

## **Review findings with regard to the guidance on responding to complainants.**

The National Board commissioned a review of the guidance contained in Resources 13 and 15 with reference to responding to disclosures. This section of the guidance had recently received attention within the media and the Board were anxious to confirm that it was sufficiently clear and offered appropriate direction for those referencing it. To that end, they approached an independent consultant to consider this and advise as to whether any amendment was needed.

The National Board received the Review report at their meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> September. The findings confirmed that “Resource 13 and 15, combined with Resource 2 and 16, offered a comprehensive approach to addressing an allegation of inappropriate sexual behaviour”. In the consultant’s view, the document makes it clear that Church representatives should not act in isolation and should consult with the statutory authorities responsible for Child Protection.

The Review Report offered clarification on the meaning of the term “enough detail” as used in point 10 of Resource 15. This should be understood as meaning that the alleged offender should be given enough detail that would allow the Church to take responsible and protective action to ensure child protection and welfare, while affording the alleged offender the opportunity to reply to the allegations. The designated officer, who may be undertaking this task, must be impartial and avoid being seen as an advocate for the alleged offender to the detriment of the victim. It is recognised that this is a challenging and complex task and it is recommended that training be made available to all those who would likely to undertake it in the Church’s safeguarding structure.

The consultant further recommended that a complainant may be asked to sign a document by the designated officer which would confirm that the policies and procedures of the Church have been fully explained to them by the designated officer and they understand what steps will follow.

Emphasis is placed upon ensuring that the Church representatives do not act independently of the statutory agencies. To achieve this, there should be a good and ongoing dialogue with them.

### **ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS.**

- 1) In the light of the Review findings, the National Board has commissioned Dr. Monica Applewhite to provide training for the support of designated officers and others, who may be called upon to undertake these tasks. This training will be provided during the week of 11-15 October 2010 and details will be confirmed shortly.

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- 2) A template for confirming agreement by a complainant to the safeguarding policies and procedures will be drafted and posted on this website for adoption by all designated officers if required.