reciprocal police information, the Barring Scheme will give no benefit in engaging volunteers / paid workers from this group.

Other Faith Groups

As with the CRB checks, most other Faith Groups are not incorporated into Safeguarding processes.

Barring

There is an outstanding issue whether if an individual is barred from working with children, there is an automatic bar from working with vulnerable adults, and vice versa.

At the end of the dialogue, it was agreed that Ron Ludgate, Adrian Child, Jennifer McCreanor and Pearl Luxon will draft and send on behalf of the Forum a letter to the lead ministers in the Home Office, the Department of Children, Schools and Families, and the Department of Health, expressing our concerns relating to the key areas referred to.

3) Minutes of CFS meeting 18th June 2007

- Apologies

Jennifer McCreanor had given her apologies.

The meeting passed the Minutes as correct, subject to the above correction.

- MAPPA – Ministry of Justice

No paper was attached. The only paper available is the MAPPA guidance itself.

- Recruitment Standards

Even without the NSPCC agreeing the revised version, the standards could be released including recruitment for work with vulnerable adults.

4) Matters Arising

a) Letter from Information Commissioner

This letter takes us no further forward, its direction only refers back to the CRB guidance. The need to sustain a paper trail for decision-making will need to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

b) Constitutional Document

The Paper outlining the terms of reference was agreed, and now needs to be merged with the previous Paper on objectives. There was continued discussion on the Forum's work programme, and further proposals on this will be submitted at the next meeting.

Further reference was made to how the Forum was resourced, but this discussion led to no conclusion.

5) CRB checks for Student Ministers

There is still work to be done with the CRB in respect to what constitutes a volunteer role eligible for a CRB check, in addition to whether Student Ministers are eligible for checks.

A Faith Sector meeting convened by Phil Quinn will be held to discuss the issue.

6) Conferences Update

- Extending Our Comfort Zone (Survivor Conference)

10th November 2007, Methodist Church House, £25 (£10 for unwaged)

- Joint Methodist & Church of England Safeguarding Conference
29th & 30th January 2008, High Leigh Conference Centre,
Hertfordshire (£90 for residential, £35 for day delegates)
- Conference organised by the Catholic Church – on vulnerable
adults (mental health and capability, self-care, safeguarding)
6th – 8th October 2008, Swanwick, Derbyshire

7) Any other business

8) Dates of next meetings

10th January 2008:

Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ (nearest tube:
Westminster)

24th April 2008:

St Columba's Church, Pont Street, London SW1X 0BD (nearest tube:
Sloane Square, Knightsbridge, South Kensington)