

Dear all,

I am writing this from 'lockdown' but in my case 'lockdown' substantially mitigated by the possession of a garden on which the sun is currently shining, and a newly acquired knowledge of 'Zoom' magic social media. As DSOs we are, however, acutely aware that for many others the experience of 'lockdown' brings with it the fear of domestic violence and for children an increased risk of physical, emotional or sexual abuse and in both cases the near impossibility of escaping from the abuser. We are apprehensive about what we shall be faced with on the eventual emergence from the current situation and are currently consulting with children and family's workers across the District about positive ways to keep in touch with families connected to our churches. We have been informed that the national Domestic Abuse hotline has been inundated with referrals. We suggest therefore that help might more effectively be sought via more local domestic abuse services who can check the national database to see what, if any, refuge accommodation is available throughout the UK. Councils have been allocated extra funding for victims of domestic violence and are legally obliged to rehouse victims even if this means putting them in a hotel.

We are also receiving requests for advice about supporting those in our churches who may be suffering from dementia and are having difficulty understanding and adhering to the requirements for social distancing, especially as they are currently often deprived of their normal sources of advice and support. There will shortly be some notes on the District website giving general advice about such circumstances.

As ever please contact us if you would like some advice about any issue arising from the current situation.

Can we please also draw your attention to a new Connexional Policy, 'Children and Youth Social Media and Communications policy' which is now on the safeguarding section of the Connexional website.

You will be aware that Advanced Module Safeguarding training planned for May has had to be cancelled. We are doubtful that the sessions planned for July will go ahead but, living in hope, have decided not to cancel just yet. We are looking at how we shall need to modify delivery of the training in order to stay as safe as possible. Watch the website and communications from District Office for updated information nearer the time.

Also postponed are the sessions of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) which were to take place in March and were to look at the Methodist Church amongst others. They will now take place sometime in the autumn.

More positively we want to take the opportunity of introducing our new colleague DSO, Emma Goodley. Emma, who took up post on 30th March, replaces Katy Spencer-Madden who is now working in the Yorkshire North and East Methodist District. Emma says about herself,

‘I am a mother of two grown up children who are at University studying a Bachelor’s degree in Professional Musicianship and a Masters in Fashion. I have a little Chihuahua that I am probably overly obsessed with and I also have two cats, all of which are a little crazy. I have a degree in Psychology, and I am currently studying for my Masters in Investigative Psychology. I have a level 4 Diploma in Management, Advice and Guidance and Advanced CBT. My working background is varied, I have worked within Probation, the Prison Service, Mental Health, High Schools and Intensive Family Work. I have been a team leader for over ten years, and I love being able to support others in their training and advancement. Personally, I am rather a free spirit, or so I have been told over the years. I have road tripped across France and Spain to Ibiza on three occasions with many hair-raising moments across the Pyrenees in a large camper, however I am here to tell the tale at least. In terms of hobbies, I don’t do as much as I used to, but I do like to make clothing and to work with recycled fabrics, and I also like to write poetry. One thing I do regularly is keep a gratitude journal and practise mindfulness, I have found this invaluable over the years in managing the trials and tribulations that life can bring our way.’

Emma’s email is goodleye@dso.methodist.org.uk

Looking forward to seeing you all just as soon as possible.

Susan, Barbara and Emma

The Yorkshire West DSO team