



Coronavirus/Covid-19

Advice for Safeguarding Co-ordinators, Trainers and Presbytery Safeguarding Contacts

17 March 2020

It is now anticipated that the current outbreak of Covid-19/Coronavirus will cause general disruption to services both essential and non-essential.

The volunteer community will also be significantly impacted by the spread of the virus.

The Church of Scotland has a Coronavirus Task Group which meets daily and issues regular briefings to your Presbytery Clerk.

In addition to the advice issued by this task group, the Safeguarding Service has sought to answer some of the queries we have received from you over the past few days.

It is a fast-moving situation and advice may change from day to day.

Please keep up to date with the advice issued by Health Protection Scotland and the UK and Scottish Governments.

<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

<https://www.gov.scot/>

Congregations wishing to set up services to help those who are self-isolating may want to make contact with their Local Authority Community Planning Partnerships or other Community links to assist with initiatives that are already in the process of being organised.

Q. Can our congregation help those self –isolating in the community?

A. Yes. However, there are a number of issues you might want to consider before setting up initiatives in the name of your congregation. For example:-

Volunteers

The Safeguarding Service would advise congregations to use those in the following positions e.g. Minister, district visiting elders, Ministries Development Staff (MDS), those on your congregational register (SG7), or those you regard to be in a position of trust in your congregation. We would advise against using people unknown to the congregation.

Volunteers that might be considered as being in a 'high risk' group should not risk contracting the virus by offering their services or the congregation knowingly accept their services.

'High Risk' groups are currently those individuals considered to have particular underlying health conditions, the over 70's and pregnant women.

Direct physical contact with those who have coronavirus symptoms should be avoided.

Providing a service

Congregations should decide which services they can provide based on the availability of suitable volunteers and take steps to ensure that the person providing the service is known to the recipient. This is to prevent 'scammers' or other unsuitable people from acting on behalf of the Church. It would be helpful for the volunteer to carry some form of identification.

If your congregation intends to do shopping for someone the Service would advise that you have robust procedures in place for the transaction. Where possible, if the congregation has the means, it would be a safer option for the volunteer to

- Have a float (small sum of money) which is provided by the congregation to the volunteer and the congregation keeps a record
- The congregation records which volunteer is providing the service to the individual
- The volunteer provides the shopping to the individual and
- Provides the receipt to the congregation to be photocopied, retained and
- The original receipt is provided to the individual concerned and the congregation then seeks payment from the individual at a later date

Individuals **should not** provide money to those they do not know.

You should be aware that any service provision can be fraught with difficulty (especially where financial transactions are involved) and take steps to ensure that your volunteer knows the procedure to be followed. This is to protect the volunteer as well as the recipient of the service.

We are aware that the cards below are being used to provide services to individuals who are self-isolating, we would advise congregations to discuss how the cards could be safely used e.g. would it be preferable to have a small number of people being the main contact (s)/co-ordinator (s) for the services to be provided rather than having the details of a larger number of volunteers being distributed within the community?

HELLO! If you are self-isolating, I can help.

My name is

.....

I live locally at

.....

My phone number is

.....

If you are self-isolating due to COVID-19 I can help with:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Picking up shopping | <input type="checkbox"/> Posting mail |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A friendly phone call | <input type="checkbox"/> Urgent supplies |

Just call or text me and I'll do my best to help you (for free!)

Coronavirus is contagious. Please take every precaution to ensure you are spreading only kindness. Avoid physical contact (2m distance). Wash your hands regularly. Items should be left on your doorstep. **#ViralKindness**

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.....

I live locally at

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GDPR

For advice in relation to retention of individuals contact details, please refer to the GDPR section on the Law Department Circulars.

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/law-circulars>

Q. I am a Safeguarding Trainer. I have a number of training courses organised, should I be going ahead with them or cancelling them?

A. At the present time the UK and Scottish Governments have advised social distancing measures to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19. In particular this is strongly advised for people aged 70 or over, people with particular underlying medical conditions and pregnant women. People that can work from home are being advised to do so. Most organisations will restrict attendance at events, training and meetings. All of these factors ought to be taken into consideration when deciding whether your safeguarding training should go ahead or not. The safest option would be to consider in the first instance whether your training can be delivered by other means e.g. video conferencing etc. If this is not possible please consider whether your training can be postponed until a later date. If you are unsure of the implications of delaying the training please contact the Safeguarding Service for further advice.

Q. Will the Safeguarding Service still take enquiries and referrals if 121 close for a period of time or if staff are working from home?

A. Yes. The Safeguarding Service expects to be able to continue to provide a safeguarding service. If 121 close for any reason, a message will be left on the Services' answering machine outlining the details of how to contact us. We will pick up enquiries and referrals e-mailed into the safeguarding mailbox safeguarding@churchofscotland.org.uk. A member of staff will then make contact with you.

Q. Will PVG applications still be processed if 121 close or if staff are working from home?

A. No. The service does not have the ability to process applications out with the office. If these measures are taken by the Church of Scotland it is very likely that our partner agencies (Volunteer Disclosure Services and Disclosure Scotland) will also be subject to the same measures and therefore unable to process our applications at their end.