

Appendix 2: Historical (non-recent) abuse policy and procedure

1. Policy statement

This policy is about how the Church aims to respond to the needs of survivors of historical abuse.

The Church will:

- Seek to ensure that there is a sensitive and effective response for survivors reporting any type of historical abuse perpetrated by a Church office bearer/employee in a Church activity, or by another service user in a social care service provided by CrossReach (Social Care Council)
- Treat all disclosures of historical abuse seriously
- Offer the survivor the opportunity to be heard and listened to
- Ensure that where disclosures allege criminal activity, and/or there is an on-going risk of significant harm to the survivor, a child or adult, this information will be shared with the police or other public authorities. There is no legal definition of significant harm or the distinction between harm and significant harm. The extent to which harm is significant will relate to the severity or anticipated severity of impact upon a person's health, development and wellbeing.

2. Procedure

The procedure provides a framework for responding to reported historical abuse. Steps will not always happen in this exact sequence. The process could end at any stage.

Disclosure

The process starts with a report of historical abuse by a survivor, or other person, about the harmful conduct by a person. The disclosure may relate to any organised activity or service provision in the Church or in a current, or past, CrossReach service.

Safeguarding procedure

Historical abuse should be referred to the Safeguarding Service using the established safeguarding procedure for all reported harm.

Basic information will be required about what happened, where, when and who was involved.

The police, or other public authority, will take the lead role with investigation.

Appropriate senior staff of the Central Services in the Church of Scotland National Office (and/or CrossReach, as relevant) will be advised about the disclosure.

Initial risk assessment

The Safeguarding Service will do an initial risk assessment to determine if the information disclosed needs to be shared with the police or other public authorities.

Sharing information with the police

When a disclosure suggests that a crime has been committed, the standard practice of the Church will be to share this information with the police.

The Church has a duty to contribute to public protection.

Sometimes the survivor may be at risk of ongoing harm or another child or adult may currently be at risk of significant harm.

In the first instance, the survivor will be encouraged to share information with the police themselves. Where the survivor does not want to, or is not able to do this, the relevant Church department/council or The Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service will share this information.

But the survivor retains control – they do not have to speak with the police unless they want to.

The police will decide what to do with the information, for example note it for information or make further investigations.

Being heard and responding to the needs of survivors

If appropriate, the survivor will have the opportunity to speak to a member of staff from the Safeguarding Service.

The member of staff can provide initial support and advice to the individual and assist in signposting them to the most appropriate services to meet their needs.

3. Summary

The Church will be receptive to the needs of survivors and will give them an opportunity to be heard. The policy and procedure provide a structure and process for this to happen. The measures of success will be the outcomes for survivors.

The Safeguarding Committee will regularly monitor and review this policy and procedure.