

Summary Report

Safeguarding Audit of Arrangements for Yr Eglwys yng Nghymru/Church in Wales

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Introduction

Reason for requesting a safeguarding audit

This Safeguarding audit (Phase 2) was commissioned by Yr Eglwys yng Nghymru/ Church in Wales with a view to an independent external review of its safeguarding processes and policies. Thirtyone:eight were asked to complete the audit in a staged manner with specific key priority areas reviewed thus providing an opportunity for any suggested actions to be embedded, prior to a further review being undertaken.

The Audit follows Thirtyone:eight's standards-based framework and is in line with the requirements of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, the audit seeks to identify and highlight strengths, areas of improvement and recommended actions to strengthen safeguarding for the organisation.

The Church in Wales has undergone a significant period of change in the appointments of key management roles, and these have resulted in changes of structure and governance. There has been a renewed focus on how safeguarding is managed, and policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated over the last two years.

In April 2023 Thirtyone:eight was asked to initially focus the audit on three key areas:

- Governance
- Safeguarding Policy
- Working with those that may pose a risk

This second stage of the audit now seeks to review the key areas of:

- Training and Awareness
- Managing Workers
- Responding to concerns

About Thirtyone:eight

Thirtyone:eight is a Christian charity providing a range of services to support churches and other faith-based organisations to protect vulnerable people. "Our vision is a world where every child and adult can feel, and be, safe". We aim to do this by equipping, empowering and encouraging organisations to create safer environments, respond to abuse, and raise their standards of safeguarding practice. Our name is taken from Proverbs 31 v 8: "Speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable".

We are a leading safeguarding organisation within the faith sector and offer a range of services to support organisations, including: a DBS checking service, a variety of safeguarding training courses, policy support, consultancy, safeguarding audits, risk assessments, case reviews and international safeguarding advice.

Methodology

During the safeguarding audit a number of documents were reviewed to assist the assessment process. These included Safeguarding policy documentation and policies from Human Resources. The audit also looked at strategic documents relating to safeguarding and internal process documents

for the Provincial Safeguarding Team. The audit also included a review of all training materials, the Provincial and Diocesan websites.

Numerous interviews were held over Microsoft Teams with a number of members of the Provincial Safeguarding Team.

Additionally, an MS Forms questionnaire was also distributed to sixty-five Ministry Area Safeguarding Officers (MASO's) across the province asking questions in relation to their role. Thirty-six responded and the Auditor is grateful for the insight into their experiences and their knowledge of parish safeguarding. Further to the completion of these online forms, four MASO's also made themselves available to speak by phone and share their thoughts and observations and the reviewer is again grateful to the time they made available.

This audit was undertaken at a specific time and therefore provides a snapshot of the safeguarding arrangements and culture at the time the audit was undertaken. The findings of the audit are based on the evidence seen at this time.

This is an independent audit, based upon Thirtyone:eight's 10 Safeguarding Standards. These standards provide a comprehensive framework for successfully auditing an organisation, and therefore equip that organisation to engage in safeguarding best practice. As this exercise for the Church in Wales, was based on a selection of 3 areas under Thirtyone:eight's 10 standards, the numbering used in this Report is based on Thirtyone:eight's order of these three areas (i.e. Standards 5, 7 and 9).

Summary of Audit

Strengths

This Audit undertook to focus on Training and Awareness, Managing Workers and Responding to Concerns. The Auditor was fortunate to be able to engage with members of the Provincial Safeguarding Team including the Provincial Safeguarding Officer's, Engagement Officers and trainers. An online questionnaire was offered to 65 participants and 36 took the opportunity to respond and four of them subsequently made themselves available for a phone conversation.

The picture that emerged was a growing workload for the Provincial Safeguarding Team which was currently manageable and within their skill set and they were encouraged to attend external training and seek advice when needed, especially in relation to Deliverance Ministry. The observations made about the PSOs were positive with comments made that they were helpful and available for advice when needed.

The implementation of the MASO role is still relatively new in that most volunteers have only been in place for two years unless they were previously involved in the 'Safety Officer' role. Those that engaged in the questionnaire painted a picture of challenge but also how valuable their work was getting to know their ministry areas. Some MASOs oversaw less than five churches while others were engaged with twelve or more. The links MASOs were building with churches included regularly meeting with the Safeguarding lead (if there was one in place), attending church council meetings and church activities and for some running training events for those unable to access the internet or navigate online courses. The MASOs also link into the Ministry Area meetings although the input available to individuals was unclear as some reported they spoke at meetings while others submitted reports.

The Engagement Officer role is equally important for addressing issues before they become safeguarding concerns, and their preventative work is of assistance both to the parishes and the PST. This role is currently under review as it is closely linked to that of training and therefore there will be consideration in relation to future recruitment.

The Training team work closely with the PST which was a positive working together as they were able to respond to concerns and feed them into the training. Other members of the team also attended training sessions on occasions. This was especially evident in the Senior Clergy training where the Director of Safeguarding made it a priority to attend all the courses across the dioceses. The training and trainers were highly rated, and the content of the training raised awareness and understanding of how a safer church should look.

The completion of the questionnaire was hugely helpful, thirty-six MASOs completed the online form responding to sixteen questions. They came from across five diocese areas, and some provided contact details for in person phone conversations which were very helpful and provided further valuable insight. The questions answered showed the amount of work many are undertaking and the efforts they are making to reach the churches in their ministry areas, their work should be celebrated across the diocese areas to encourage and promote safeguarding.

Areas for Improvement

Training and disseminating information from the policy makers to those in local churches is paramount but given the amounts of training required across the province this would appear a near impossible task especially as training comes up for review and new courses are promoted. The Training team's availability is limited as it is a huge task to regularly run Zoom and in person courses across the province during the week, evenings and on Saturdays. The Auditor noted that on occasions courses were cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances for the trainer. This is not unusual but there did not appear to be the capacity for others to backfill the role. On one of the courses, it was noted that the course had been cancelled twice which brings disruption to busy people who set time aside for courses.

At this time the training is made accessible to people by the trainer, at times travelling long distances and staying overnight to facilitate training. This is appreciated but is also time consuming therefore an increase in trainers in different areas of the province may be a valuable option for the future.

The work of the MASOs on occasions appears to involve training in the churches of their local Ministry Areas, this would appear to be an opportunity to congratulate this work and offer 'train the trainer' sessions for those interested in developing their skills as volunteer trainers.

It was acknowledged there is further development needed in relation to Domestic Abuse training, Spiritual Abuse, Pastoral Care and Mental health and these are areas that are all being developed for the future.

Key messages from People's Voice

Those that contributed to this audit were very much appreciated, especially those who are volunteers and promote safeguarding in their 'free time'. It was encouraging to hear how much work has been undertaken in local churches and to hear the largely positive response from those in clergy roles who support their local MASO's.

The voice of the MASO's is one of mixed responses and a great deal of work is being done in individual churches, large and small and this will be an ongoing challenge. Many acknowledge the hard work and time involved but also celebrated being part of something bigger and welcomed the opportunity to use their skills and time in this way.

The My Church People database was a subject of frustration to many although there was an understanding that this is still new and is still being implemented across the province. Those who contributed would like more training and many were frustrated with lack of clarity around DBS checks and the mixed messages from government guidelines, APCS (the online provider) and central office support services. The lack of clarity around the names used for roles in church life brought inconsistency and frustration to many.

Recommendations

Standard 1 - Governance	Previously assessed in April 2023
Standard 2 - Culture	Not assessed in this focussed audit
Standard 3 Safeguarding Policy	Previously assessed in April 2023
Standard 4 Safer Recruitment	Not assessed in this focussed audit
Standard 5 - Training and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review workloads of trainers and capacity to provide cover when unexpectedly unavailable. • Employment of trainer(s) across the province. • Consider 'Train the Trainer' opportunities • Consider validated volunteer trainers across the province • Continue development and implantation of Advanced courses ie. Domestic Abuse. • Ensure accessibility issues are considered for those who are attending training and have physical, mental, visual or hearing impairment. • Ensure all training is in line with the recommendations of the National Training Standards Framework
Standard 6 - Working & Communicating Safely	Not assessed in this focussed audit

(including Pastoral Care)	
Standard 7 - Management of Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive promotion of Safeguarding at diocese level and the role of MASOs • Create peer support opportunities for MASOs in their diocese areas. • Newsletter sent regularly to MASOs to encourage them with information to pass on to the parishes including key issues such as risk assessments, working with adults at risk of abuse and/or neglect and identifiable risks. • Training for My Church People to be offered to all those who require it with clear guidelines on what they are expected to review and hold.
Standard 8 - Partnership Working	Not assessed in this focussed audit
Standard 9 - Responding to concerns (including Supporting Survivors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information to be provided on all diocesan websites giving information of support services for Survivors and those in need.
Standard 10 - Working with those who pose a risk.	Previously assessed in April 2023

Audit Undertaken by:	Date Completed:
Dawn Watson – Senior Safeguarding Advisor	28/11/2023

Action Plan (to be undertaken by the organisation)				
Standard	Action to be taken	By Who	By When	RAG rating
Standard 5	Review workloads of trainers and capacity to provide cover when unexpectedly unavailable.			
	Employment of trainer(s) across the province.			
	Consider 'Train the Trainer' opportunities			
	Consider validated volunteer trainers across the province.			
	Continue development and implantation of Advanced courses i.e. Domestic Abuse and Spiritual Abuse.			
	Ensure accessibility issues are considered for those who are attending			

	training and have physical, mental, visual or hearing impairment.			
Standard 7	Positive promotion of safeguarding at diocese level and the role of MASOs			
	Create peer support opportunities for MASOs in their diocese areas.			
	Newsletter sent regularly to MASOs to encourage them with information to pass on to the parishes including key issues such as risk assessments, working with vulnerable adults and identifiable risks.			
	Training for My Church People to be offered to all those who require it with clear guidelines on what they are expected to review and hold.			
	Ensure all training is in line with the recommendations of the National Training Standards Framework.			
Standard 9	Information to be provided on all diocesan websites giving information of support services for Survivors and those in need.			

Completed by:	Reporting to:	Date
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