



Christian Safeguarding Services

Pioneer Trust Safeguarding Learning Review Full Report

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Section 1: About this review

Introduction

Christian Safeguarding Services (CSS) have been commissioned by Pioneer Trust (PT) to conduct an external, independent safeguarding review prompted by concerns raised about their late founder's ministry practices. There was a concern that some of the repercussions may have an ongoing impact on the organisation. The circumstances of the complaint and the commissioning of this review are outlined below.

CSS are grateful to all of those who have contributed to this review. We especially recognise the input of those respondents who have experienced harm and chose to share their experiences with the reviewers. We are also grateful for the contributions of the Trustees, National Leadership Team (NLT), and staff, who have answered all our questions and provided access to all of the information and records that we have requested. This cooperation and the candour with which our questions have been answered has greatly helped the process. Our impression is that the contributions have been open and transparent and that there is a genuine desire to understand the truth and to learn whatever lessons need to be learned.

Whilst this report is provided primarily for the trustees and leadership of Pioneer Trust, CSS are aware that it will be shared with the Charity Commission, and that Pioneer Trust have committed to publishing this report in full for the sake of transparency. It is our hope that it will also prove helpful to churches within the Pioneer Network and beyond.

Circumstances

This review was initiated in response to a complaint that was raised with Pioneer Trust in July 2023 via social media. The complaint was about their late founder and former National Leader, Gerald Coates (GC). The complaint related to ministry and pastoral practice. It did not meet the threshold for referral to statutory services such as the Police or Social care, however, it did raise significant concerns.

Following receipt of the complaint, representatives of PT's safeguarding team met with the complainant and subsequently put support in place for them. The complaint was credible and, the nature and detail of the complaint was consistent with observations and shared concerns that had been discussed previously within the safeguarding and leadership teams of PT. Members of Pioneer's board of trustees, staff and leadership team had sought to address the concerns with GC on several prior occasions.

When the complaint was raised, the potential numbers of people affected by similar experiences and the seriousness of any such concerns was unknown. The Trustees and leadership of PT decided to commission an external review to seek to understand the situation more clearly.

The concerns raised did not meet any criminal or statutory safeguarding thresholds, however, given the profile of the Pioneer network and their founder, reputational risk to the charity was identified. The Pioneer trustees therefore decided to submit a Serious Incident Report to the Charity Commission. CSS agree that it was right and necessary to do so, even though this was not a clear-cut decision at that point.

Purpose

The overall purpose of this review is to provide a comprehensive assessment of safeguarding practice of the Pioneer Trust, both currently and historically. The review aims to identify any actions that need to be taken and lessons that need to be learned, to inform the development of future practice.

To achieve the overall purpose, this review includes:

- Assessing the current safeguarding arrangements and culture and identifying any required improvements.
- Providing an independent and safe channel for anyone with safeguarding concerns related to Pioneer Trust's safeguarding arrangements, culture, or about individuals who act / have acted on their behalf to raise their concerns and have their voices heard.
- Assessing the accuracy of Pioneer leadership's self-assessment of the proportionality and effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements.
- Understanding the scope and prevalence of past or current harmful experiences, or poor safeguarding or ministry practice, resulting from the activities of Pioneer Trust or individuals who have acted on their behalf.
 - Understanding what was known about such practices or incidents, by whom, and when.
 - Understanding what actions were taken in response to identified concerns and the extent of compliance with organisational policy, legislation, and guidance, and safeguarding best practice.
- Understanding the culture across Pioneer Trust activities with specific reference to the safeguarding culture and how safeguarding is embedded into the ministry culture.
 - This includes, but is not limited to, consideration of how senior leaders are and were held accountable and challenged.
- Applying the learning from the above to improve practice and safeguarding arrangements.
- Identify any other actions that may be required.

Scope

This is a review of Pioneer Trust (Charity number 1118766) and focuses on the Trust's activities, systems and processes, and the culture within the charity. It also considers partnership arrangements in which Pioneer Trust has a relationship to, or partners with, other charities. These partnerships may involve network churches or other charities and may involve varying degrees of formality or informality of the partnership arrangements. Thus, it considers situations where Pioneer Trust has either shared or full responsibility and authority.

It is important to note that the scope of this review does not include:

- GC's activities outside of what is now the Pioneer Trust
- Pioneer network churches (which are separate charities in their own right)

It is also important to note that, although this review was prompted by allegations made against the founder of the Pioneer Trust; Gerald Coates, this is a review of safeguarding at the Pioneer Trust, including, and prompted by, concerns raised about him and his ministry. It therefore includes how known safeguarding concerns have been managed in the past and PT's current safeguarding arrangements.

The scope of this review includes:

- Gathering additional information relating to the concerns already identified and providing opportunity to identify further concerns or allegations that were previously unknown to the Trust.
- Consideration of the effectiveness of Pioneer Trust's responses when concerns were raised, the extent to which policies, procedures and best practice were followed, and the extent to which the safeguarding arrangements currently in place minimise the risk of recurrence of such concerns.
- Identify learning from the past to shape future development of safeguarding practice.
- The extent to which Pioneer Trust's approach to safeguarding reflects and has been shaped or impacted by its biblical values and beliefs.
- Consideration of the extent to which the implications and impact of factors such as theological perspectives, presuppositions, worldviews, paradigms, and the dynamics of power, have been clearly understood and managed by Pioneer Trust's leaders, including:
 - The clarity with which they have understood and managed the impact of these factors on safeguarding arrangements and practice, and the proportionality and effectiveness of measures implemented to manage any perceived or identified risks or impacts.
 - The extent to which these subjective factors may have impacted the effectiveness of senior leaders and the effectiveness of accountability structures.
- Assessing the proportionality and effectiveness of the current safeguarding arrangements.

Limitations

Pioneer churches are independent charities and therefore concerns about their activities fall outside of the scope of this review, which is focused solely on the Pioneer Trust.

It is important to note that Gerald Coates, passed away in April 2022. Consequently, this review has not been able to hear his voice and provide him opportunity to respond or explain.

It is also important to remember that the scope of the review is limited to those people who felt able to contribute and wished to do so, and that the focus of the review is specifically on failures or deficiencies in PT's past or current culture and safeguarding practice. This review does not aim to survey the views of all those who have engaged with pioneer. It only sought views from people who had concerns. It does not seek to hear and record the views of the many people whose experience of Pioneer and / or GC was positive and helpful. Many of the participants, who expressed concerns recognised that even their own experiences were a mixture of positive and negative elements. The majority also acknowledged that many others have had positive experiences of both PT and GC. This, of course does not minimise the negative impacts, but it is important to remember when reading this review that it focuses on only one part of the whole picture.

Due to recording standards at the time and data retention regulations and policies, written records are not available from the earlier decades of Pioneer. Consequently, this review, which looks back as far as the late 1960's, is frequently reliant upon participant's memories of events that occurred many years ago. This reliance upon recollections impacts the review process and represents a real limitation.

It was vital that respondents were able to share their experiences with the interviewers on a confidential basis. This review strives to maintain their anonymity. Consequently, the reviewers are aware of evidence and situations that relate to the review but are unable to share the details within the review report. Where identifying details are shared, this has been done with the explicit and informed consent of the respondent.

Methodology

Following initial discussions between CSS and leaders of Pioneer Trust the purpose and scope of, and approach to the review were agreed. Pioneer Trust announced the launch of this review on the 18th of August 2023 via their website. This included an invitation to contribute to the review process by submitting a written contribution, via email, using an online form, or by phoning CSS, until mid-November. Information about the launch of the review was shared by Pioneer Trust on their own website, and on Christian news websites. Pioneer Church leaders were also informed of the launch of the review.

The initial plan was to provide opportunity to make submissions until mid-November. Submissions were still accepted until the end of December 2023 due to initial participants providing information that led to further submissions.

Thirty-five people provided written submissions to the review: either by email or using the online form. Respondents were given the opportunity to ask for a discussion with the reviewers and were asked whether they would be willing to speak with us if we wished to clarify information with them. The reviewers conducted 26 video interviews with respondents.

A smaller number of people did not make contact with CSS directly but were encouraged to speak with the reviewers by other respondents. This led to a further 4 interviews being conducted.

A second phase of interviews focused on people within Pioneer Trust. These interviews were conducted on a 1:1 basis. 15 people were interviewed including:

- Current National Leadership Team
- Current Trustee Board
- Previous UK Leader of Pioneer
- Designated Safeguarding Lead for Pioneer Trust
- Pioneer Trust's Safeguarding Advisor
- Previous leaders who held a role within Pioneer Trust
- Previous Chair of Trustees from 2014 - 2021

Pioneer Trust provided CSS with its safeguarding records, policies, and procedures, which were reviewed as part of this process.

Information from the online submissions to the review, video interviews and safeguarding documents were collated and analysed. Following the analysis, themes emerged, and recommendations have been made.

Report structure.

This report covers a great deal of ground.

- Section 1 outlines the background to the review and explains the process and its aims.
- Section 2 provides a brief summary of the key points.
- Section 3 sets out the background and context of both Pioneer Trust and the legal and regulatory framework in which the events examined occurred.

- Section 4 relates specifically to Gerald Coates and examines the specific concerns that gave rise to this review and the findings resulting from the appeal for information.
- Section 5 considers the culture and practice of safeguarding at the Pioneer Trust.
- Section 6 addresses issues that are relevant to this review, but which have a wider application because they are not specifically restricted to Pioneer trust. This section may be helpful to Pioneer network churches and to other churches more generally.
- Section 7 forms a concluding summary
- Section 8 provides specific recommendations for Pioneer Trust to consider.

Abbreviations used.

PT refers to Pioneer Trust

NLT refers to the National Leadership Team of Pioneer Trust.

DSL refers to the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead.

CSS refers to Christian Safeguarding Services.

GC refers to Gerald Coates, founder, and national leader of Pioneer.

BK refers to Billy Kennedy, the national leader from 2009-2019.

NW refers to Ness Wilson, national leader from 2019 - present.

LADO refers to Local Authority Designated Officer, who oversees the assessment of allegations or concerns about the suitability of adults who are engaged in regulated activity with children.

Definitions and use of terms

Respondents – in the context of this report refers to those who responded to the appeal for information.

Participants – in this report refers to those who provided information and includes both respondents and current and past officers, staff, or volunteers.

“Holy Kiss” - . This greeting, described by GC himself as a “Holy Kiss” involved a kiss on the cheek, similar to that which is currently common in other cultures around the world. The term “holy kiss” is taken from the writings of the Apostle Paul (e.g. in verses such as 2 Corinthians 13:12, Romans 16:16 etc. in which the Apostle encourages the believers to ‘greet one-another other with a holy kiss’). Such a greeting was common in that cultural context when greeting family and close friends.

Section 2: Executive summary

Introduction.

Christian Safeguarding Services (CSS) have been commissioned by Pioneer Trust (PT) to conduct an external, independent safeguarding review, arising from concerns raised about the ministry practice of their late founder Gerald Coates (GC).

CSS are grateful to all those who have contributed to this review. We especially recognise the input of those who took the time to recount painful experiences, which for some had been dormant for decades, and which were difficult to revisit and share with the reviewers. We are also grateful for the contributions of both current and past Trustees, members of the National Leadership Team (NLT) and staff who have answered all our questions and provided access to all the information and records that we have requested. This has been a challenging process for them too. Their cooperation and the candour with which our questions have been answered has greatly helped the process. Our impression is that the contributions have been open and transparent.

The full report has also been made available, but this summary seeks to capture the key findings and recommendations from what is, a lengthy and detailed document.

The review sought to understand as clearly as possible the extent and nature of inappropriate practice, and the response of Pioneer Trust to concerns that were known by them. The scope of the review did not extend to concerns about individual Pioneer Churches, as these are independent charities with their own trustees. It should also be noted that this review was not a wide-ranging culture review that aimed to hear both positive and negative experiences. Rather, it only sought to identify concerns. Consequently, the review reports focus on areas that require improvement. CSS recognise that there are many people who have benefited greatly from the work of PT. However, the harmful experiences that some have reported must not be minimised.

Context and background.

Pioneer traces its history back to the late 1960's as part of what is often referred to as the New Church or charismatic movement. GC was a leading figure in this movement in the UK and beyond. By the mid-1980s, churches were connecting as a network of independent churches, giving rise to the development of the Pioneer Trust, an organisation that in its own words "connects, inspires and equips" its member churches. GC was prominent in PT and was the first national leader.

By 2014, several factors coalesced:

Firstly, approaching his 70's, GC had handed the leadership of Pioneer Trust to Billy Kennedy (BK) and GC himself had no official role within PT. As the founder of Pioneer, and someone who was recognised as having a prophetic gifting, he was still held in high regard within Pioneer and beyond, but the influence that he held was now informal and he did not act in an official capacity for PT. He continued to attend Pioneer Trust events and continued to minister within the local church context and beyond but did so in an independent capacity. By 2014, there was a growing concern amongst PT leaders that some of GC's ministry practices fell short of the standards that they expected. The leaders began to address these concerns with him. Throughout the process of addressing these concerns, which extended over a number of years, PT leaders sought, and followed, advice from Thirtyone:eight (formerly CCPAS) who are their external independent safeguarding advisors.

Secondly, GC had, since the late 1990s been concerned about the influence of an increasingly sexualised society on Christians in the UK and other places. He saw the use of pornography and related private sexual behaviours as a major challenge, both for the spiritual wellbeing of individual believers and for the health and

spiritual mission of the church. In 2013, he published a book on the subject, which had already become a significant focus in his ministry.

Thirdly, GC was convinced of the need to raise up and develop a new generation of leaders in the church. The major focus of this involved young adults; usually late teens – mid 20's.

At this point, some further background information is worth noting. Three points in particular are worthy of attention:

1. GC had spoken during the earlier part of his ministry about his own early experiences of same-sex attraction; some participants reporting that he had described himself in public meetings as an “ex-homosexual”. At the time of his death, he had been married to his wife for more than 50 years. Having married in 1967, by this stage they had adult sons.
2. One of the key distinctives of the Pioneer movement, shaped by GC himself was the conviction that, as their website states, “We value the contribution of both women and men at every level of leadership”.
3. By the 2010s, understanding of safeguarding both children and adults, and national expectations in relation to safeguarding practice had developed significantly since the early days of GC's ministry.

The specific concerns that were developing within the PT leadership at the time concerned how GC related to young men; most of whom were young adults in their late teens – mid 20's. It is important to note that the concern was not that GC was behaving in a sexually inappropriate way, but rather that his conduct did not meet the standards expected at the time, that he was not respecting personal boundaries, and that his behaviour could be misunderstood as having a sexual motivation.

Two practices in particular are concerning. The first was that during public events and in public spaces, GC would, prophesy over and pray for young men. This in itself was not problematic, however, within this context, two main concerns were identified:

1. On some occasions, it was felt that the intensity and duration of these prophesy and prayer times was not in line with expectations.
2. Following the prophesy and prayer, GC would often seek to make personal contact with the individual; seeking to exchange contact details, or tracing and then approach them through social media.

The second was the use of the “Holy Kiss”. This involved a kiss on the cheek, not dissimilar to that which is practiced in many cultures, but which is not common in UK culture; particularly so when interacting with someone previously unknown to an individual.

Review conclusions and findings.

It is important to note that this review has not, due to his death in 2022, heard GC's voice directly. While the reviewers spoke to people who worked closely with him over the years and who would describe him as a friend, his own voice is obviously absent. It is also important to recognise that it is impossible to judge motives and intentions and that particular care must be taken given that GC's voice could not be heard.

The review heard from more than 30 people; some of whom knew each other but most of whom, so far as CSS can tell, had not had previous contact. The information supplied suggests a consistent pattern of behaviour that falls significantly short of expected standards at the time. CSS affirm the concerns of the PT leadership and agree with the advice provided by Thirtyone:eight. PT acted upon the advice that they received, and GC did modify his behaviour to some degree, however, overall, the interventions were not as effective as would have been hoped.

One discernible pattern of behaviour was that GC would approach a young man, often after a public meeting and would share a prophetic word with them. This prophetic word was usually encouraging and identified in

some way that God's hand was upon them, that they were special and that they would be future leaders in the church. He would then seek to establish contact with them; usually by offering, or at least appearing to offer some sort of mentoring or spiritual leadership development. Establishing contact took varying forms including giving them his business card, exchanging phone numbers (at the time), or searching them out using social media later and approaching them, usually by Facebook message.

A second pattern was greeting them with the "holy kiss", sometimes accompanied by a reference to scripture as a justification. This was done without prior consent or explanation.

Another identifiable pattern was that GC would approach young men that he had never met in person using social media. He would often offer a prophetic word of encouragement and then seek to establish ongoing contact.

Once contact had been established, he would start very quickly to question them about their use of pornography, masturbation etc. He would ask detailed questions about the type of pornography and about their accompanying sexual activity. This would happen without invitation in a conversation that the young man believed related to the prophetic word that they had previously been given.

On some occasions, Gerald apparently approached people indicating that he could be a father figure to them and that he believed God had called him to this.

As a result of this review, examples of all of the behaviours described, many of which were not known by PT leaders at the time, were reported. Most involved young adults, but there were 2 (possibly 3 as the age of one is unclear) who were in their mid-teens and one, who was aged 12-13, who it appears was contacted directly via social media. This behaviour would, both now and at the time that it occurred, be regarded as a safeguarding concern that should have been raised with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

While contact with under 18s is the most concerning behaviour from a safeguarding and legal perspective, contact with young adults was much more commonly reported. Some of these felt violated by the "holy kiss" but felt unable to object. Others were subjected to unexpected and detailed questioning about their sexual desires and practices. This conduct would in a similar professional context be considered unacceptable and a breach of trust. Others felt privileged to have received a prophetic word and an offer of mentoring from GC, but then felt let down when their expectations were not met.

It is important to remember that GC's voice could not be heard, however there were consistent and discernible patterns. Some individuals appear to have been harmed emotionally, psychologically and spiritually, and attribute that to their contact with GC and / or PT.

Most of the accounts provided during this review were unknown to PT, however, some concerns were reported to them. PT sought and followed the advice of Thirtyone:eight (formerly known as CCPAS). PT leaders raised these matters with GC. While some of his behaviours were modified, concerns remained, and the interventions initiated saw limited success.

The single most significant missed opportunity reported to the reviewers involved contact with a 12-13-year-old. This is particularly concerning in light of the wider concerns that were known at the time. This event, even in isolation, should have been passed to the LADO. The incident came to light when it was reported to another local charity, who state that they raised the matter with both GC's church and PT. The charities records were incomplete. Based on the partial records, CSS conclude that it is more likely than not that the events occurred broadly as described, however we cannot be confident that the young person's age was clearly communicated. Neither the church, nor PT have either recollection or records of the conversations described. While it is impossible to say what the outcome of a report to the Local Authority would have been, the fact that none of the

organisations involved reported the information was a significant failure and a missed opportunity to add weight to the actions of PT to address GC's concerning behaviours.

Prior to 2018, charities which do not engage in regulated activity (i.e. working with children, young people, or adults with care and support needs (as defined in the Care Act) were not required to have safeguarding policies in place. PT had a policy and procedures in place from the early 2010's. The key question for the review was more focused on the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements.

As stated above, PT does not engage in any regulated activity, however churches within the network do. PT has invested considerable time, energy, and finance in supporting its churches to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are in place. However, in doing so, they have not analysed with sufficient clarity, the safeguarding risks that they themselves need to manage. The focus of activity and the policies and procedures are more suited to the individual churches than to the network organisation. All of the safeguarding arrangements need to be reviewed to ensure that the charity's own activity is adequately covered. Many of the review recommendations relate to this. There is undoubtedly a desire in PT to ensure that safeguarding is prioritised and that both the trust, and churches that are part of the network give safeguarding the attention it requires. However, this review raises questions about the role and responsibilities of the Trust, its relationship to its churches and the way that their theology impacts safeguarding; both positively and negatively. These "big picture" questions need to be addressed. From there, the Trust can and should proceed to review its policies and practices.

The review recommendations are provided at the end of this report.

Conclusions

As has previously been stated, this review was not able to hear GC's voice. There is also a lack of documentary evidence to establish many facts. These conclusions must, therefore, be understood in that context.

There is no doubt that some of the ministry practices discovered during the review fall significantly short of the standards expected. CSS agree with the advice given by Thirtyone:eight and have seen evidence that the advice was not only sought but followed. PT had reached a decision that if GC did not adhere to the expected standards, they would dissociate from him. This had not been deemed necessary prior to his death in 2022.

CSS are unable to draw any conclusions in relation to GC's likely motives and intentions. There is no evidence to suggest that he attempted to engage in any inappropriate conduct beyond that described in the main review report.

Overall, CSS affirm that PT have expressed and demonstrated a serious commitment to safeguarding, were willing to take difficult decisions such as the in-principle decision to dissociate from their founder if he failed to operate in line with the expected standards, and have expressed a strong desire to learn lessons and strengthen practice. There is now, however, the need for this to be backed up with clear action to address the "big picture" questions with sufficient depth, precision, clarity of thought and analysis, and then to tailor the safeguarding arrangements to better reflect the activities and safeguarding risks that they themselves face.

Over recent years the prevailing view has been that safeguarding should be rooted in and shaped by the organisation's core values and beliefs. CSS believe that Pioneer could strengthen their practice still further with careful consideration of how their theology impacts safeguarding practice both positively and negatively.

Before proceeding to the recommendations, CSS wish to emphasise one final point. This review has identified weaknesses that need to be addressed, however, as stated in the previous paragraph, there is a strong commitment to safeguarding among the leadership of PT. CSS are aware that often in such situations, questions are asked about the leadership's suitability for their role on an ongoing basis. CSS are deliberately

and consciously not recommending that any leaders should step down in response to the findings of this review. Not only do we conclude that this is not necessary, we wish to go further and state that we believe that the Trustees, staff and NLT have the necessary commitment to drive the change that is needed. It is our view that to call for resignations would be inappropriate, unjust, and could potentially impact negatively on the action that is now required.

Once again, CSS wish to thank all of those who have participated in this review. It is our hope and prayer that this information will aid Pioneer Trust and its churches as they move forwards.

Recommendations

In light of this review, CSS recommend:

1. That PT conduct a rigorous self-audit of all safeguarding arrangements across the charity. (CSS have an audit tool that can be downloaded from their website which may be helpful.)
2. That PT conduct competence and training gaps analysis to identify training and skills development needs and then address those gaps across the trust.
3. That PT conduct a thorough review of their policies and procedures, ensuring that they align with the trust's activities rather than simply adapting a policy developed for churches.
4. That the trustees of PT prioritise safeguarding and develop processes by which they can assure themselves of the implementation and effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements.
5. That PT develops a plan to embed safeguarding into the organisational processes and culture so as to minimise the personal dependence upon a small group of individuals.
6. That PT adopts a proportionate but effective safe recruitment process for all staff and volunteers.
7. That PT leaders consider how they will keep their knowledge of safeguarding requirements and practice current and relevant.
8. That PT considers developing robust codes of conduct and ministry practice standards.
9. That PT carefully considers the implications of its theology and ministry practice for safeguarding; particularly when involved in ministry to children and young people.
10. That PT reviews its practices around recording, retaining, and sharing information.
11. That PT reviews its roles and responsibilities and clearly communicates its approach to working with other organisations including its network churches.
12. That PT considers setting clear standards of conduct and practice for the network churches and establish processes for addressing sub-standard practice.
13. That PT reviews its approach to information sharing with network churches where a safeguarding risk is identified.
14. That PT develop a clear action plan to monitor progress in these areas.

Section 3: Background and context

Pioneer

Pioneer as a movement traces its history back to the charismatic revival of the late 1960s and the “house church” movement that grew out of it. Gerald Coates, the founder of Pioneer was an influential figure in this movement and planted churches. Like-minded churches began to connect under the leadership of Gerald Coates and Pioneer Trust ultimately emerged from this network of churches. Pioneer Trust (PT) was first registered with the Charity Commission on 29 July 1986 (Charity number: 327160). The trust then became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) on 11th April 2007 (Charity number 1118766).

As detailed on their website <https://pioneer.org.uk>, Pioneer describes itself as follows:

About us (see <https://pioneer.org.uk/about-us>)

Who We Are

Pioneer is a relational network that connects, inspires, and equips churches in the UK and globally.

Our Purpose

We exist to take the gospel to new places and spaces.

Our Strategy

Our strategy is focused on both health and growth.

In terms of health we are committed to ensure that every leader is relationally connected, cared for, supported and accountable. Healthy leaders create healthy teams and healthy churches. Healthy churches will be marked by seeing salvation, supernatural and community transformation.

In terms of growth, we are expecting a multiplication of disciples, leaders, and churches. We champion innovative, creative and mission-shaped church planting that fits each context. We are expecting to see a mix of new micro churches/missional communities meeting in homes, new project plants coming out of community engagement initiatives and more conventional church planting teams sent out from some of our resource churches. There is no one size or one model that fits all. Pioneer will champion the small expressions as much as the big.

We want our growth to be commensurate with our ability to care for the growth, so over the coming years we will be looking to multiply our regions, release more apostolic regional leaders and develop strong resource churches in each region that are able to support other churches as they, in turn, serve their villages, towns and cities.

Pioneer churches work in partnership with a wide variety of churches and organisations in the UK and overseas. We recognise the breadth, richness and diversity that exists within the body of Christ and welcome connection with, and input from, other ministries and networks.

We acknowledge that Pioneer is a 'small cog in a much bigger wheel' but we want to play our part strongly, securely, and humbly.

Pioneer describes its values, distinctives and doctrines as:

Our values and distinctives (see <https://pioneer.org.uk/values>)

Values

We are relational, missional, charismatic, and kingdom orientated.

We are Relational

- God is community and, we believe, it is only in community that we can accurately reflect Him and see real and lasting fruit.
- We honour and celebrate multi generational and multi ethnic diversity within the context of our relationships.
- We recognise that anointed leadership is a grace gift given to serve, with humility, in the context of community. Leadership authority is based on relational authority
- We value the contribution of both women and men at every level of leadership.

Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it

1 CORINTHIANS 12:27

We are Missional

- The mission of God has a church and we see ourselves as co-workers with God in His mission – the reconciliation of all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.
- The Good News about Jesus needs to be presented in a way that is relevant to our context through our words, actions and with a demonstration of God's miraculous power.
- We believe that justice and social action are central to the message of Jesus.

As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you

JOHN 20:21

We are Charismatic

- Our life and faith is energised and informed by a living experience of the Holy Spirit, both individually and corporately.
- We believe in a God who breaks into time and space by His Holy Spirit, bringing revelation, healing bodies, sharing spiritual gifts and performing miraculous signs.
- Our spiritual life is rooted in the Scriptures and informed by church history.
- We believe in the full functioning of the five-fold ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (ACTS 2:4)

We are Kingdom Orientated

- We believe that the whole of life and creation is sacred. We, therefore, look to express a culture and lifestyle of worship that has no sacred-secular divide as we celebrate all of life.
- We have a strong commitment to equipping everyone to engage across all spheres of life – business, politics, media, community, education, creativity and the arts.
- We are committed to the unity of the Body of Christ and will seek to partner with others wherever possible.

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it. (PSALM 24:1)

Our Distinctives

We have three key distinctives:

The role of women in leadership.

We welcome and promote the role of women at every level of leadership.

Unity of the Body of Christ.

We actively and intentionally pursue unity and work in partnership – locally and nationally.

Adventure.

As 'pioneers' we want to continue to innovate, to take risks, to try new things, to be Spirit-led people and to have fun as we serve God's purposes.

Our doctrine

We hold a theologically orthodox position and as such we ask Pioneer churches to affirm both the [Nicene creed](#) and the [Evangelical Alliance basis of faith](#)

Pioneer trust currently has 6 members on their National Leadership Team, 4 trustees, 4 ministry leads and 4 staff.

Our leadership (<https://pioneer.org.uk/leadership>)

Ness Wilson - Ness is the Pioneer UK Leader. She leads Open Heaven Church in Loughborough, is on the Core Team for the Wildfires Festival, sits on the Evangelical Alliance Council and is a Trustee for LICC. Ness is the Regional Leader for Pioneer Midlands and together with the Midlands Regional Team, she works into the Midlands churches. Ness is our 'champion' for women in leadership across the network.

Linda Ward - Linda is the Regional Leader for [Pioneer London](#) and together with the London Regional Team, works into the London churches. She is also Pioneer's Ecumenical Lead, leads Pioneer Network Australia and co-chairs WLL (West London Leaders, a unity collaboration of over 100 church & Community leaders across denominations). She is an accredited Mediator with experience journeying with leaders in the workplace and churches.

Richard Anniss - Richard, together with his wife Judith, are the Regional Leaders for [Pioneer North](#) and they also lead the team of leaders at King's Church in Greater Manchester. Richard is Pioneer's Training and Theological Lead overseeing [CORE](#) and [PATHWAY](#). He also coordinates a local unity movement in Manchester.

Paul Weston – Paul, together with his wife Paula, are the Regional Leaders for [Pioneer South](#) and they also lead New Generation Church in Sidcup – which is an outstanding church in terms of its impact in the local community. Paul Co-Chairs the New Generation Schools Trust developing the Hope Community School network and serves on the leadership team for Spring Harvest.

Paula Weston - Paula, together with her husband Paul, are the Regional Leaders for [Pioneer South](#) and they also lead New Generation Church in Sidcup – which is an outstanding church in terms of its impact in the local community. They founded Hope Community School, they run the local community library and Lark in the Park every summer. Paula leads the [Pioneer Prophetic Community](#) which is developing strong and healthy prophetic cultures in our churches.

Graham Blake - Graham is the Regional Leader for [Pioneer East](#) and leads Hope Church, Diss in Norfolk which serves their local rural community in many different practical ways. Graham is also Pioneer's Prayer Lead helping mobilise effective prayer across the Network.

There are 4 PT Trustees: Steve Clifford (SC) – Chair, Richard White, Jo Musgrove (Safeguarding Lead), and Greg George. PT also has 4 ministry leads and 4 members of staff.

Pioneer has had 3 national leaders. Initially, Gerald Coates, the founder of Pioneer led the network until 2009, when he handed the role over to Billy Kennedy. Ness Wilson succeeded Billy as national leader in 2019.

Brief history of Pioneer including leadership

Pioneer began as a group of Christians from a Brethren assembly background, meeting in the home of Gerald Coates in the late 1960s. This group grew in number and eventually became 'Cobham Christian Fellowship' (CCF) in the 1970s, continuing to be led by GC.

By the 1980s, GC felt led to take on a more national role in developing the Pioneer Network of churches and on 29 July 1986 Pioneer Trust was first registered with the Charity Commission.

CCF was, many years later, rebranded as 'Pioneer People'. Pioneer People closed around 2003/4 and between 2005 to 2007 GC launched a new fellowship called, 'Engage Church'.

In 2009 GC was succeeded as National Leader by Billy Kennedy (BK), who came from New Community Church; a non-Pioneer church based in Southampton. Pioneer Trust also employed a staff member whose role included the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). This person continues to be contracted as the

Safeguarding Advisor. Pioneer Trust relies significantly upon the Safeguarding Advisor, who is an experienced, knowledgeable, and competent safeguarding professional.

BK led PT until 2019. Ness Wilson (NW), the current incumbent, succeeded him as National Team Leader for Pioneer UK Network.

Culture at Pioneer

From its' earliest days Pioneer has positioned itself within evangelicalism as an informal, non-religious, and relational movement, breaking away from what it deemed to be the constraining structures and practices of traditional churches. In 1998 GC published a book entitled 'Non-religious Christianity' wherein he challenged conventional religious practices. Pioneer has been variously described, including such descriptors as cutting edge, radical, non-conformist, and trailblazing.

The idea of being bound by formality or having defined parameters has historically been seen as somewhat incompatible with the concept of Pioneering. It was reported by several participants that in GC's time, creating policies and procedures, including those pertaining to safeguarding, was not a high priority. Some respondents suggested that this perhaps reflected an attitude of reliance on God's protection, perhaps mixed with a naivety as to the safeguarding and reputational issues that can permeate any organisation or movement. Others disagree, noting that as a registered charity that in 1999 had a turnover in excess of £800,000, 4 staff, plus volunteers, a network of over 80 churches, and a Council of Reference, PT would have had such policies and procedures in place.

It is reported that when BK took over the leadership of Pioneer from GC, there were approximately 30 boxes of documentation, 4 computers and further data stored on removable disks. However, it seems that most of this was old data which was securely destroyed. At the point of handover, PT did not engage in regulated activity and in line with practice at the time, did not have a safeguarding / Child Protection policy, and no safeguarding records of any description were handed over to the new leadership team. Under BK's leadership, Pioneer established these policies, procedures, and systems; much of the work being completed by the Operations Manager and the DSL. In 2018, significant changes to the Charity Commission's expectations were introduced in updated guidance, requiring all charities to have a safeguarding policy. PT had introduced safeguarding policies in the early 2010s which have been updated over the years.

Broader society-wide context

Overview of the development of safeguarding practice in the UK

Pioneer Trust dates back to the mid-1980s and has its roots in the late 1960s. During this time, there has been considerable change in the awareness and understanding of safeguarding, the expectations of organisations to safeguard, and the expectations and legal duties of charities. It is therefore essential that the review considers events in their chronological context. This section outlines key developments and changes during this period. A more detailed timeline is provided at Appendix A.

During the 1960's and 1970's, awareness of Child Protection was limited and was largely seen as a responsibility of the state. The wider notion of "safeguarding" had not yet developed and there was limited emphasis on the importance of organisations sharing information and working together to protect children from harm. The responsibility to protect was largely seen as a Local Authority (Social Services) activity.

During the 1980's a number of highly publicised child deaths, and the outrage that they provoked across society, resulted in the introduction of the 1989 Children Act. This was a significant development that radically shifted the understanding and expectations in relation to safeguarding. The 1989 act (with various amendments) continues to be the foundation of all modern child protection and safeguarding practice.

The 1990's saw a significant shift in the awareness of safeguarding across all aspects of society and expectations of all organisations (including charities) to cooperate with the local authority to keep children safe. This included an increasing awareness of the importance of checking the suitability of those who worked with or had access to children and young people. By the late 1990's, the routine background checking of the children's workforce and the need for organisations working with children and young people to establish child protection policies and procedures, and to provide training to staff and volunteers was established.

The death of Victoria Climbié in 2000 and the public inquiry into the circumstances of the tragedy placed emphasis upon the importance of information sharing, and all organisations (including churches and other faith-based organisations) working in partnership with the local authority to protect children and young people from abuse or neglect. While this requirement was not new, there was a significant increase in awareness and the requirements were formalised in the 2003 Children Act.

The 2000's also saw a broadening definition of safeguarding. Awareness of the importance and value of early intervention grew. The broader term "safeguarding" replaced the "Child Protection" terminology, encompassing both protection from harm and the promotion of wellbeing.

An increased focus on background checking and the abuse of a position of trust continued to develop throughout the 2000's, with Ian Huntley's murder of Jessica Chapman and Holly Wells resulting in the Safeguarding vulnerable Groups Act in 2006. The increasing awareness of the importance of considering the suitability of staff and volunteers, the need for appropriate policies and procedures, and the importance of good safeguarding practice was becoming more mainstream in churches and other faith-based organisations.

Following the death of Jimmy Saville in 2011, and the ensuing allegations and uncovering of his crimes, the focus once again turned to the abuse of a position of trust and the suitability of staff and volunteers. In addition, international scandals involving the abuse of children and adults by aid workers in charities such as Oxfam and Save the Children resulted in an increased focus on the voluntary sector. The commissioning of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in the UK in 2014, and its subsequent work also shed light on past failures and sought to develop safeguarding practice based on the learning from the review.

By the mid-2010's greater awareness of risks within the wider society including grooming, Child Sexual Exploitation, and Child Criminal Exploitation were also increasing. The #Metoo movement broadened the awareness of abuse, not only of children, but also of adults both in the workplace and more widely across society, including a focus on power dynamics and imbalances. There was also an increasing focus on violence against women and girls. The #Black Lives Matter movement raised awareness of oppression, exploitation, and abuse within society. These moved the focus of adult safeguarding to include universal safeguarding in addition to considering "adults at risk of abuse" and "adults with care and support needs" (as defined in the care act 2014).

In addition to this, broader cultural shifts were also taking place, particularly around same sex marriage, gender identity, critical race theory etc. These were driving significant changes of worldview in younger generations. Within church circles, increasing awareness of the misuse of power and authority, and broader issues of abuse

in the church – both at levels that reached statutory thresholds, and at sub-threshold levels, was shaping expectations and exposing past failures.

In 2018, the Charity Commission (England and Wales) revised its guidance and expectations. Key changes included:

- Requiring all charities to have a safeguarding policy (previously this was only required if the charity was engaged in regulated activity).
- Requiring a statement about safeguarding to be included in the charity’s annual return.
- Broadening the safeguarding responsibilities of trustees to include “universal safeguarding”, often referred to as the “general duty of care” to everyone who comes into contact with the charity and articulating the need to take reasonable steps to protect everyone who comes into contact with the charity, not just beneficiaries.

All these factors and many more have shaped safeguarding practice over the decades. As previously stated, it is important when considering historic events to consider them in their correct chronological context. These changing expectations have been rooted in legislation and guidance that was shaped by a variety of events.

Section 4: Concerns raised about Gerald Coates

Founder of Pioneer: Gerald Coates

GC was the founder of Pioneer Trust. Without his vision and drive, it is unlikely there would be a Pioneer Network of churches. He was a charismatic, if somewhat eccentric leader who significantly influenced the development of the 'Charismatic', 'House Church', or 'Restorationist' movement. He was a gifted communicator and popular preacher. GC was, and is, regarded as an apostle by many within the movement. His principle spiritual gifting though, was said to be in the realm of the 'prophetic'.

GC was not afraid of controversy; some would say he courted it. He would address issues that others, who were perhaps more sensitive to the prospect of causing offence, would not. His willingness, even in the early days of the movement, to discuss issues, some of which were taboo like masturbation and the use of pornography, but also more theological issues such as the role of women in the church, the sabbath, and the Lord's table. A significant feature of his ministry was his challenge to "institutional Christianity"; authoring a book entitled "Non-religious Christianity" in 1998.

GC's approach to some of these issues caused unease amongst fellow leaders in the wider "Restorationist" or "New Church" movements at the time. Both in the Ralph Turner (RT) biography of GC and in Dr. Andrew Walker's book, 'Restoring the Kingdom', reference is made to such issues contributing to a split in the "New Church" movement. Those from a more conservative, Pentecostal background feared that GC's more liberal approach could lead to 'grace being used to cover up license' (RT Bio Ch.8 p 87).

GC was not afraid to face challenges head on. Over the years he had been vocal in his support of traditional and historically orthodox views on marriage and homosexuality, and on his opposition to same sex marriage. It is also reported by participants that he had also been open publicly about his own experience of same-sex attraction in his youth. He did not, however, regard holding strong views on biblical sexuality as a barrier to demonstrating grace and giving hope to those who took the contra view. Indeed, according to Ralph Turner, GC himself, "helped create one of the biggest and most successful AIDs charities in the UK."

In 2013, GC co-authored a book entitled "Sexual healing: identity, sexuality and calling" which addressed the use of pornography and masturbation; something that he saw as a significant issue facing the church at the time. Significantly, it has been GC's willingness to incorporate this openness to discuss sexual issues into his prophetic and pastoral ministry that raised red flags both contemporaneously and posthumously. This very issue has led several contributors to this review to come forward.

Concerns expressed.

The source material relating to the concerns expressed about GC is derived from documentation passed to CSS by PT, and contributions made via the submission of a contact form and/or a video interview with CSS. There are several key themes that were expressed, or that emerge from these sources, many of which will be developed further in this review.

It should be emphasised at this point that the following list reflects what was reported to CSS, not the reviewers' conclusions or assertions.

1. Gerald's ministry and "prophetic words", particularly later in his life, appear in the main to have focused on young adult men in their early 20s.
2. These men were typically described by those expressing concerns as "gifted" and "good looking".
3. A number were initially approached by GC at public events including PT Leaders Conferences, University Christian Unions etc.
4. These were singled out by GC to receive encouraging or occasionally directional prophetic words.
5. A number were subsequently encouraged to move to the Leatherhead area.
6. Some had accommodation arranged in a property next door to GC and his wife.
7. Many were led to believe they had a future in ministry under his mentoring.
8. Many were subjected to GC's 'holy kiss'. This greeting, described by GC himself as a "Holy Kiss" involved a kiss on the cheek, similar to that which is common in other cultures around the world.
9. Some young men were directly contacted by GC without any prior contact, via Facebook.
10. Others were followed-up via Facebook by GC with or without their prior approval or consent.
11. On a few occasions GC contacted teenagers (and on one occasion a 12/13-year-old) on Facebook either directly or having gained parental permission to do so, without having any prior contact with them.
12. It was reported by several respondents that GC had spoken publicly of personal experiences of same sex attraction in his early life.
13. Some respondents reported observing GC consuming significant amounts of alcohol on a regular basis later in his life.
14. GC became focused on the struggles young men had with pornography, masturbation, sexuality, and identity. Some participants were told by GC (when they asked about his line of questioning) that he had a standard "questionnaire" that he used with those he mentored. This included questions about sexuality, sexual attractions, and activity, and, based on respondent's accounts of their conversations GC was used routinely with anyone that he mentored; regardless of the reason for the mentoring or the themes to be addressed.
15. GC would ask deeply personal questions of young men about their struggles in these areas typically without warning, invitation, or permission to broach those issues.
16. GC appears to have lacked appropriate and effective personal accountability structures, particularly after passing on his leadership role and employment in 2009.
17. Some respondents expressed the view that within PT, there was an avoidance of, or discomfort with, properly recognising and responding to safeguarding risks associated with concerning aspects of GCs ministry practices. While this is disputed, numerous participants reported that encountering an attitude of "that's just Gerald" or "that's Gerald's ministry", particularly in the earlier days. It should, however, be noted that while this may have been the case in the wider Pioneer network, by the mid 2010's, leaders and relevant staff at PT were actively seeking advice from Thirtyone:eight (formerly CCPAS), PT's external specialist safeguarding advisors, and were following that advice and taking active steps to address the concerns.
18. When he was spoken to, GC seemed to largely disregard advice and guidance offered to him around these safeguarding concerns, even as the response of PT was escalated.

As detailed in the 'Scope of Work' published by Pioneer Trust on 18 August 2023, "This review was initiated after a complaint was raised with Pioneer Trust in July 2023 about their late founder and former Network Leader, Gerald Coates, who led the network up until 2009. The concerns relate to approaches to ministry and pastoral practice."

Several contributors have reported what they believe to be inappropriate and abusive behaviours in relation to GC. With due regard to the wishes of those who wished to remain anonymous we will now consider in summary form the nature of the concerns expressed. We will begin with the complaint that prompted this review. We will then outline the concerns expressed by other contributors who described being subjected to behaviour that they considered inappropriate or abusive by GC.

The complaint that prompted the review

On 19 July 2023 Pioneer Trust responded to a complaint made to them in connection with the historic conduct of GC. The complainant will be referred to as 'C' hereafter.

C's connection with Pioneer traces back to when he joined Pioneer's DNA evangelism training programme at the age of 19. DNA was formerly known as 'TiE', an acronym for 'Training in Evangelism'. C's recollection of the training (and discipleship dynamics in the charismatic sub-culture more generally at the time) was that it was intensive, encouraged personal vulnerability, and involved submission to leadership, whether that leadership was gentle or less gentle in nature.

C maintains that the style of mentoring or discipleship could lack boundaries and respect for personal autonomy. Enthusiastic young people, keen to please and seeking validation, affirmation, and approval could be particularly vulnerable to seeking this in spiritual leaders; a vulnerability that could be exploited by abusive leaders.

C did not feel taken advantage of by the DNA team however he felt differently about his experience with GC. C explained that he first encountered Gerald during the first residential of his DNA year. GC was invited to speak at one of the sessions and was clearly held in high regard as the founder of Pioneer and as a prophet. C recalls Gerald latching on to one of the young men in his cohort and spending a lot of one-to-one time with him.

C's next encounter with GC was, he believes, at the Pioneer leaders conference. Gerald spotted him from across the room and came to tell him that God had spoken to (Gerald) about him; that he was special, unique, and different and so GC suggested that C should come and spend some time with him. C was flattered. He stated that the attention appealed to his ego and a need for validation from a father figure. C recalls that it felt as though Gerald was saying he understood him in a way that no one else did; something he (GC) talked about on another occasion. Gerald was deemed important by the DNA team, and at the conference, and so C felt he should be honoured by his attention and do whatever he suggested as he could be trusted.

Subsequently Gerald contacted C via Facebook and arranged to meet up in person. C describes that on arrival, he was taken aback when Gerald kissed him on the cheek. Gerald quickly justified it by referencing a biblical practice referred to in Bible verses such as 2 Corinthians 13:12, Romans 16:16 etc 'greet each other with a holy kiss'. C's view was that this was not simply a quick peck on the cheek. It felt more deliberate to him and made C feel deeply uncomfortable. This happened every time they met. Finding it difficult to challenge the conduct, C felt violated as he had not in any way consented to this physical contact. C felt it was forced upon him. He felt that the use of bible verses to justify the practice was a form of spiritual abuse.

C's description of the conversations they had when they met up, was that Gerald spent a lot of time talking about himself, his achievements, and who he had met. But what he found more uncomfortable and inappropriate was when he started talking about pornography and masturbation leaving C feeling that he was prying into his private life. C didn't bring this up, nor did he feel a need to talk about it, but Gerald continued to do so in graphic detail, making C feel very uncomfortable. It felt 'creepy and weird' and didn't sit right with him. For a while though, as Gerald was held in such high esteem, C ignored these feelings. He wanted to feel accepted, understood, validated, and chosen. But after a few meetings, C began to withdraw due to the discomfort he felt. At that time, C was also feeling increasingly disillusioned with the charismatic movement more generally.

Gerald continued to contact C somewhat randomly via Facebook or via phone call (C stated that Gerald had been very keen to get his mobile number). Despite the context of a prophetically inspired mentoring relationship, C noticed that Gerald would often get his name wrong and never seemed to remember anything about him. C found this very confusing; particularly in the supposed context and given the expectations that GC's prophecies and encouragements has raised within him.

During their time at theological college, another young male student told C that Gerald had sent him a Facebook message out of the blue that he found rather odd and out of place. He had seen that C was a mutual friend of Gerald's on Facebook and asked C about it. It seemed Gerald had received a prophetic word for this young man also and was trying contact him to share this with him. Gerald had talked about how he had done the same thing with other young males. C finds this behaviour concerning.

Gerald continued to contact C sporadically, however, C tried to distance himself from him. Around 2014, having declined an invitation to attend an event at which GC was speaking and having informed Gerald that he was getting married, Gerald stopped contacting him.

C tried to forget about it and move on. However, while on a "fathering weekend" for former DNA students in 2019, Gerald's name came up and one young man around C's age expressed serious concerns about an experience he'd had with Gerald. This caused C to further reflect on his own experience again. C states that he spoke with members of the DNA team. The concern he expressed was that Gerald seemed to have an unhealthy interest in young men, including himself, but C felt this was ignored and not taken seriously. He is not aware of any action being taken. Those leading the event have no recollection of this conversation and there are no records of it. They did however indicate that it could have been mentioned in passing during an informal conversation between those attending.

In 2023, allegations about another well-known Christian leader came to light in connection with his treatment of young men, which brought C's experiences with Gerald back to the surface, in as much of the situation resonated with him. C realised Gerald's behaviour was unacceptable. C had been told that Gerald was an ex-homosexual, but C stated that he didn't believe that struggle was over. His experiences and observations suggested to him that Gerald continued to have an inappropriate interest in young men and used his position and reputation for having a prophetic gifting, to get close to them under the guise of some sort of mentoring relationship. From there, he would move to asking highly personal questions that were, in C's view, unrelated to the prophetic word.

By the time of Gerald's death in 2022, C had significant concerns about elements of the culture and theology of Pioneer specifically and the charismatic subculture more generally. He expressed the view that it can facilitate this inappropriate behaviour.

Following Gerald's death, C found it incredibly difficult to hear people talk so positively about GC in tributes, describing him as a legend, etc, given C's damaging experience of him and his knowledge of wider contact that GC had with other young men. This led him to make a comment on Pioneer's Facebook post announcing Gerald's death. He felt that this needed to be acknowledged but didn't know how else he could raise his concerns.

Accounts from other contributors

In the review announcement, individuals who had any relevant information were encouraged to contribute to the process. In response to that invitation, a number of individuals contacted CSS to share their stories.

Clearly, due to the timing of this review, CSS were unable to raise these matters with GC, and so they are recorded from the contributions made without further investigation. As stated previously, it is important to remember that Gerald's voice could not be heard. This is not to question the integrity or truthfulness of the accounts; however, it is only right to keep clear that GC has not been able to participate or respond. It is also important to recognise that common themes exist between contributors.

The following summarises the concerns expressed to CSS during the review by participants in relation to GC:

- 1) **Late 1990s** - at Cobham Christian Fellowship (CCF) GC became increasingly focused on preaching about homosexuality, pornography, and sex addiction.
- 2) **Late 1990s** - GC was seen using the 'holy kiss' with young men.
- 3) **Aug 2003** - a young man is picked out by GC at a non-Pioneer Christian festival or conference. Ongoing contact is maintained culminating in the man moving in next door to GC.
- 4) **2005** - GC reaches out to a teenage boy via Facebook (FB)
14. **2005-2007** - GC launches 'Engage Church'.
15. **2005-2007** - 3 young men living next door to GC report observing him consuming significant amounts of alcohol on a regular basis.
- 5) **2009** - Pioneer Leaders Conference, GC highlights a young man and gives him a 'holy kiss' then follows up using FB Messenger.
- 6) **2009** - GC met a young man when a guest speaker at a church. GC messages him on Facebook, advising him of various places he would be speaking. GC continues to message him up until 2014.
- 7) **Feb 2010** - at a Pioneer Leaders Conference - GC highlights a young man, shared a 'word', and gave him a 'holy kiss'. Future meetings with the young man always involved the 'holy kiss'.
- 8) **Feb 2013** - GC publishes his book, 'Sexual Healing, Identity-Sexuality-Calling' which he co-authors with a young man aged approximately 20 years.
- 9) **March 2015** - Pioneer Leaders Conference
 - GC approaches and interacts with a lone 16-year-old non-Christian undertaking work experience at the venue, prophesying over him and praying for him.
 - GC directly approaches a 2nd male in his early 20s.
 - GC directly approaches a 3rd young man in his early 20s which involves a kiss on his forehead.

In part, the concern about the prophesy and prayer was the duration and intensity of the interaction. This was a complex situation that warrants some additional comment, however, the chronological sequence of events is of importance, so the expanded notes are provided here.

Prior to the 2015 Leader's Conference, the security team had been alerted to safeguarding concerns. There were some differences of understanding about the detail of this alert and the precise nature of the risks. The security team's understanding was that there were concerns about some of GC's ministry practices. The team were aware of concerns from the 2014 conference. However, one participant, who spoke clearly and confidently about this, stated that the alert related to concerns that someone from the media may seek to question GC about his book "Sexual healing" and possibly also his position on homosexual relationships. It is, of course, possible that both concerns were known by some of those responsible for the event. It appears, however, that there was not a consistent understanding of the risks across all relevant personnel.

This behaviour, listed at "9) March 2015" (above) prompted Safeguarding reports to be raised by security staff and the Safeguarding lead. The security staff were concerned about his behaviour, given the concerns from the 2014 conference and his failure to adhere to the ministry guidelines. They believed that he should be removed from the conference and prevented from returning. One aspect of this was that amount of time taken monitoring GC was distracting the security team from their wider duties at the conference and their responsibilities to the conference organisers and attendees. Advice was sought from Thirtyone:eight (formerly CCPAS), Pioneer's external, specialist safeguarding advisors. The advice provided was discussed and implemented by PT. The full notes of the meeting to discuss the concerns (including the advice received and Pioneer's response) is provided at Appendix B.

From this point, there was an escalating response to the concerning practices. During the 2015 conference, a meeting took place between PT leaders and GC in which GC was reminded of the expected ministry standards and expectation. PT leaders expressed to GC that he must comply with these, and this was confirmed, both in writing and in conversation after the conference. It is important to note that at this point, the notes of the meeting indicate that, in addition to a conversation with GC, the following decision was taken:

In the meeting we decided that we would have to sever links with Gerald should he fail to agree to the guidelines outlined. This would involve the ending of our financial support.

CSS were informed that after the conference, GC formally raised concerns about his treatment at the conference and that the response of the security team had been disproportionate and heavy handed. Full documentation of the complaint and investigation was not available to CSS, however, GC's concerns were handled as a formal complaint, and appear, from the partial records provided to the review team, to have been handled appropriately.

Following the review, a letter was sent to GC and his wife, which is included as appendix C. This letter consists of three main points:

1. An apology for the way GC was treated at the conference.
2. Confirmation that PT had not received formal complaints from any of those approaches (see above).
3. A clear statement that PT believed that the raising of the concerns was right and proper, reiterating the advice provided by Thirtyone:eight (formerly CCPAS), and requesting that GC confirm receipt of the letter and his willingness to comply with the code of conduct.

CSS have not seen evidence of GC's response but were informed that PT believe that this assurance was provided.

It was reported to CSS that following receipt of the letter (see Appendix C) GC contacted a young man that he had spoken to at the event. In summary, the messages indicated that both he (GC) and the young man he was messaging had been poorly treated at the event, that he (GC) had received an apology and that the matter was now '100% sorted' and that he would like to pick up where they left off.

- 10) **May 2015** – a local charity reported that they communicated with PT, expressing concerns that GC had directly contacted a 12 to 13-year-old boy from a family known to them using Facebook. The young person was not known to GC, who had allegedly sent the boy a message via Facebook stating that GC believed that he needed a father figure in his life, and that he (GC) felt God was calling him to get in touch with the young person. The local charity reported that prior to contacting PT, they had contacted Engage Church (where GC attended). The representative of the charity stated that the response from the church indicated that the person spoken to was unconcerned about the contact, stating that it was part of GC's ministry. Dissatisfied with that response they contacted PT. At this time, GC had no formal role with PT. They report that PT explained their position legally in relation to the churches; namely that Pioneer is a network of associated churches in which every local church is independent governmentally, legally, and financially. They explained that Pioneer acts in a supportive and consultancy capacity but has no legal recourse should matters like this be unresolved. The charity reported that they were told that PT had contacted both Gerald and the leadership of Engage church and that they were happy that the proper mechanisms of accountability were in place. The charity provided CSS with internal communications by e-mail and formal report that confirmed this.

The charity reported to CSS that in their view this response was inadequate and led the charity to formally disassociate with GC and Engage Church, notifying PT of this action. It should be noted that neither PT, nor Engage Church have either recollection or records of these conversations.

- 11) **2017** – Pioneer Leaders Conference – GC approaches a young man in his mid 20s, shares a 'word', initiates a 'holy kiss' and tells the young man to kiss him back. This was a clear breach of acceptable standards at the time.
- 12) **March 2018** – Following the Pioneer Leaders Conference, a concern was raised with PT that GC had approached a young man, shared a prophetic word with him, followed this up with Facebook messages and a subsequent phone call. This call quickly and predominantly turned to unsolicited questions about pornography and masturbation. This was reported to PT and was dealt with as a complaint.

In the complaint documentation, the complainant stated:

"I had an amazing time at the Pioneer Leaders' conference three weeks ago. Right at the end of the conference, Gerald Coates came up to me and gave me a prophetic word (it was the first time we had met; I didn't know who he was) which was spot-on and resonated with what the Spirit had been saying to me over that week. Gerald gave me his card and a book and said he'd like me to be in touch. The next day, Gerald found me on Facebook and messaged me. He said that he wanted to talk, saying 'I think, with your permission, I can get you from here to wherever'. Naturally I was curious, and Gerald's

reputation as a prophetic leader was such that I wanted to know what he wanted to talk to me about. He phoned on the Tuesday, and we talked for an hour. He began by saying that he always starts with a few basic questions so he can place the many people that he mentors. He asked a little about where I'm from, my family, but then moved onto questions like "When do you think you first became sexually aware" and "When were you first exposed to pornography" and so on. I answered, but also asked why he was asking me these things. It was a total surprise. He said that he had written a book on Sexual Healing and was mentoring people with problems with sexuality, and that sexuality and identity were very linked. Towards the end of the phone call, I asked again - was there a specific reason he wanted to ask me these questions, or were they just his standard questions? He said they were just standard questions. Questions about sexuality certainly took up the majority of the phone call. I left the phone call quite confused and disappointed. I messaged Gerald a day or two later to say so, and to suggest that he should be careful asking questions about sexuality without prior warning or context. His replies don't suggest that he plans on changing his approach in future."

GC was challenged about this. His account was significantly different from the account given by the person raising the concern, indicating that the questions around sexual matters formed a very small part of the conversation, lasting perhaps 60 seconds and consisting of 3-4 questions. The person raising the concerns indicated that the call had lasted for an hour and that "questions about sexuality certainly took up the majority of the phone call. The individual messaged GC expressing both surprise at the line of questioning and disappointment that the conversation was not what they had understood it to be. GC replied explaining that "identity, sexuality and calling are often interrelated...". In raising the concern with Pioneer, they said that they left the phone call (with GC) quite confused and disappointed. They messaged him a day or two later to say so and suggested that he should be careful asking questions about sexuality without prior warning or context. Their assessment was that "his replies don't suggest that he plans on changing his approach in future". From the communication between GC and the person raising the concerns and communications between PT and GC, their assessment seems reasonable to the reviewers.

- 13) **January 2019** – GC reaches out via Facebook to a 17-year-old male and initiates a phone call which includes an invitation to stay at his house. GC asked the male about his masturbation habits, sexual desires, and use of pornography. The male felt GC had purposefully misled him about the nature and purpose of the call. The male shared with GC that he did watch porn. GC explained to him that a part of his ministry was helping young men/teenagers work through porn addictions and sexual desires. GC shared he had coached other young men with porn addiction before. He states that GC invited him to come and stay at his family home (just the male, not his family) at any time and for as long as he wanted, and he would be welcomed as part of their family and GC would support him in the area of sexual healing. The respondent's assessment was that the tone was less an invitation to stay at his house, and it was more an assumption that he would do so, and that Gerald would help him to sort this problem out.

- 14) **December 2019** – Exit interview by member of PT staff recorded them stating, *“It is not my place to file a complaint as this is not something I have experienced but I have had a number of men talk to me about the behaviour of Gerald Coates around them which I would consider highly inappropriate and borderline harassment. I have been concerned about how, on occasions, this behaviour has been overlooked or “how Gerald is” and I would not want Pioneer to continue to create an environment when behaviour like this is accepted.”* The Safeguarding Lead was made aware of this.
- 15) **6-7 March 2020** – Pioneer Leaders Conference: GC shares a word with a young man (20yrs), hugged him and tried to maintain contact. The young man felt GC was gaining some form of sexual benefit from the contact. A Safeguarding report raised the concern about GCs conduct at the conference in March 2020. The complainant shared their concerns with the Safeguarding Lead, both in relation to their own experience and more generally regarding GC’s relationships with young men and his use of the holy kiss. There is also a record of GC approaching another young man at the same conference.

Publication of ‘Sexual Healing – Identity-Sexuality-Calling’

There is a broad recognition by the current leadership of PT (NLT, staff, and trustees) and many of the respondents to this review, that GC focused much of his ministry around working with and supporting young men; increasingly so as time progressed. Multiple participants indicated that GC would focus his attention on particular young men for a period of time, but he would then move on to concentrate individually on other young men. His prophetic ministry was overwhelmingly directed at young men. Very rarely would he prophecy over or publicly pray for, young women or more mature people. It also seems, based on the information from participants, that a number of these identified themselves as lacking a father figure in their lives, or were perceived as being on the fringes of a group, or appeared as though they didn’t quite “fit in”. They would also usually be gifted in some way and attracted to the prospect of entering Christian ministry themselves. GC would initially show them a lot of attention; indicating to some degree, or at least leaving them with the impression that he could develop them towards a bright future in Christian Ministry. Due to his position as founder of Pioneer, his profile both nationally and internationally, and the regard in which he was held by so many, particularly in relation to his prophetic gifting, these “prophetic words” were seen as carrying great weight by the recipients. Within the theological framework of Charismatic theology, and the desire within Pioneer to develop young leaders, it should have been important to recognise the power dynamic at play and to manage this well. Some did go on to serve in public ministry, but others felt they were misled, manipulated, and were ultimately left disappointed and disillusioned. Some felt that they were being made to feel good in the moment but that there was no substance behind the prophetic hopes GC had articulated and the expectations this raised within them. The issuing of prophetic words in this way is, of course, a complex and multifaceted issue with many factors that could influence the outcome, however, numerous respondents described strikingly similar experiences, which raised significant expectations.

In February 2013, GC published his book, ‘Sexual Healing – Identity-Sexuality-Calling’ which he co-authored with a young man of about 20 years who we shall refer to as ‘A’. In the book, A describes his deeply personal struggle with pornography and masturbation and how the associated guilt led him to consider suicide. He also describes his first contact with GC in the following way:

“Then, out of the blue, I received a message on Facebook from someone who did not know me, connected to a forum I had posted on. This was in October 2011. He wanted to know more about

me. ‘You sound interesting – what church are you a part of in Bradford?’ After I replied for the first time his response contained these words: ‘I sense strongly the hand of God on your life – very powerfully – that is why you can’t escape even though you have drifted and tried. You feel special because you are – that is the favour of God – if He can put that on a sex addict and murderer – King David – He can with you!!’ [p37 Sexual Healing]

This led to GC arranging to meet A in person, and A eventually moving to the area and working for GC as his personal assistant.

A has contributed to this review and recounts being asked very detailed questions by GC as to precisely what porn he watched which made him feel uncomfortable. A received no independent pastoral support or advice on co-authoring a book of this nature. A expressed regret at his use of certain colloquially vulgar language that he states GC encouraged him to use in the book. The legacy for A is summed up in his words to CSS, “*I wish I could buy every copy to take it out of circulation.*”

A recalls that on the ‘book tour’ he noticed a very predictable pattern. GC would always choose a “good-looking young man in his early 20s” to prophesy over. A stated that he could accurately predict who GC would choose before GC chose them.

GC’s use of purposefully shocking language is particularly evident in his introductory chapter of ‘Sexual Healing’. For example, on p.12 under the sub-heading ‘A sex-soaked culture’. GC says,

*“You can even purchase a local village newspaper and respond to advertisements promising the pleasures of being wa**ed off (sorry I didn’t prepare you for that one!)”. {GC omits the asterisks in the book}.*

In Ralph Turner’s Biography of GC, he includes a chapter on sex. On p219 he references GC being interviewed on Radio 5 Live by Nicky Campbell following publication of ‘Sexual Healing’. GC finds it necessary or appropriate to use the ‘w’ word to which Nicky Campbell replies, “Let’s keep it clean shall we, let’s keep it clean! Shall we be a little more Christian with our language.”

Turner quotes GC as responding to Nicky by saying, “Pornography is the battle of the Christian church in the twenty-first century’. GC’s response indicates how important he believed this issue to be amongst churches and individual believers.

Concerns identified and Pioneer response (timeline)

The scope of this review includes an examination of the safeguarding concerns that have been raised. Many complainants have been left feeling hurt and abused by GC’s conduct. While this review is broader in its scope than the concerns about GC, it is important that the voices of those who have raised their concerns are heard.

There are unavoidable questions that must be considered in relation to the identified issues of concern. We acknowledge that discussing these issues is potentially distressing, not only to the complainants but also to the family and friends of the late GC. However, the purpose of this review is not to shy away from uncomfortable and sensitive issues but to evaluate and report upon the nature and context of matters that go to the heart of PTs approach to safeguarding. The reported conduct concerns must therefore be given due consideration.

Questions the concerns pose include:

1. Did PT clearly identify risks associated with GC's ministry practice?
2. How did PT respond to those risks?
3. Did PT hold GC accountable or was his behaviour minimised, excused, or even accepted as legitimate?
4. Was GC 'hiding in plain sight', operating within the lines of ambiguity where he was deriving some level of personal gratification under a cloak of spiritual concern?
5. Was sufficient action taken to correct GC's behaviour during his lifetime and were safeguarding practice reviewed when issues had been raised or identified GCs lifetime?

Reflections of past Pioneer Leaders

The following summarises the anonymised reflections of some significant Pioneer leaders concerning GC.

- The focus of GC's ministry was predominantly on young men. This leader stated that these had been raised with PT.
- Both a representative of PT and a representative of the Church that GC attended spoke with him, mainly expressing concerns about how others could see this rather than as a safeguarding concern.
- One leader recalls an international ministry trip he made with GC. While there, a pastor asked this leader whether GC was homosexual. He explained that GC had produced and shown him (the International Pastor) a file of young men. GC explained that these were people for whom he had received prophetic words and that he was providing some degree of guidance / mentoring to them. The Pioneer leader providing this information, said that he does not, and did not think, that GC had inappropriate sexual relationships with young men, but he believed that there may have been some form of emotional connection. This leader indicated that he had not spoken to GC about this incident, as he thought there were others better positioned to do this.
- One leader also reflected on GC jointly authoring a book with a young male, focusing very strongly on sexual matters and identity. He had not read it but questioned the wisdom of such a book. Another leader was reported to have said that he thought GC had got away with it by, "the skin of his teeth."
- Another leader reflected on conversations he had with GC regarding GC surrounding himself with young men, primarily around how this could be perceived.
- Yet another provided similar observations about GC surrounding himself with young men. He recalls raising this with another leader very close to GC who indicated GC had been spoken to about the perception it left with people.
- Still another made comments regarding GC surrounding himself with young men and that GC had favourites.

Analysis

A key issue at the heart of the matters surrounding GC's conduct is how it was viewed, analysed, and responded to by those around him. During the course of the review, numerous views were expressed to the reviewers directly, and some participants described views that they had encountered in others. Views expressed, or reported have been expressed at various points in time about GC's alleged conduct are summarised below.

It is important to be clear that amongst the current PT leadership team (NLT, staff, and Trustees), there is a clear view that the problematic aspects of GC's conduct were not acceptable and were being challenged.

- Some referred to having come across an attitude of “it’s just Gerald being Gerald”. He was a flamboyant, somewhat eccentric man who expressed himself in ways that were unconventional and that could be misinterpreted. Typically, those expressing this view saw GC’s conduct as unwise in terms of not appreciating how some of this behaviour and ministry practice would be perceived. Some participants expressed, as recently as 2019, concern that this may have been the case in some quarters.
- Some suggested that it was for GC, rather than PT, to consider how his conduct might appear to others.
- Others within PT expressed frustration that PT did not provide a sufficiently robust response at the time some of these events occurred.
- Some have expressed the view that it is difficult to mitigate the risk, because the conduct in question was directed at adults and did not, in their view, meet a criminal or statutory threshold. (Based on the information provided to CSS, this assessment is broadly correct in most cases. It is unlikely that those expressing this view were aware of GC’s contact with minors.)
- Some expressed that aspects of GCs’ conduct were inappropriate and even ‘creepy’.
- Some felt that GC’s status within Pioneer effectively made him untouchable.

In 2018, an email to the leadership team, following a meeting to discuss concerns relating to GC stated that:

“I wanted to put on record that Gerald has approached at least 5 young men from [church name removed by the reviewers] over the last 5-6 years to prophecy personally at a Pioneer leaders conference, gave his contact details and offered to mentor, the most recent of these being at the conference this year 2018.

The e-mail went on to outline actions that the church leadership had taken to mitigate any perceived risk and acknowledged the positive elements of the prophetic words.

The e-mail then described the most recent concern and the actions taken by the church. Following this the e-mail went on to say:

I welcome this conversation today and in light of recent publicity in other networks and scrutiny, glad we are relationally and faithfully working through so please let us know when (names redacted by the reviewers) have arranged to meet so we can pray.

Being someone who was prophesied over by Gerald when I was a new Christian at 18 years old, I know how incredibly accurate, releasing, and powerful his prophetic gifting can be. It would be such a shame if anything untoward were to come to light so covering both Gerald and the network by following through this conversation, on what was agreed and signed three years ago and us reviewing and if necessary, updating our policy and procedures, pertinent.”

A safeguarding concern raised 2020 included the following observations:

“Conferences have been repeatedly used to connect with males he (GC) would not normally know, even after Pioneer requesting/suggesting how he could and should do that safely, he has ignored. When Gerald follows up this initial contact by asking for personal contact information or issuing a business card and then contacting over social media, he then makes others uncomfortable with his

line of sexual questioning. This is either extremely poor judgement or some level of grooming for emotional and personal gratification. Having been warned not to pursue this type of connection Gerald has still continued to contact young men individually, but there seems to now be a phone call to the local church asking if he can mentor them as an accountability. Without the church leadership knowing there could be concerns in this area, they will not think to say no or put anything in place as this would seem like a real honour that Gerald would give his support in this way.”

None of the contributors referenced this, but, in Ralph Turner’s sympathetic GC Biography on p222, in a Chapter titled, ‘Father and Friend’. Turner says:

“Not everything Gerald does is on the main stage. Ever the prophet and pastor, the two are reflected in one of his most important – and often unrecorded – roles as a father and friend to the next generation. There’s history here. One of Gerald’s main regrets with regard to his own family is that he didn’t have a close relationship with his dad.”

He continues, *“Whatever the reason, it’s something that has made Gerald doubly aware that he needs to be on the lookout for young men who need a helping hand. Pastoring people is a gift of Gerald’s anyway. Add to that a deliberate mentoring of young men he prophetically sees are on the verge of finding their own life-calling, and you see one of Gerald’s hidden and very effective ministries.*

Again, God has prophetically spoken into this. In 2009 Gerald becomes increasingly aware that there needs to be a new generation of young men and women moving into leadership. He feels compelled to help, but he’s not sure how it would be seen – an older man mentoring much younger men. He needn’t be worried. At a conference in Sheffield, [name deleted by the reviewers], one of the main student leaders at Sheffield University, points to Gerald and says that God has a word for him:

‘You will be a father and will jump a generation. You will spend a lot of time with young adults - this will be misunderstood – but you must do it.’”

Whether or not there was a consciousness of this prophecy within the Pioneer network, it seems that Gerald himself saw this as a calling and that others have shared that view. It is not possible for CSS to draw a conclusion about GC’s motivation for this area of ministry, as the evidence can be interpreted in different ways.

Throughout the history of Pioneer, the understanding of the authority of prophetic utterances has varied. Historically they were more likely to be understood as being direct communications from God and could be judged on their accuracy or accord with scripture or otherwise. The more contemporary view of prophecy within the PT leadership, however, is that prophecy is given, ‘in part’, as the Apostle Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 13:9. The ‘word’ has to be ‘weighed’ and the ultimate arbiter of its truthfulness lies, not in the inherent authority of the communication, but in the assessment of the recipient. The responsibility rests with the intended subject of the prophecy, to sift and evaluate and accept or reject at their own discretion. Whatever they feel to be good, encouraging, or helpful, they are at liberty to keep. Anything else they are free to reject. However, the reality of a young adult feeling able to ‘weigh’ the prophetic word in these circumstances must also be considered by those engaging in this ministry. Given GC’s reputation, it is quite likely that some mature believers would feel confident enough to do so, however, when the age of these young men is considered, the reviewers can understand that for some, they did not feel able to do so and believed that any discrepancy between the prophecy and their actual experience indicated some fault in themselves.

CSS findings in relation to GC's conduct

Objectively evaluating the conduct of a respected church leader is always challenging and is particularly difficult for those inside an organisation who have a shared history, vision and purpose, and a profound personal and emotional connection. Those personal connections tend to blur boundaries and shift the focus away from the objective analysis and understanding of the issues.

Drawing firm conclusion about an individual's thoughts and motivations is extremely difficult in the best of circumstances. The reviewers are also very aware that GC's voice has not been heard and that there are multiple possible explanations of the picture that has emerged from the information provided to the review.

The reviewers wish to be clear they have not received any evidence of intention or attempt on GC's part to move actions beyond those described in this report. Despite opportunity over time, no evidence has been identified, disclosed, or even suggested. Given the extended period of time that the review has considered, this may suggest that there was no such intent. However, this can neither be confidently asserted nor conclusively denied. There is no doubt that some of GC's actions as described above have crossed the line of acceptable conduct and practice, and GC continued this practice despite being asked to change his approach to ministry in line with expected standards. Some aspects of his behaviour, particularly in relation to contacting under 18s via social media would be regarded as significant safeguarding concerns that would meet the threshold for referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

It is impossible for CSS to draw any definitive conclusions about GC's motivations. Several possibilities could be considered but can neither confirmed not contradicted. These would include:

- That GC was operating in line with the prophecy referenced above and quoted from Ralph Turner's book and was willing to bear the risk of misunderstanding to pursue his calling.
- That GC was an aging man, coming to terms with a changing ministry and seeking to find new ways to use his gifts and experience, but without setting appropriate boundaries.
- That GC became obsessed with a particular area of sin which he believed to be the major issue impacting the church and that he viewed every situation and person through that lens.
- That GC was a man of his generation, out of touch with changing sensitivities, views, and expectations.
- That GC derived some sort of emotional benefit, validation, or sense of purpose from this contact.
- That there was a more predatory dimension to his behaviour and that he was skilled at staying within the bounds of ambiguity or plausible deniability.

CSS do not have sufficient evidence to either confirm or contradict these or other conclusions.

The most concerning of the incidents discovered are the approaches to under 18's and in particular the May 2015 incident involving a young person of only 12-13 years. This alone, even without the context of broader concerns, should have been reported to statutory agencies since it clearly met reporting thresholds. The failure to report represents a significant missed opportunity. This event certainly reached the statutory threshold as it constituted behaviour capable of posing a risk of harm to children and indicating unsuitability for working with children. Records of this situation are insufficiently robust to draw an absolute conclusion. Records from the local charity are incomplete. PT have no records of the conversation described and the officer has no recollection of it. CSS cannot assert with absolute confidence that even if the conversation did take place, the

age of the young person was communicated. Likewise, the church has neither record nor recollection of conversations about this incident. However, the partial records from that charity and their subsequent actions do support the account. On balance of probability, the reviewers regard the explanation offered by the charity as credible and probably the most accurate interpretation based on the records available and the clarity of first-hand testimony of the worker from the local charity.

In this and other cases where contact was made with teenage children, GC's conduct would be seen by many as demonstrating a reckless disregard for the safety and wellbeing of the individual children concerned, for safeguarding practice at the time, and for his own reputation. Seeking, as a complete stranger, to instigate a 'fatherly' relationship with a 12- or 13-year-old child via direct Facebook contact in any context would universally be seen as some form of attempted predatory grooming. It would certainly be condemned by the general public as such, and their expectation would be that this incident be reported to the relevant authorities. We have seen no evidence of such a referral. Given the seriousness of this situation, any, or all of three of the charities reported to have been involved had an obligation to report.

Had LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) been made aware of the situation, a thorough assessment could have been conducted and information potentially shared with relevant statutory agencies. An appropriate intervention strategy could have been considered and relevant safeguards implemented. It is impossible to say how positively such a referral may have impacted GC's conduct thereafter as that that obligation was sadly neglected, and the opportunity missed, however, it may have prevented the later contact with other under 18's.

The reviewers acknowledge that this review has uncovered new information, and that it has brought information together in a way that has not occurred before. That said, the concerns were known and discussed over a prolonged period. Even though the information known to PT was more limited than is now known, it resulted in an escalating response, however, the actions taken had limited success. Although GC did change some of his behaviours, for example contacting church leaders if offering mentoring to young adults who attended their churches, the changes made were not sufficient. The reviewers do however wish to be clear that PT were seeking to address the situation and that there was a plan to escalate the matter further by disassociating from GC if his conduct did not meet the required standards, however, his death in 2022 removed the necessity for such action.

When all the information is brought together, as it has been above, the catalogue of reported incidents provides significant evidence that GC's practice fell short of expected standards, that appropriate boundaries have not been respected and maintained, and that there has been a lack of oversight and accountability for his actions. The reviewers believe that PT, despite their efforts, were not able to effectively address and managed GC's concerning behaviours. This was, of course, hampered by the fact that by this stage, GC did not hold any office or role within PT which made handling the situation significantly more difficult. He did, however, continue to exert significant soft power and influence due to his founding role and a degree of deference was evident. For example, at the 2015 conference, GC was not a scheduled speaker, and yet he was still able to access the stage area and to exercise his ministry.

Having acknowledged the complexities and challenges, it must also be clearly stated that the complainants are credible individuals who provided compelling testimony. Furthermore, there is a clear pattern of behaviour reported by (to CSS's best knowledge) unconnected individuals, who have, to varying extents, suffered emotional, psychological, and spiritual harm on account of GC's behaviour. Some felt physically violated by the 'holy kiss' and unable, because of GC's status, to repel the advance verbally or physically. Others felt manipulated and let down, still others have experienced significant emotional and / or psychological harm

which they attribute to their experiences with GC and Pioneer, and in some cases, with broader “charismatic” organisations.

Many of the respondents felt compelled to disclose extremely intimate details of private acts that they were ashamed of and did not wish to share. They have then had to process the guilt they felt about the acts themselves, along with the shame associated with an involuntary disclosure to a man holding significant spiritual influence over them. There was a substantial power imbalance at play that some respondents believed was leveraged to achieve what they perceive to be GC’s desired outcome of full disclosure. It has been commented that GC regularly taught that “the unshared areas of our life are the ones where Jesus is not Lord.” While the motivation for his probing questions may have been in line with this and from a desire to help the individual in question, it left some respondents feeling violated and that they were denied choice or control in the situation. Many participants indicated that these questions were raised without any prior warning or expectation, in the context of a conversation they believed to have a very different purpose. Many of those also stated that GC’s reputation within PT and beyond, as someone with a prophetic gifting, contributed to them feeling that they had no choice but to disclose. This approach is contrary to acceptable practice in a counselling or other pastoral situation.

GC had said himself that he had helped well over a hundred and twenty young men struggling with (according to his understanding or view) porn addiction. It has been reported to CSS that the level of requested detail in some instances encompassed the precise nature of the pornography that had been viewed, along with the minutia of the related sexual activity. Even in the context of a quest to support young men in their struggle to overcome personal temptations, there is no justification for such disproportionate uninvited and gratuitous probing. This approach falls significantly outside accepted standards and best practice in such counselling situations and is clearly inappropriate even if there was no ulterior motive. The worst-case scenario would be that GC was deriving a measure of emotional or even sexual benefit from the disclosures. Some complainants and other participants expressed the concern that this may have been the case. It is a possibility that the review can neither confirm nor contradict.

The reviewers were also made aware of an occasion where GC invited an older male leader to his home and probed him, with no relevant context to prompt, about sexual sin, encouraging confession. This leader found the interaction concerning and disturbing. He was aware of and concerned about GC’s focus on engaging with young men and had shared these concerns along with his own experience with PT leadership. He remained concerned that there was insufficient accountability in place to manage GC’s conduct.

As described previously, there is a discernible pattern to GC’s behaviour. He would pursue follow-up contact with some of the young men he had met at PT conferences or other public events. More latterly he sometimes subsequently approached their local church leaders. He was operating outside the perimeter of PT oversight to situations where their suggested code of conduct had not been shared and their concerns were not known. His persistence in seeking to meet these young men, clearly made some feel even more uncomfortable than they already were, following the initial meeting. Local leaders were inadvertently at risk of facilitating abusive contact with GC due to the lack of information.

In relation to the concerns about Gerald Coates, this review concludes that GC misused his position of trust as a spiritual leader. While many of the cases examined do not meet statutory reporting thresholds, a few do because they involve under 18s. Even where those involved were 18 years old or above, there was a significant imbalance of power, and a failure to work to appropriate standards as defined in PT’s policies, procedures, and codes of conduct. This, however, is not the whole picture. It is clear to the reviewers that PT took advice from Thirtyone:eight, their external specialist safeguarding advisors, and that they took appropriate and

proportionate action as advised. It is also clear that the actions taken were not effective. The review must, therefore, turn its attention to the question of the lack of effectiveness of the interventions implemented.

Furthermore, the considerations to this point also draw our attention to the mechanics of the inter-relationships between PT and the Network churches. How do the Network churches manage a risk that they are unaware of? How does PT view their responsibility in such instances? What legal basis would there be for sharing information that cannot be substantiated? While challenging, such issues must be examined and addressed.

Section 5: Safeguarding at Pioneer Trust

Development of Safeguarding Practice at Pioneer Trust

As described earlier in this report, safeguarding practice across the UK has developed and progressed over the decades that Pioneer has existed. While this review considers Pioneer Trust's safeguarding arrangements across all areas of safeguarding, the concerns that gave rise to this review, and therefore a significant focus of this work, has been upon the suitability of staff or volunteers for their role, the handling of allegations against or concerns about staff or volunteers, and responsible reporting (often referred to as whistleblowing). As this report now broadens its focus from specific concerns about GC, to consider safeguarding across PT, there are a couple of points that need to be made.

Firstly, no organisation, whether faith based or not, can guarantee that it will never receive allegations against a member of staff or volunteer. Neither can they guarantee that someone who poses a safeguarding risk will never slip through their "safer recruitment" processes. It is therefore essential that systems and processes for monitoring and addressing inappropriate behaviour by staff and volunteers are in place. How the organisation responds when allegations are made is of critical importance.

Secondly, although Pioneer dates back to the late 1960's, the concerns raised during this review do not date back that far. The earliest concerns date back to the late 1980's-1990's. The earliest of these concerns did not relate to GC. (See "Investigation of a historic safeguarding allegation" commencing on page 36 of this report). As can be seen from the timeline at appendix A, the earliest concerns about GC were identified in the 1990's. A specific incident was then identified in August 2003, and the majority were after 2013. Two points are worthy of note in this regard. This may suggest that as awareness of safeguarding increased, PT's response became stronger. However, it is also worth noting that the majority of the reported incidents related to GC occurred in the 2010's; by which time awareness of safeguarding, even within the charity sector was established. Reported incidents appear to have increased between 2013-2020, by which time there was a strong awareness of safeguarding across the voluntary and faith sectors.

During this period (2013-2020), safeguarding guidance, both from the Charity Commission, and national guidance relating to safeguarding has developed considerably. It is essential that charity trustees keep abreast of evolving safeguarding legislation and practice guidance and that they ensure that their practice complies with these requirements. The Charity Commission requires trustees to take reasonable steps to assure themselves of the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements and that they are embedded within the policies, practice, and culture of the organisation. The pace of change over recent years has been considerable.

When assessing the proportionality of safeguarding arrangements and the effectiveness of practice, it is vital to understand the activities of the organisation and the safeguarding risks associated with that activity, and to effectively manage those risks.

Pioneer Trust has assessed its activity and correctly identified that the Trust itself does not engage in regulated activity, either with children or adults. Consequently, the trust has focused its attention upon the churches that form part of the network, since this is where the regulated activity is conducted. While this is understandable, the lack of clarity of analysis has had a negative impact in several areas, including:

- PT have not adequately identified, understood, and managed the risks that it (as opposed to the churches in the network) faces, focusing on the churches at the expense of focus on the Trust itself.
- The approach currently adopted has, at least to some degree, blurred the lines of responsibility between Pioneer Trust and the network churches. This was particularly evident when considering

whether members of Pioneer network churches could escalate safeguarding concerns about church leaders to PT.

- The trust has not tailored its approach to safeguarding to its own context and activity and has not implemented its own safeguarding policy clearly.

The requirement for charities not engaging in regulated activity to have safeguarding policies and procedures in place was not introduced until the late 2010s. Unsurprisingly, therefore when leadership of the Pioneer network passed from GC to BK, no safeguarding policies, or procedures, were in place,

Shortly after the handover of the leadership from GC, Pioneer Trust received a historic allegation dating back several decades (See “Investigation of a historic safeguarding allegation” commencing on page 36 of this report). The individual raising the historic concerns was an adult at the time, and the matters raised did not meet the threshold for statutory intervention. However, this highlighted the importance of safeguarding to the trust, so the new national leader appointed a safeguarding lead from 2012 to both put in place safeguarding arrangements for the Pioneer Trust and to liaise with Pioneer churches about their safeguarding arrangements. This was a positive move that addressed the issues raised in the complaint and marked a significant change of approach. At this point, PT was ahead of the statutory requirements.

Whilst safeguarding under 18s has been more prominent since the Children Act 1989 and subsequent Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance, the Care Act 2014 marked a milestone in the legalisation protecting adults from abuse and neglect. It was not until 2018, that the Charity Commission updated its guidance, requiring all charities to adopt a safeguarding policy. Pioneer Trust as an organisation does not engage in any regulated activity with children, young people, or adults, however, they do provide conferences, events and training for adults and it is always possible that an adult with care and support needs or an adult at risk of abuse could attend and could make a disclosure. As such, they require (and have) a safeguarding policy and procedures. It is also possible that Pioneer Trust could become aware of significant safeguarding failures in a local church, or other organisation that they partner with that were so serious that that they had a duty to report the matter to statutory agencies. While this would be unusual, it is possible so proportionate and clear processes, that reflect the context in which the charity is operating are now expected.

The 2018 revised guidance also broadened the scope of safeguarding requirements to include adults who do not meet the definitions of “adults with care and support needs” or “adults at risk of abuse” as defined in the care Act (2014). The Charity Commission updated their guidance and expectations, articulating the duty of trustees to take reasonable steps to protect everyone who comes into contact with the charity from harm. It placed a new focus on the universal tier of safeguarding (often referred to as the general duty of care) to protect everyone coming into contact with their charity from experiencing harm. Findings from the review process highlighted that although the leaders of Pioneer have kept abreast of changes to Charity Commission guidance, they have not adequately analysed and responded to the changing expectations of the trust itself. It should be emphasised that consideration has been given to safeguarding policies and procedures and to the culture of Pioneer. The Trust has continued to make significant progress for more than a decade, however their analysis of the risks faced by the Trust (as distinct from the individual churches) has not been sufficiently clear and detailed.

A further complicating factor for Pioneer is the potential reputational risk that being part of a network, or as in Pioneer Trust’s case, being a network that connects other charities. For example, each church in the network is an independent charity, with its own trustees and legal duties. The challenge for PT is that a significant safeguarding failure in a network church could tarnish the reputation of other Pioneer churches and of the Trust itself. PT’ analysis of the safeguarding risks it faces has been too superficial and their focus on supporting network churches has distracted them from addressing these and other such risks.

The reviewers wish to draw attention to one further impact of the focus on safeguarding in the network churches, rather than the trust's own safeguarding arrangements. The focus as it stands has the potential to blur the lines of responsibility and undermine role clarity. This is not, of course, inevitable, however, it is, at least to some degree, a risk. This issue is challenging for the trust and the implications are broader than just the safeguarding implications outlined here. From one perspective Pioneer Trust wants to provide effective leadership of safeguarding and set high standards for its churches. From another perspective, however, the churches are independent charities that have their own trustees, and the responsibility for their safeguarding arrangements legally sits at the local level. There is the potential for the issuing of the safeguarding audit/checklist and the provision of training to the churches, funded by the trust, etc to be interpreted as meaning the trust has more authority or responsibility for safeguarding than is, in reality, the case. Furthermore, the old maxim that "what is free isn't valued" could be relevant to Pioneer. While the trust is to be commended for its efforts to provide leadership in the area of safeguarding to the network churches, there was some evidence of confusion, lack of role clarity, and mistaken expectations. CSS suggest that, given that such confusion was identified amongst participants, it is likely that this is greater at church member level, however, it was beyond the scope of this review to seek to establish whether this is the case.

While these challenges are not unique to Pioneer, the solution will need to be Pioneer specific. Pioneer describes itself as a "relational network" and the network churches are each independent charities. It is therefore important to clearly define how this is harmonised with the legal duties of the Pioneer Trust as a charity in its own right.

Notwithstanding the lack of depth of analysis and of clear application of safeguarding to the Trust's activities (as opposed to the network churches' activities) since the early 2010's, Pioneer Trust has kept pace with developments in safeguarding practice and has complied with legal duties. This progress has largely been driven by the National Leaders (BK and NW) and has relied heavily upon the Safeguarding Advisor. All of these individuals have demonstrated a consistent commitment to safeguarding, however, it is important that review of policies and assessment of the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements at the trust level (bearing in mind the previous comments that it is the trust's own activities that should be the focus, not merely the activity of the individual churches) is systemised. Currently, the dependence upon specific individuals to provide momentum is a weakness and that needs to be addressed. Awareness of safeguarding amongst the wider NLT and the trustees was evidenced, however, the lack of focus on the risks faced by the trust was particularly evident in discussions with this wider group.

Investigation of a historic safeguarding allegation

Pioneer Trust informed the reviewers of a historic safeguarding allegation that was raised by an individual during BK's time as National Leader. The allegation was of emotional / psychological harm caused to the complainant, which they linked directly to their interactions with one of the ministries of Pioneer Trust. The harm occurred in the 1980s and the complainant alleged an unhealthy culture in the specific aspect of Pioneer Trust's activity. It was agreed as part of the scope of this review that CSS would not reinvestigate the matter, however, the reviewers would give consideration to the processes adopted and handling of the situation. Details of the circumstances are not included due to confidentiality requirements. CSS were, however, given full access to the relevant records.

The reviewers are conscious that this matter was dealt with more than a decade ago, and that practice has developed, and guidance has been clarified in the intervening years. However, it is also clear that the situation was not handled as well as we would have expected based on practice at the time. There was significant complexity in the whole situation, however, having considered all these factors, our observations on the handling of the situation are:

- Whilst an apology was issued to the complainant, no offer of pastoral care or counselling was made by Pioneer in relation to the harm they experienced. This would have been helpful to the complainant and is standard practice (though not legally required) in such situations.
- The person accused was not supported effectively while the investigation took place. Greater care should have been taken in notifying them of the allegations and in supporting them during the investigatory process.
- It is CSS's understanding that within the cohort interviewed there was evidence shared that the allegations raised by the complainant were credible. While there were no witnesses to some of the specific situations, the victim did discuss these with several people at the time. This could have provided verification that the allegations and claims had not changed over time.
- The review process and outcome suggest a lack of understanding of the burden of proof required within a safeguarding review. There was clear evidence of a safeguarding concern, which should have been judged based on balance of probability (the standard used in safeguarding) rather than using the criminal burden of proof (beyond reasonable doubt). Application of the correct burden of proof may have changed the outcome.
- A review of the ministry area resulted in a restructuring of PT and changes in operational responsibilities. As a result, actions agreed to support reflection and personal development of the person accused were not rigorously implemented and actioned through to conclusion.

Information sharing is an important element of good safeguarding practice. In this situation, there was a significant justification for appropriate information sharing, however this did not happen.

The reviewers' assessment is that the alleged behaviours in this situation were serious enough to justify a more robust response, and that the only reason that they were not handled in a different way was the level awareness and expectations at the time that they were raised.

A wider issue was highlighted within the historic allegations relating to the culture of the ministry that they experienced. Similar concerns were also raised by other respondents to the review. These concerns were about an inappropriate use of power, control, a lack of meaningful risk assessment, and bullying behaviours by some leaders involved in the ministry. Some participants referred a 'laddish' culture, an unhealthy level of "banter" and a heavy-handed approach to those accessing the area of ministry, displaying a lack of appropriate boundaries, and lack of choice for those receiving ministry. . These harmful elements of the culture in that particular ministry area may also have caused these respondents significant emotional harm and could have been corroborated or contradicted if the review had taken input from more people. It should, however, be noted that many of those involved in the ministry at the time thrived, and this was acknowledged by those who found their involvement personally damaging.

CSS recognises there will be many others who have not contacted the reviewers who had very positive experiences of the ministry. The reviewers also recognise the safeguarding landscape in the 1980s and 1990s was very different to the present day and when we look back into previous decades, we must be careful to assess safeguarding arrangements by the legislation and practice standards of the time. However, corroborating evidence has been presented to the reviewers that elements of the culture and leadership of the particular ministry area in that period were harmful to some, had unhealthy elements, and some would now see a tolerance of ungodly behaviour.

This allegation, made in the early stages of BK's leadership of Pioneer highlighted to the national leadership the absence of safeguarding arrangements within Pioneer Trust. This was subsequently addressed.

The review must now consider elements of PT's safeguarding arrangements that are essential for effective safeguarding practice.

Governance

Effective governance and oversight of safeguarding arrangements within a charity is a central responsibility of the trustees. The Charity Commission requires trustees to take reasonable steps to ensure that everyone who engages with their charity is protected from harm and that systems are in place to identify and manage safeguarding risks. Trustees are able to delegate much of the activity of safeguarding to others, however, they are the ones who are ultimately responsible, so it is vital that when tasks are delegated, there is clarity about the different roles and responsibilities, that appropriate accountability is in place, and that the trustees take proportionate action to assure themselves of the effectiveness of the arrangements that have been agreed.

Functions that the trustees must complete themselves include:

- Ensuring compliance with safeguarding requirements and holding overall accountability for safeguarding arrangements.
- Ensuring that safeguarding is led and promoted from the most senior levels of the organisation.
- Ensuring that the safeguarding policies, procedures, and systems comply with national and local requirements are in place and are regularly reviewed for both compliance and effectiveness.
- That a competent safeguarding lead is appointed, supported, and resourced.
- That those acting on behalf of the charity are suitable for the roles allocated.
- That all staff and volunteers are proportionately trained and that they know how to recognise and respond to safeguarding concerns.
- That there are clear processes for raising concerns and complaints, and that these are investigated fairly, transparently and in a timely manner.
- That the whole range of safeguarding activity, including universal safeguarding (often referred to as the general duty of care to everyone who comes into contact with the charity) is considered and managed.

As previously stated, Pioneer have focused on the safeguarding arrangements within the individual Pioneer churches rather than assessing the safeguarding risks and assuring themselves that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place for the activities that they as a charity are responsible for. It also appears that the positive progress made to date has largely resulted from the activity and drive of the National Leaders and the Safeguarding Advisor rather than being led and directed by the trustees.

One of the challenges for PT, and in particular for its trustees, is that the leadership of PT on a practical level is provided by the NLT. This is not unusual and is a perfectly acceptable way to operate. It should be emphasised that there is a broadly consistent understanding of this arrangement. However, there is no clear definition of the roles and responsibilities, and the lack of role clarity impacts negatively at both the strategic and the operational levels of safeguarding.

It is apparent to the reviewers that due consideration has not been given by the trustees to ensuring that clear safeguarding arrangements are in place for each of their activities. It appears that there has been a degree of misunderstanding in respect of safeguarding oversight of certain events, for example, conferences. Whilst these may be hosted in a Pioneer church building, there appears to be a lack of clarity around who is responsible for safeguarding arrangements; the host church providing the building or Pioneer Trust. This lack of clarity presents a risk that safeguarding arrangements are not effectively implemented.

Whilst the Trustees may not be involved in the operational side of implementing the necessary safeguarding arrangements, they do hold the responsibility to ensure it is being done. The trustees should provide proportionate accountability to the NLT or others for the tasks they have delegated to them for administering the operational safeguarding of the charity.

Trustees of charities hold the responsibility to assess and manage strategic-level risks which include safeguarding and reputational risk amongst others. This is commonly monitored by charities through a risk register; a tool by which high level and strategic risks can be identified and managed on an ongoing basis. Pioneer Trust have in place a Charity Risk and Issue Log which is overseen by the trustees.

Reviewing the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements and assessing safeguarding risks should form a regular and ongoing conversation among trustees. This should include assessment of the safeguarding risks associated with any proposed new activity or the expansion of existing activity. Historically discussions about safeguarding have been sporadic at Pioneer trustee meetings. Including safeguarding as a standard agenda item for trustee meetings would help ensure that safeguarding is not seen as an add-on but an important aspect of trustee business.

Previous Serious Case Reviews and other learning reviews have regularly identified the importance of effective governance arrangements. This should include ensuring role clarity. Pioneer should ensure that there is clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the trustees, the NLT, the safeguarding leads, the safeguarding advisor, staff, and others who act for the charity. Consideration should also be given to how safeguarding is managed when working in partnership with other organisations, including, but not limited to, the network churches. Clear standards of conduct should also be set. Where responsibilities are delegated, the Trustees should ensure that they provide meaningful and proportionate accountability and oversight.

Safeguarding reports for trustee meetings are produced by Pioneer Trust's safeguarding advisor but this has not been requested by the trustees as a regular update for each meeting. The safeguarding reports have focused on safeguarding arrangements in Pioneer churches and safeguarding training attendance by individual churches which are separate legal charities in their own rights. The reports have not focused on the charity of Pioneer Trust and its activities and therefore have not been an effective tool for the trustees of Pioneer Trust to assess and monitor the safeguarding arrangements and risks within their charity.

The Charity Commission requires trustees to ensure that those working and volunteering within a charity are suitable to undertake their role. This includes those invited to become trustees or members of the National Leadership Team. The Pioneer Trust's board currently has four trustees, three of whom did not go through the relevant checks. The most recent board appointment, however, did follow appropriate procedure. The requirements should be in place for appointment to the National Leadership Team.

Policy and Procedure

Safeguarding policies and procedures are a central part of a charity's governance and management of safeguarding. They exist to provide clarity in respect of roles, and responsibilities, expectations and standards and provide a framework for the charity's operation.

The Charity Commission expects trustees to ensure the organisation's policies are compliant with the legal and regulatory requirements and ideally should reflect best practice. Trustees also need to assure themselves that the charity's policies are effectively implemented, and that staff and volunteers are aware of, understand and comply with them.

In line with the reality that most safeguarding issues occur within the churches, there has been a focus to date on ensuring the churches in the network have in place the required safeguarding policies and procedures. A database of templates for safeguarding policies and procedures is available to the churches produced by Pioneer's Safeguarding Advisor. This review, however, only focuses on the PT safeguarding policy. When safeguarding systems work best, there is an integration between different elements (i.e. the policies, procedures, codes of conduct, systems, and culture).

Some participants suggested that ensuring compliant policies and procedures were in place and put into practice was not seen as a high priority for Pioneer Trust and / or its network churches. They suggested that culturally, Pioneer (as its name suggests) has regarded itself as radical, throwing off the shackles or organised religion, moving into new territory, developing new approaches, being “spirit-led” and embracing a sense of adventure. Within this culture, these participants felt that policies and procedures may be regarded by some as legalistic, restrictive and an inconvenience within the work of the network. It should be emphasised that this is not the case in the current NLT, however, this was a view that was expressed by several participants.

CSS have not systematically reviewed the network churches which are independent charities in their own right. Clearly, the trustees cannot be held responsible for the activities and culture of other charities, and it is evident from the work that is conducted supporting the churches that the leadership are committed to establishing and maintaining high standards.

As mentioned in other sections of this review, PT have, to date, seen the main focus of their safeguarding activity taking place in and through local churches. They have prioritised this support on an ongoing basis but have not given sufficient attention to the Trust itself.

This review has identified the need for improvement in 2 key areas of policy and procedure:

- The policies and procedures currently adopted require updating to reflect best practice standards.
- The implementation of the policies and procedures has not been effective across the trust.

It should be emphasised that this does not mean that safeguarding practice is dangerous. It can be seen from the information in this review that safeguarding concerns were identified and that advice was both sought and actioned. However, the policy as it stands requires update and much greater attention needs to be given to the implementation of the policy. We will not provide a detailed analysis of the policy here; however, CSS have provided a marked up copy of Pioneer’s policy to the Trust as part of this review.

The Charity Commission expects trustees to ensure their policies are reviewed at least annually to ensure they remain suitable and compliant, to consider if new procedures require development to cover new risks or situations, and to assess the effectiveness of the arrangements.

The Charity Commission also expects charities to set appropriate standards of conduct for staff and volunteers. This is often achieved with a code of conduct which reflects the charity’s culture. Clear codes of conduct provide staff and volunteers with explicit standards and expectations of behaviour. Alongside the code of conduct, the charity should also implement a clear process by which any concerns about an individual whose conduct falls short of the standards outlined in their code of conduct can be raised and addressed. This includes low level concerns that do not meet statutory reporting thresholds.

Whilst Pioneer provide codes of conduct templates for the network churches to access, the code of conduct for Trust staff and volunteers requires updating. The code of conduct that forms appendix 6 of the trust’s safeguarding policy is not tailored to the activities in which the trust engages and does not appear to have been implemented by the Trust.

Role descriptions are also helpful tools to provide clarity around responsibilities within an organisation. Pioneer Trust has job descriptions for those employed by the Trust. However, there are a number of people who volunteer either as Trustees, on the NLT, or as ministry leads who would benefit from role descriptions. A clear statement outlining the key safeguarding responsibilities of different groups of staff or volunteers would improve role clarity and understanding of which responsibilities sit with whom.

Record Keeping

Effective and thorough record-keeping is a key component of safeguarding arrangements within an organisation. This includes not only documenting the higher-level concerns but also having processes in place where lower-level concerns are also identified and recorded to enable the organisation to identify and monitor patterns and trends that may be emerging. This helps the leadership/trustees to consider what action may be required and to evidence any actions taken.

Prior to 2009, it appears that the Trust had no safeguarding record keeping mechanism in place. In 2012 the UK Leader tasked the Designated Safeguarding Lead with implementing safeguarding record keeping for the Trust. Currently safeguarding records are held securely online and are overseen by the DSL and Safeguarding Advisor. Pioneer has a Data Retention Policy in place; however, this does not include the retention periods for different classes of safeguarding data. This needs to be added. A recording standard that sets minimum standards for records and against which records can be measured would also be beneficial.

Competence and recognising the limits or gaps in competence.

The staff, volunteers and trustees who work within Pioneer Trust should be competent in fulfilling the safeguarding responsibility of their roles. Any given role will have a different level of responsibility and therefore consideration should be given to ensuring individuals have the right level of competence including their skills, knowledge, and experience.

Pioneer Trust contracts a freelance Safeguarding Advisor to work for them two days a month. Historically this individual was permanently employed by the Trust for three days a week to work as their Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in 2013-15. This individual is a very competent, skilled, and experienced safeguarding professional. The safeguarding advisor's passion for high-quality, effective safeguarding practice came through clearly throughout this review process and she is a valuable asset to Pioneer Trust.

Understandably staff and volunteers within Pioneer Trust rely heavily upon the Safeguarding Advisor's expertise in relation to safeguarding. However, the significant reduction in hours has led to the Safeguarding Advisor being more removed from the day-to-day workings of the NLT and Trustees and therefore the opportunity to access the Safeguarding Advisor's professional advice has reduced in terms of bringing their safeguarding perspective to planning, risk management, and safer recruitment and policies and procedures within the Trust itself. The Safeguarding Advisor is contracted to focus their time supporting the Pioneer churches as opposed to the Trust itself.

Since the Safeguarding Advisor's change of employment status and reduction of hours in 2015, the DSL role for Pioneer Trust has sat with the Operations Manager. Although the logic of this decision is sound, it was unclear to the reviewers how the decision to make the Operations Manager the DSL was reached and when. The current Operations Manager has been in post just under two years. Their job description includes liaising with the Safeguarding Advisor and working with them to promote excellent safeguarding practice across Pioneer churches but detail around the responsibility of the DSL role is absent. Whilst the Operations Manager expressed a desire for effective safeguarding arrangements to be in place and for safeguarding to have a high priority within the charity, they personally do not have any prior safeguarding experience, knowledge, or expertise. Since being in post, the Operations Manager has not been required to attend any safeguarding training for the DSL role. Such training is required and should be formally refreshed every two years. The

Operations Manager expressed they have not felt equipped or supported by PT, in relation to fulfilling the DSL role for the Trust.

The Charity Commission expects a trustee board to collectively have the knowledge, experience and skills needed to fulfil their legal responsibilities. The Charity Commission also anticipate that trustees recognise and acknowledge where there may be a knowledge or skill gap within a board in relation to a particular area of responsibility and to seek appropriate advice and input.

Within the current Pioneer Trust's board there are gaps in understanding of the safeguarding responsibilities required of them by the Charity Commission and there is room to strengthen their competence in this area. A trustee with responsibility for safeguarding has been appointed, however, the Charity Commission guidance emphasises that safeguarding is the responsibility of all trustees, not just a nominated trustee for safeguarding. PT appear to have overlooked the importance of aspects of the DSL role in relation to the activities of the Trust and have not put arrangements in place to ensure this key role is fulfilled effectively.

A thorough understanding of safeguarding, and the ability to apply that knowledge into the specific context of the charity is crucial for a trustee board. Trustees are required to identify and manage risk to the charity. The two most significant risks are finance and safeguarding. These two are intrinsically linked because of the reputational risks associated with a safeguarding failure.

Both the trustee board and the NLT need to ensure they are sufficiently aware of relevant safeguarding information to inform the planning and decision-making processes of the charity. This must include clarity about the roles, responsibilities, and processes. The implications of this were recently highlighted. A recent decision was taken by the NLT. However, because they were not all aware of a historic concern that was known by the Trust, due diligence and risk assessments were not completed. This came to light through this review process, and appropriate steps are now retrospectively being taken, to assure the trustees that the risks are effectively managed. This incident, however, highlights the importance of relevant and proportionate information sharing within the charity.

The NLT has a crucial role in the running and leading of Pioneer Trust. It is they who hold the spiritual and operational leadership of Pioneer Trust. It appears from information provided during this review that when planning events or making decisions around future ministry opportunities, consideration has not routinely been given to the safeguarding arrangements for the activity. There are no formal mechanisms in place to ensure the NLT inform the trustees of safeguarding considerations for these activities, to assure the trustees, as the group who hold the legal responsibility, that safeguarding arrangements are being effectively implemented. Whilst the NLT do not hold the legal responsibility for safeguarding, they play a crucial role in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are implemented. If the NLT decide to delegate some safeguarding responsibilities, they must ensure they provide appropriate support and meaningful accountability.

The Charity Commission expects those leading the charity to be competent in fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities. The NLT are not up to date with their safeguarding training for their positions within Pioneer Trust, which are potentially very different to their roles in their local church, and currently there is nobody within the charity who takes responsibility for ensuring that all those who act for the charity are up to date with their safeguarding training.

Safeguarding support from Pioneer Trust to churches

Pioneer Trust offer their churches a considerable amount of input and support to meet their safeguarding obligations. This is delivered by the Safeguarding Advisor who is contracted for two days a month by Pioneer Trust. The individual churches have the option of independently contracting the services of the Safeguarding Advisor to complete additional work with them directly.

The support available to churches includes:

- Resources such as template policies and procedures
- A range of free safeguarding training, developed and delivered by their Safeguarding Advisor
- A safeguarding checklist

The safeguarding audit / checklist was initially developed in 2013 as a ten-point checklist focusing on safeguarding arrangements within the individual churches. It was sent to church leaders to complete and return to Pioneer. This has developed over time and now covers more areas and is sent out to all churches every two years.

It is intended to be a helpful and constructive tool to enable the churches to assess their safeguarding arrangements. It covers areas such as designated safeguarding lead, trustees level oversight of safeguarding, policies and procedures, safer recruitment, training and managing allegations.

Pioneer's safeguarding advisor collates the results of the checklist and produces a spreadsheet for each region within the Pioneer network which highlights areas of strengths and weaknesses of safeguarding arrangements within the churches. This information is sent to each member of the NLT who has oversight for a region and the safeguarding advisor meets with them to highlight if particular churches need follow-up support.

The safeguarding advisor will also report to Pioneer's trustees when an audit is completed and highlights actions arising from the audit. For example, a previous audit highlighted to need for church trustees to attend training specific to their role. The Safeguarding Advisor then developed and now offers trustee training to the network's churches.

The commitment of Pioneer Trust, making this level of support available to the local churches is commendable. It is important, however, to remember that the local churches are independent, separate charities and that their local trustee boards hold the responsibility for ensuring effective safeguarding arrangements for their church. This is not the responsibility of the Pioneer Trust. Offering such a generous level of support could potentially lead to confusion and ambiguity around the lines of accountability and responsibility for safeguarding arrangements within the local churches. The very process of asking churches for safeguarding information through the audit process could be seen to imply that Pioneer Trust have some level of responsibility or authority, and / or that completing the audit will result in some action on the Trust's part.

The investment of a significant amount of their charity's time and finances into this provision for churches is an indication of their commitment to safeguarding. However, as previously stated that have not given adequate time, detailed attention, and financial investment to their own safeguarding arrangements.

The role of Pioneer Trust and its relationships with its churches

Pioneer Trust describes itself as 'a relational network that connects, inspires, and equips churches'. It is important for any organisation to clearly define and communicate its role and purpose. Whilst Pioneer have done this, during the review process a variation of understanding emerged in respect of the role that Pioneer Trust has with the churches. The reviewers heard views such as

- Pioneer is solely an affiliation organisation with no responsibility or oversight of the churches.
- The charity (PT) offers and provides a degree of leadership to their churches.

Interestingly, several respondents posed questions to reviewers such as:

- What degree of influence does Pioneer Trust have on their churches?
- How much do they get involved at the local level?

Some respondents believed that unresolved problems at the local level could be referred to the Trust, while others believe that this was not possible because the church was an independent charity. Some raised this as a question asking the reviewers who they can go to if the local church does not respond well to a concern raised?

When safeguarding systems fail, a frequent contributor is a lack of role clarity. When speaking to leaders of Pioneer, they understand and can articulate answers to questions about the relationship between the trust and the local churches, however, on closer examination there are inherent challenges that do not appear to have been clearly thought through and so have left areas of ambiguity. This may in part result from the fact that while Pioneer Trust state they are a relational network connecting independent churches, their activities as a charity include providing spiritual leadership, oversight, and accountability to some of the churches, and they require information (governance and safeguarding) from the churches. This can, and indeed has been taken to suggest their influence goes beyond a relational network, at least in some cases.

Over time, Pioneer Trust has in some ways evolved from a solely relational network, into a legal entity, registered as a charity and therefore working towards their specified charitable aims and taking on the legal responsibility that comes with operating a charity. Whilst the vision remains that Pioneer is a relational network, the detail of how this relates to the legal duties that a registered charity and its trustees have, requires further thought and clarity to fit the times that we are now in. Once this is defined, it will be important to work through how this can be clearly communicated to the churches within the network.

The importance of clarifying the role of Pioneer Trust and the degree of relationship and influence it has over the churches impacts how the charity handles and takes responsibility for safeguarding arrangements. Where this remains unclear, there remains the potential for safeguarding concerns to fall between the cracks and not be dealt with effectively.

The relational emphasis within the network has been a strong theme that has emerged throughout the review process. It is clearly a value that is held highly within the network's leadership, and it is seen as a strength of the network's heritage that it has developed in a relational way. However, some of the challenges of having a less structured and more relational arrangement within the network were also evident during the review process. In more recent years a clearer process for joining the network has been developed and is documented within the [Joining Pioneer booklet](#) available on Pioneer's website. This process involves not just meeting with members of Pioneer's leadership team but also churches completing a governance and safeguarding checklist. This joining document explains that churches within the network can receive support and encouragement from their regional leader(s) and by joining the network an extra layer of accountability for a church's leadership team is then in place. The document also outlines what the Trust expects of its churches, however little detail is provided. Having a more thorough explanation of what Pioneer Trust expects of the churches may prove helpful to ensure there is clarity and understanding between both parties.

There is no process in place currently to enable Pioneer Trust to ensure that those churches that have been part of the network for many years are also clear about the current expectations of the Trust towards them, and how the Trust will respond to churches that do not comply with those expectations. The lack of detail about the expectations that the trust has of member churches could lead to a lack of understanding between the two parties. For example, Pioneer Trust may have behaviours or ministry practices they naturally expect of the churches within the network but without this being documented there remains a risk of a lack of clarity and understanding.

This could lead to a scenario whereby churches in their network are conducting themselves in a manner that Pioneer Trust would not want a church affiliated with them to do, but they have no way of monitoring or challenging that conduct.

A clear statement outlining Pioneer Trust's expectations in terms of conduct and ministry practice could be a helpful tool. It would also be helpful to have a clear process for supporting churches to meet the expected standards and if necessary, sanctioning churches that are unwilling or unable to meet the expected standards. This could include, for example, a process which may ultimately include disaffiliation from the Pioneer network.

An area of ambiguity that became apparent during the review process has been the role of Pioneer Trust when concerns are raised about a Pioneer church. Some respondents in the review shared safeguarding concerns about their local church which didn't meet the threshold for statutory intervention. These were, of course, beyond the scope of this review, however, it is worth noting that some of these respondents were unclear what role Pioneer Trust could or should have, and how they as members of the congregation could get in touch with Pioneer Trust to seek assistance. They were not aware of any mechanisms or processes they could access to raise concerns.

Where these respondents felt there were no other effective ways to share their concerns or did not know there was an option of informing Pioneer Trust, they all individually felt the only option remaining was to leave the varying Pioneer churches they were part of. These respondents to the review were all congregation members who had served in varying roles in their churches.

The impact on these people who felt they had nowhere to turn in relation to being able to share concerns about their leaders included feeling dismissed and betrayed. Others described feeling side-lined and not listened to. Others defined their experiences as spiritually abusive resulting in a subsequent lack of trust in church leaders.

Pioneer's NLT and trustees expressed a desire that people within congregations should feel able to share their concerns with the Trust once local mechanisms have been exhausted so that people can be heard and where appropriate Pioneer Trust become involved. Currently, there is no documented process in place for this to happen. Respondents who experienced these situations raised the question of how Pioneer Trust monitors or reviews the individual church's conduct and culture to ensure they reflect what Pioneer would expect of them. There is currently no review process in place with respect of the church leader's conduct or unhealthy church cultures within their network.

Churches within Pioneer are located within a region and each region has a leader(s). The regional leaders form the NLT. The Joining Document states that local churches can expect support and encouragement from their regional team and an additional layer of accountability. The NLT and trustees are clear the churches are independent charities and therefore they wouldn't enforce their input or support onto any church. They would, however, seek to support if invited / or asked to do so by the church's leadership. Therefore, the relationship between each individual church and the Trust will vary across the network, depending upon how much or little the church chooses to engage with the offer of support, encouragement and accountability offered by Pioneer's regional leaders. Consideration could also be given to how the Trust would respond if church members sought help, but the leader(s) chose not to seek support.

In respect of the accountability on offer to church leaders, no details are provided in the Joining Booklet as to what exactly Pioneer Trust are holding the church and its leaders accountable for. The reviewers were told that that at least one church within the network that now relates to an external overseer from outside of the Pioneer network. The relational culture of the network permits individual churches to choose who they relate to as an overseer. Where an external overseer is in place at a church, the potential for confusion among the members of the congregation about the role of the overseer, relative to the role and support of the Pioneer national team is clear and was expressed by some participants.

Further clarity around the role of the regional leaders and what churches can expect of them would be helpful to avoid any possible misunderstanding. It has not been clear within the review process whether regional

leaders have guidelines to clarify the parameters of their roles with churches in their region and under what circumstances situations should be escalated to either the NLT or Pioneer trustees for further input.

Pioneer Trust highlight their belief in the importance of the apostolic ministry, however, understanding of what this means and how it works in practice has varied. Consideration needs to be given to how any apostolic leadership or oversight (from the Trust) relates to the Trustees and local leaders of an independent local church.

It is important for the leadership of Pioneer Trust to clearly define what they understand apostolic leadership to be in their relational context and clearly communicate this to the church leaders. This should include clarity around whether leaders within Pioneer churches automatically come under the apostolic leadership of the NLT and if so, how this interacts with the authority and legal responsibilities of the local church leaders. Thinking through these questions and their implications for authority structures, power dynamics, is vital for the network. Without greater clarity PT faces a potential unmanaged reputational risk and unrealistic expectation of the powers that PT holds. There is also the risk that at some point, the trust acts outside its powers or is forced into accountability for something over which it has no control.

Leaders of churches or those leading networks of churches need to be mindful of the power, authority, and influence that they have over those they lead; whether that be formal authority or informal power that comes through reputation, knowledge, gifting etc. It is possible to misuse any theological position to assert an unhealthy power imbalance and care must be taken to avoid this in order to protect people from harm. For Pioneer, that could lie in the area of Apostolic or prophetic gifting. An unhealthy culture in on part of a network can damage the reputation of the entire network, so it is important for Pioneer to carefully consider the setting of clear standards.

The NLT have stated clearly to reviewers their desire for healthy leadership within both the Trust and Pioneer churches. However, based on the examples shared with reviewers it appears that further work remains to be done to ensure a culture of healthy leadership across the network of churches. This will require careful consideration of the Pioneer Trust's role, responsibilities, and identity.

Culture

The culture of an organisation is influenced by its identity, values, and processes, and forms a shared awareness and understanding of how an organisation does things and what is important to them. This in turn influences and reinforces behaviours within an organisation. It is important for organisations to reflect and identify how their culture influences their safeguarding practices and arrangements. For Christian organisations, the culture is shaped primarily from our understanding of scripture and its teachings. This impacts safeguarding both positively and negatively, so it is important for all faith-based organisations to carefully consider how their values, theology, and culture impact safeguarding practice. This impact will vary, depending upon the organisation's theological emphasis, however, for organisations in the evangelical (theologically) tradition, a common element is the belief in the inspiration and authority of scripture. Those who have particular spiritual gifts will therefore be afforded particular respect. It is therefore essential that we understand the power-dynamics that result from our theological perspective. In some traditions, for example, it is those with a gift of teaching that become leaders, in other traditions anointing is the prime factor, etc.

Within the Pioneer network, two key areas of gifting had been particularly prominent, and the balance between the two has fluctuated over time. In the early days, the prophetic gifting was prominent. Many participants spoke positively of the accuracy, power, and resultant blessing that flowed from GC's prophetic gifting. More recently, a greater emphasis on apostolic gifting alongside the prophetic has been valued. It is important to understand that this is not a matter of "good / bad" or "better / worse". Neither is this phenomenon restricted to faith-based organisations. All communities form around specific values, beliefs, attributes etc. What is important is that we

understand that attributes that are values and therefore convey some degree of wither formal or informal power or authority upon those who have the particular attribute. The important factor is not which attributes are valued. Rather, is the personal and organisational understanding and management of the dynamics of power that is important.

While the current leaders of PT value safeguarding, both for theological reasons and arising from awareness of past failures within churches and other Christian organisations, some respondents commented that within Pioneer, organic development and being “Spirit-led” was valued more than structure and procedure. Some participants indicated that in their view, the implementation and maintenance of procedures, codes of conduct etc, was hindered, or even undermined by a culture that values spontaneity, organic development and being led by the movement of the Holy Spirit.

One of the challenges that PT faces, which is an outworking of their particular theology, is how to ensure best practice standards, without hindering the movement of the Holy Spirit and stifling the expression of the Spiritual gifts. This is particularly important when engaging in ministry to children, young people, or adults who may have particular vulnerabilities.

The following example may help to “ground” the point being made here. This should, however, be seen as only one of many ways in which this works out in practice.

Some participants described, and indeed emphasised, a development in the understanding of prophetic gifting within the Pioneer network. This has varied at different points in time, and across the network. However, in simple terms. There are two different emphases that can be clearly identified. Both have existed to varying degrees at different times and in different parts of the network. These views (simplistically described) move along a spectrum, that runs between two points:

- Prophecy is divinely inspired and, while not infallible, carries significant authority.
- In this life we prophesy “in part” and therefore all prophetic words should be tested and weighed.

From a safeguarding perspective, the first of these carries the risk of an overly directive ministry, which could border on the authoritarian / controlling. The second of these, risks undermining the individual’s confidence and self-determination and could result in coercion or manipulation. It can be very difficult to “test and weigh” a prophetic word given by a mature and respected leader who is ministering from a recognised gifting. Thus, for PT, one of the challenges is managing the power-dynamic that this creates. It is important to reiterate that power-dynamics are important for all organisations and individuals. The important message here is that those dynamics must be identified, clearly understood, and managed effectively. Some participants described experiences that were damaging to them emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually, particularly arising from ministry that they received as children, young people or as adults at times of particular vulnerability.

Another key value that shapes the culture at PT is relationality. This has resulted in key positions of leadership, either as trustees or serving on the NLT being allocated on the basis of existing relationship, with some degree of subjectivity resulting. Once again, this should not be seen in absolute terms and the reviewers are not suggesting that such decisions lack objective assessment. There is, however, a risk that must be recognised and managed; that being a lack of diversity of skills and perspective due to the natural tendency to appoint those who “fit in”. This can result in the creation of an “echo chamber” that hinders the examination of key decisions from different perspectives. This relational way of operating has undermined the implementation of the safer recruitment section of PT’s own safeguarding policy.

A healthy culture within an organisation is one where harmful behaviours and conduct are challenged. Many of the respondents believed that the culture within Pioneer Trust led to GC not being effectively challenged by the trustees or NLT. They believed that Gerald’s conduct was widely dismissed as ‘*that’s just Gerald*’ and his

behaviour was thus enabled by a lack of challenge. These respondents expressed the view that he was beyond challenge or criticism, as he was publicly honoured and celebrated, placed on a pedestal, and viewed as a celebrity or VIP at Pioneer Trust events. Some respondents did not raise their concerns as they felt they wouldn't be believed or taken seriously. Therefore, they believed themselves to be in a position where their voices were effectively silenced by the cultural attitude towards Gerald. While it is clear to the reviewers that GC's conduct was challenged by PT leaders; particularly from 2014 onwards, it must also be acknowledged that the challenges were less effective than they hoped. Some within PT expressed frustration at this.

The culture of any organisation must create, actively encourage, and maintain an environment where everybody feels able to raise concerns or complaints when things go wrong, in the confidence that such concerns will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately. It appears to the reviewers that GC did not have effective accountability structures in place particularly after leaving employment as the leader of Pioneer. This is not to suggest that such structures did not exist at all, however, they were not as effective as would accountability be if it was never challenged. The current senior leadership of Pioneer must ensure they have in place robust and effective mechanisms of accountability.

Ministry practices are a significant part of the culture of a Christian organisation like Pioneer Trust. One of Pioneer's four values is being charismatic: 'We believe in a God who breaks into time and space by His Holy Spirit, bringing revelation, healing bodies, sharing spiritual gifts, and performing miraculous signs'. (Taken from Pioneer's website). The value placed on the use of spiritual gifts such as the prophetic has been a theme that has come through the review process as part of the heritage and culture of Pioneer Trust. The reviewers heard from respondents who had very positive experiences of receiving a prophetic word within a Pioneer context and shared the encouraging effects that had upon them. We also heard from respondents whose experience was not as positive and who reflected it caused them a degree of harm. It is important that this theme is considered more broadly than just key leaders and must extend into the practice of the whole group of gathered believers. Clearly, PT cannot be held responsible for what happens in individual churches; however, consideration does need to be given to the conferences and other gatherings that PT organises.

One theme that came through both historically and in more recent times was prophetic words shared over younger emerging leaders and the individuals then feeling a sense of pressure to see that prophetic word fulfilled. This was within both the context of Pioneer Trust activities and some Pioneer churches. When the individuals didn't see the outworking of the prophetic word, questions arose for the individuals such as 'Am I the problem? Am I a failure? Why are those around me flourishing? There is a risk that self-blame and subsequent isolation could come into play for such individuals. While the more contemporary view of prophesy being "in part", it should be recognised that this in itself creates a pressure, placing the onus on the young leader to assess the accuracy of a prophetic word given by a more mature believer.

Reviewers also heard of more historical situations where respondents described feeling that the prophetic and words of knowledge created an environment of fear that made, particularly younger people susceptible to manipulation and control. It is important when those operating in the spiritual gifts, especially those in a position of leadership, are aware of the inherent position of power and authority they hold and the implications of that upon the individual being ministered to. An understanding of the power dynamics within that scenario and the risk of control and manipulation are an important factor for people within leadership to think through. Care must be given to the delivery of such prophetic words or other spiritual gifts and how it is received by the recipient is an important factor to safeguard them from any unintended harmful effects.

There appears to have been an assumption by the leadership of Pioneer Trust that people accessing their activities (such as conferences, training, retreats etc.) are all mature leaders and therefore should be competent at ministering in a healthy manner. Because of this assumption, due thought and consideration has

not always been given to thinking through ministry practices at Pioneer Trust activities although guidelines have now been written and placed in conference booklets.

During this review members of the NLT shared with the reviewers examples of what they believed to be healthy ways of both delivering prophetic words and pastoral follow-up with the individual recipients. A desire for the use of spiritual gifts to be exercised in a healthy way across both the Trust itself and Pioneer churches was evident. Ministry guidelines and associated codes of conduct can be helpful tools which provide clarity and parameters to what is deemed by a church or network to be appropriate ministry practice in a certain area.

It is crucial that effective safeguarding arrangements are woven into the culture of an organisation. Safeguarding should be a fundamental part of how things are done and should be embedded into all the activities of the organisation, rather than being viewed as an important 'add-on', a matter of legal compliance, or worse still, a hinderance to effective ministry.

Culture within an organisation is usually shaped and modelled by those in positions of leadership. Therefore, it is vital that safeguarding is led from the most senior level of the organisation as trustees and leaders by setting and modelling a high value on safeguarding. By intentionally establishing and maintaining a culture within Pioneer Trust that integrates and places a high value on safeguarding the culture of the organisation should become healthier and reduce the risk of harm occurring for those people who interact with it.

Section 6: Broader Issues that are relevant, but not specific to Pioneer Trust

Societal / cultural factors

As we have seen, the events of concern relating to GC, have not occurred in a societal/cultural information vacuum. During the history of PT, there have been significant legal and policy developments in the safeguarding arena prompted by significant, highly publicised events. It is vital that senior leaders at PT, particularly the Trustees who are ultimately responsible for safeguarding, take active steps to ensure that their knowledge is up to date, that their analysis of risk is comprehensive and informed by best practice, and that safeguarding is effectively implemented, not only in the churches but also at the trust level.

Increasing awareness of trauma, mental health

There has been an explosion in public mental health awareness in recent years. Central to this has been a recognition of the need to talk about the issues that have impacted our mental health. Society has benefitted from an increased awareness of the causes and triggers of psychological harm and consequently many feel better equipped to recognise the signs and symptoms of various harmful behaviours, including those that occur in churches and other faith-based communities.

This increased awareness evidently helped contributors to process and articulate their 'lived experience' and no doubt empowered some to come forward. Some have historically accessed talking therapies at least in part due to their experiences within Pioneer. Others have indicated a need to do so, and PT have responded positively to these expressed needs.

It is vital that churches and charities seek a basic understanding of how to recognise and respond well to those who have previously been abused or exploited, those who suffer from poor mental health and those who have experienced past trauma. The impact of some experiences at Pioneer seems to have traumatised some individuals and may have contributed to long term mental health challenges.

Responding to low-level concerns (including standards of proof)

Understanding the various levels of abuse and potential abuse and the intervention thresholds that apply to such conduct is crucial to a holistic approach to responding to safeguarding concerns. It appears that PT have, at times, struggled to recognise these lower-level thresholds.

Any charity requires internal clarity in identifying whether a single incident or a pattern of behaviour constitutes grounds for either statutory referral or organisational intervention. Clearly, concerns that reach statutory thresholds are of vital importance, however, it is also important to monitor low-level concerns about adults who are in a position of trust. Such monitoring of low-level concerns can allow problematic behaviours to be challenged and corrected.

Implication of theology on safeguarding practice and communication and the use of vocabulary

CSS have become increasingly aware of the need for all Christian organisations, whether that be individual churches or networks, to carefully consider areas of their theology or ministry practice that impact safeguarding. This is not about suppressing or opposing these theological positions, but rather is driven by a conviction that the Bible calls us to higher standards of care and safeguarding people than legislation does.

Churches, networks, and denominations across the UK hold a wide range of theological beliefs and ministry practices. It is crucial that leaders reflect and think through the implications of their theology and practices on their understanding of and approach to safeguarding. This includes identifying possible safeguarding risks associated with a particular theology or ministry practice.

For those churches and networks like Pioneer who hold a charismatic theology, this should include thinking through how they ensure spiritual gifts are used in a healthy manner and those receiving ministry are not harmed, even when harm is wholly unintentional. The development of codes of conduct and ministry / practice guidelines can be helpful tools to ensure ministry is conducted safely, safeguarding standards are maintained, and risk of harm is reduced. This is particularly important when engaging in ministry to children, young people or adults who have additional needs or vulnerabilities.

Churches of other traditions may have different theologies and ministry practices but equally need to think through any particular risks associated with any areas of theology and take reasonable steps to mitigate those risks.

An important aspect of this is reflecting on the use of language and vocabulary within a church or network. Care needs to be taken to reduce the risk of unintended meaning associated with something that is spoken within a ministry context.

Ministry to children and young people

Pioneer Trust currently does not host activities that are overtly for under-18s. However, this has the potential to change in the future with their two Pioneer Youth ministry leads. Activities for under-18s may well occur at a lot of Pioneer churches.

Greater care should always be taken when ministry is conducted with under-18s to ensure they are effectively safeguarded as they may not have the same freedom and choice due to their development stage. Churches and ministries should think through the impact of the environment and culture on under-18s.

A theme emerged within the review that highlighted historic concerns around inappropriate prayer ministry practice within a Pioneer church with under-18s. The concerns shared with reviewers were under-18s were prayed for by any adult within the church with no consent sought and no choice around hands being laid on in prayer. This resulted in feelings of being powerless, having no choice and subsequently feeling unsafe.

Historically as we have seen, Gerald Coates chose to reach out to under-18s where his involvement was uninvited by the teenagers resulting in them feeling manipulated and uncomfortable.

It is crucial that under-18s are prayed with and ministered to appropriately to prevent harm and ensure they are safeguarded. Under 18's, just as much as adults, have the right to decide if they want to be prayed for and for it to be done in a safe and age-appropriate manner.

The reviewers recognise that the culture within both churches and society has developed over time and there is a much greater awareness these days of praying appropriately with those under 18. Through talking with members of the current NLT a clear desire to ensure this is done well and an understanding of best practice with praying with under-18s was evident.

While these issues are essential for under 18's, it is important to recognise that over 18's (particularly young adults of those who are new to faith), may also be more vulnerable in some ways.

Section 7: Conclusion

CSS are conscious that this review is, to some degree inconclusive and that this will be difficult for all involved. Unfortunately, that is often the case in situations such as this. The situation was difficult for Pioneer to manage. They sought advice appropriately and followed the advice provided, however, the interventions implemented were limited in their effectiveness.

CSS are, as we have already stated, also conscious that it was not possible for us to hear Gerald's voice. However, it is clear from the documentary evidence that we have seen that some of his behaviour fell significantly short of expected standards. The 2015 incident involving contact with a 12-13 year old via Facebook is deeply concerning, and the failure of any of the organisations believed to have been involved was a significant missed opportunity. This should have been reported to statutory agencies, but CSS do not have any reliable evidence to indicate that this happened. Indeed, CSS conclude, on balance of probability that it is unlikely that the required referrals were made. Equally, although we think on balance of probability that the local charity did contact both the church and the PT, we cannot establish clearly that the local charity clearly communicated the actual age of the young person in question. The contact with other under 18's was also a significant concern.

Most of the concerns related to young men and would not meet adult safeguarding thresholds. However, GC's ministry practices did not meet expected standards and certainly had a negative, and potentially harmful impact on a number of those involved. There was a clear imbalance of power and the high regard in which GC was held had a silencing effect. It also resulted in GC being able to probe with personal questions that others would not. Whether this was an intentional misuse of power cannot be established, but a number of respondents indicated that they felt that refusing to answer was not an option because of who GC was.

It seems to the reviewers that GC either did not understand the seriousness of the issues raised with him or that he chose not to take them on board in a meaningful way. Which of those is the case cannot be determined by CSS. There is, however, sufficient documentary evidence to say with clarity that he was spoken to about the behaviours and was told that he was expected to work to the expected standards, however, he failed to do so.

This raises the question of whether these messages were communicated to GC with sufficient clarity, seriousness, and force. Not having been in the room, it is not possible to comment definitively, however, on balance of probability, CSS would suggest that there was a degree of deference to and respect for GC that probably resulted in some level of softening of the message, which may account for his not responding as positively as had been hoped.

Did PT therefore enable GC's inappropriate behaviour. It is clearly true that that the PT leadership tried to address the unacceptable practice. They established an appropriate code of conduct, identified the inappropriate behaviour, sought advice, and followed it; challenging those incidents that they were aware of. It would therefore be harsh to suggest that was the case.

However, like any other organisation, Pioneer Trust must carefully identify, understand, and manage the risks associated with its activities. This has not, to date, been an area of strength and needs to be addressed. It is clear that mistakes have been made, and that the interventions that were implemented had limited effect. Careful consideration needs to be given to a range of factors that have an impact on safeguarding. These include such issues as:

- How their theology contributes to a culture that can hinder the effective safeguarding.
- How accountability is provided to those who are viewed as gifted and called by God to a position of authority and leadership.

- How local church independence can operate effectively in the context of apostolic authority.
- How upholding the responsibility and right of the individual to test and weigh a prophetic word can be effective when the word is given by a mature and respected leader to a young believer.
- How the need for standards of conduct and practice can be balanced with the spontaneity and freedom of worship and prophesy.
- How an individual should act when they believe that their gifting leads them towards a behaviour that fails to meet expected standards.
- How they should respond when individuals (particularly leaders) or churches fail to meet the expected standards of conduct or practice.

It is important at this point to emphasis two important points.

1. The need to carefully and precisely consider questions such as those above is not unique to Pioneer. It applies to all churches and faith-based organisation. The specifics of the questions may vary, but the principle that we all have to think carefully about such issues is universal.
2. The need to consider how our values and world-view impact safeguarding is not unique to faith communities.

Overall, CSS affirm that PT have expressed and demonstrated a serious commitment to safeguarding, were willing to take difficult decisions such as the in-principle decision to dissociate from their founder if he failed to operate in line with the expected standards, and have expressed a strong desire to learn lessons and strengthen practice. However, over recent years the prevailing view has been that safeguarding should be rooted in and shaped by the organisation's core values and beliefs. CSS believe that Pioneer could strengthen their practice still further with careful consideration of how their theology impacts safeguarding practice both positively and negatively.

Before proceeding to the recommendations, CSS wish to emphasise one final point. This review has identified weaknesses that need to be addressed, however, as stated in the previous paragraph, there is a strong commitment to safeguarding among the leadership of PT. CSS are aware that often in such situations, questions are asked about the leadership's suitability for their role on an ongoing basis. CSS are deliberately and consciously not recommending that any leaders should step down in response to the findings of this review. Not only do we conclude that this is not necessary, we wish to go further and state that we believe that the Trustees, staff and NLT have the necessary commitment to drive the change that is needed. It is our view that to call for resignations would be inappropriate, unjust, and could potentially impact negatively on the action that is now required.

It is our hope that this review, difficult as it is to read, will spur Pioneer on to integrate its approach to safeguarding into its biblical perspective and contribute to them providing an ever safer and more nurturing community that reflects the heart of God for all people; particularly for those who are more vulnerable than others. Our prayer is that this review will also be useful to Pioneer churches and beyond the Pioneer network.

Section 8: Recommendations

In light of this review, CSS recommend:

1. That PT conduct a rigorous self-audit of all safeguarding arrangements across the charity. (CSS have an audit tool that can be downloaded from their website which may be helpful.)
2. That PT conduct competence and training gaps analysis to identify training and skills development needs and then address those gaps across the trust.
3. That PT conduct a thorough review of their policies and procedures, ensuring that they align with the trust's activities rather than simply adapting a policy developed for churches.
4. That the trustees of PT prioritise safeguarding and develop processes by which they can assure themselves of the implementation and effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements.
5. That PT develops a plan to embed safeguarding into the organisational processes and culture so as to minimise the personal dependence upon a small group of individuals.
6. That PT adopts a proportionate but effective safe recruitment process for all staff and volunteers.
7. That PT leaders consider how they will keep their knowledge of safeguarding requirements and practice current and relevant.
8. That PT considers developing robust codes of conduct and ministry practice standards.
9. That PT carefully considers the implications of its theology and ministry practice for safeguarding; particularly when involved in ministry to children and young people.
10. That PT reviews its practices around recording, retaining, and sharing information.
11. That PT reviews its roles and responsibilities and clearly communicates its approach to working with other organisations including its network churches.
12. That PT considers setting clear standards of conduct and practice for the network churches and establish processes for addressing sub-standard practice.
13. That PT reviews its approach to information sharing with network churches where a safeguarding risk is identified.
14. That PT develop a clear action plan to monitor progress in these areas.

Appendix A - Timeline of safeguarding events, legislation, and guidance.

Legislation, guidance, and significant events.	Significant events reported to CSS during this review.	Pioneer action taken in response to known incidents.
<p>1948 - Children Act - The Children Act 1948 set out new support measures for children across the UK. Under the Act, local authorities had a duty to provide care for any child whose parents were unable to care for them, if this was in the child's best interests.</p>		
<p>1948 – The United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights establishes fundamental human rights of all people and challenges oppression, exploitation, discrimination and other forms of abuse or harm.</p>		
<p>1970 - Local Authority Social Services Act - The act created a framework for social services and a single social services department in every local authority.</p>		
<p>1988 – Working Together guidance first published - The first edition of Working Together consolidated guidance and recommendations on procedures for the care</p>		

<p>and protection of abused children and children at risk in England and Wales. Working together: a guide to arrangements for inter-agency co-operation for the protection of children from abuse (DHSS and Welsh Office, 1988) also introduced serious case reviews (SCRs), referred to at the time as case reviews, for the first time.</p>		
<p>1989 - Children Act - The Children Act 1989 established the legislative framework for the current child protection system in England and Wales. It sets out the paramountcy principle – that the welfare of the child should be the court’s main consideration.</p>		
<p>1990 – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - The UK signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which sets out the rights of every child in the world to survive, grow, participate and fulfil their potential.</p>		
<p>1991 - Working Together to Safeguard Children - Working together under the Children Act 1989: a guide to arrangements for inter-agency co-operation for the protection of children from abuse was published (Home Office and Department of Health, 1991). It included the Children Act 1989 requirements and compiling previous guidance on child</p>		

<p>protection and best practice. Guidance had to be followed by local authority social services departments unless local circumstances indicated exceptional reasons which justified a change.</p>		
<p>1997 - Introduction of Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks - <u>Part V</u> of the Police Act 1997 established a centralised system of criminal records checks across the UK.</p>	<p>Late 1990s - at Cobham Christian Fellowship (CCF) GC became increasingly focused on preaching about homosexuality, pornography, and sex addiction. GC was seen using the 'holy kiss' with young men.</p>	
<p>1998 - Human Rights Act – The human rights act established basic rights and protections outlined in the universal declaration on human rights are established in UK law.</p>		
<p>1998 - Public Interest Disclosure Act – provided protections to whistle-blowers and supported principles of accountability and justice.</p>		
<p>1999 – Major revision of Working together guidance. A revised version of the Working together guidance was published for England. <u>Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (PDF)</u> (Department of Health, 1999) included guidance on working together to support children and families, lessons from research and experience, and definitions of abuse.</p>		

<p>2002 - Reforms to child protection legislation - Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, both aged 10, were killed by Ian Huntley, their school caretaker. He had previously been investigated by police for crimes including burglary, indecent assault, and rape. Following his conviction, an inquiry led by Michael Bichard recommended the development of a system where people are appropriately vetted before working with children. This led to the strengthening of legislation across the UK to protect children from adults who pose a risk to them, including the <u>Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006</u> in England, Northern Ireland and Wales.</p>		
<p>2003 - Sexual Offences Act outlines and clarifies legal requirements and supports prosecution of sexual offences, including the notion of the responsibility and accountability of those who are in a “relationship of care” to protect those who lack the mental capacity to protect themselves.</p>	<p>Aug 2003 – a young man is picked out by GC at a non-Pioneer Christian festival or conference. Ongoing contact is maintained culminating in the man moving in next door to GC.</p>	
<p>2003 - Independent Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié - The death of 8-year-old Victoria Climbié, following abuse and neglect by her great-aunt and great-aunt’s boyfriend, led to Lord Laming’s report (Laming, 2003). This report contributed to sweeping changes to</p>		

<p>the way children's services were structured in England and Wales.</p>		
<p>2004 - Children Act - The <u>Children Act 2004</u>, informed by Lord Laming's report, established a Children's Commissioner in England (the last of the UK nations to appoint one); created Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs) in England and Wales; and placed a duty on local authorities in England to appoint a director of children's services and an elected lead member for children's services, who is ultimately accountable for the delivery of services.</p>		
	<p>2005 – GC reaches out to a teenage boy via Facebook (FB)</p>	
<p>2006 - Working Together to Safeguard Children - The <u>Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006</u> was passed in England, Northern Ireland and Wales following the recommendations of the inquiry into the events surrounding the deaths of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman in 2002. <u>Working together to safeguard children (PDF)</u>, the statutory guidance for child protection in England was revised to incorporate changes in safeguarding policy and practice since 1999.</p>	<p>2005-2007 – GC launches 'Engage Church'. 3 young men living next door to GC report observing him consuming significant amounts of alcohol on a regular basis later in his life.</p>	
<p>2006 Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (SVGA) extended the scope of vetting and barring and included new definitions of Regulated Activity.</p>		

	2009 – Pioneer Leaders Conference, GC highlights a young man and gives him a ‘holy kiss’ then follows up using FB Messenger.	
	2009 – GC met a young man when a guest speaker at a church. GC messages him on Facebook, advising him of various places he would be speaking. GC continues to message him up until 2014.	
2010 – Working together revised and the publishing of serious case reviews - Minister for Children and Families, Tim Loughton, announced that Local Safeguarding Boards in England should publish the overview report and executive summary of all case reviews initiated on or after 10 June 2010.	Feb 2010 - at a Pioneer Leaders Conference - GC highlights a young man, shared a ‘word’, and gave him a ‘holy kiss’. Future meetings with the young man always involved the ‘holy kiss’.	
2010 – The Equality Act strengthened and unified legislation to protect specific groups for discrimination.		
2011 – Munro review - Professor Munro’s report <u>A child-centred system (PDF)</u> sets out recommendations to “help to reform the child protection system from being over-bureaucratised and concerned with compliance to one that keeps a focus on children, checking whether they are being effectively helped, and adapting when problems are identified” (Munro, and DfE,		

<p>2011). This led to a review of the statutory child protection guidance in England.</p>		
<p>2012 – Operation Yewtree, Protection of Freedoms Act and Historical Institutional Abuse (HIA) Inquiry - Operation Yewtree was set up by the Metropolitan Police Service to investigate sexual abuse allegations against Jimmy Savile and others.</p>		
<p>2012 - The Protection of Freedoms Act in England and Wales set out the requirements for vetting and barring checks for adults who are working or volunteering with children, whilst being supervised by someone else.</p>		
<p>2013 – Review of sexual exploitation in Rochdale and updates to Working together guidance in England - The independent review into child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Rochdale examined the council’s response to issues around child sexual exploitation (CSE), after 47 girls were identified as victims of CSE (Klonowski, 2013).</p>	<p>Feb 2013 – GC publishes his book, ‘Sexual Healing, Identity-Sexuality-Calling’ which he co-authors with a young man aged approximately 20 years.</p>	
<p>2013 - A new version of Working together to safeguard children (PDF) was published in England, informed by the Munro review (DfE, 2013).</p>		
<p>2014 - The Care Act - sets out statutory responsibility for the integration of care and support between health and local authorities. NHS England and Clinical Commissioning</p>	<p>Contained within a safeguarding report relating to the 2015 conference is the following note:</p>	

<p>Groups are working in partnership with local and neighbouring social care services. Local Authorities have statutory responsibility for safeguarding. <u>The Care Act statutory guidance defines adult safeguarding as protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.</u></p>	<p>There was also concern that A (referring to GC) had approached 2 other young men on our team last year, that although this didn't result in formal complaints had been noted unofficially by those they chatted to. I heard about this sometime after the conference in 2014. We didn't take any formal action as they were all over 18 but just were aware that this was a pattern of ministry that was not our style and was open to being misconstrued.</p>	
<p>2014 - Operation Midland was a criminal investigation which the London Metropolitan Police carried out between November 2014 and March 2016 in response to false allegations of historic child abuse made by Carl Beech. Beech was later found guilty of perverting the course of justice, fraud, and child sexual abuse.</p>		
<p>2015 – The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales (IICSA) officially launched to consider the growing evidence of institutional failures to protect children from child sexual abuse (IICSA, 2018).</p>	<p>March 2015 – Pioneer Leaders Conference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GC approaches and interacts with a lone 16-year-old non-Christian undertaking work experience at the event, prophesying over him and praying for him. • GC directly approaches a 2nd male in his early 20s. • GC directly approaches a 3rd young man in his early 20s which involves a kiss on his forehead. 	<p>Following consultation with their safeguarding advisors, a meeting is arranged with GC during the conference to remind him of the expected standards of conduct, endure understanding of this and obtain assurance of compliance with the expected standards. This was followed up in writing and in person by PT leaders.</p>

	<p>May 2015 – a local charity reported that they communicated with PT, expressing concerns that GC had directly contacted a 12 to 13-year-old boy from a family known to them using Facebook. The young person was not known to him. GC had allegedly sent the boy a message along the lines of; ‘I believe you need a father figure in your life, and I feel God is calling me to get in touch with you.’</p>	<p>PT leaders have no recollection of this conversation and there are no safeguarding records in relation to the matter.</p>
<p>2016 – The Henriques Report - The Henriques inquiry was set up to review the Metropolitan Police’s handling of allegations made by Carl Beech. The operation was identified as Operation Midland. The Henriques report was published on 31 October 2016 and made 25 recommendations.</p>		
<p>2017 – UK wide protection from online pornography, social care act in England. The Digital Economy Act 2017 extended protection from online pornography by allowing sites which display pornography to children to be blocked in the UK.</p>	<p>2017 - Pioneer Leaders Conference – GC approaches a young man in his mid 20s, shares a ‘word’, initiates a ‘holy kiss’ and tells the young man to kiss him back. This was a clear breach of acceptable standards as previously discussed in 2015.</p>	
<p>2017 - #Me Too movement - awareness movement around the issue of <u>sexual harassment</u> and <u>sexual abuse</u> of women in the workplace that grew to prominence in 2017 in response to news reports of sexual abuse by American film producer Harvey Weinstein. While the phrase had been in the lexicon for</p>		

<p>more than a decade, a tweet by American actress Alyssa Milano sparked a social media phenomenon that raised awareness, gave voice to survivors, and led to sweeping cultural and workplace changes.</p>		
<p>The Children and Social Work Act 2017 made several reforms to the child protection system in England. It established the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel to review and report on serious child protection cases and replaced the model of local safeguarding children’s boards (LSCBs) with local safeguarding partnerships.</p>		
<p>2018 - Updated Working Together guidance in England. An updated version of <u>Working together to safeguard children</u> (DfE, 2018) was published for England, replacing Local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs) with safeguarding partner arrangements.</p>	<p>March 2018 – Pioneer Leaders Conference – concern raised with PT that GC had approached a young man, shared a prophetic word with him, followed this up with Facebook messages and a subsequent phone call. This call quickly and predominantly turned to unsolicited questions about pornography and masturbation. The concern was raised by the individual concerned. This was reported to PT and was dealt with as a complaint.</p>	<p>GC was challenged about this. His account was significantly different from the account given by the complainant, claiming that the questions around sexual matters formed a very small part of the conversation, lasting perhaps 60 seconds.</p>
	<p>January 2019 – GC reaches out via Facebook to a 17-year-old male and initiates an inappropriate phone call which includes an invitation to stay at his house. GC asked the male about his masturbation habits, sexual</p>	

	<p>desires, and use of pornography. The male felt GC had purposefully misled him about the nature and purpose of the call. The male shared with GC that he did watch porn. GC explained to him that a part of his ministry was helping young men/teenagers work through porn addictions and sexual desires. GC shared he had coached other young men with porn addiction before. GC invited him to come and stay at his family home (just the male, not his family) at any time and for as long as he wanted, and he would be welcomed as part of their family and GC would support him in the area of sexual healing. The respondent's assessment was that the tone was less an invitation to stay at his house, and it was more an assumption that he would do so, and that Gerald would help him to sort this problem out'.</p>	
	<p>December 2019 – Exit interview by member of PT staff recorded them stating, <i>“It is not my place to file a complaint as this is not something I have experienced but I have had a number of men talk to me about the behaviour of Gerald Coates around them which I would consider highly inappropriate and borderline harassment. I have been concerned about how, on occasions, this behaviour has been overlooked or “how Gerald is” and I would not want Pioneer to continue to create an</i></p>	

	<p><i>environment when behaviour like this is accepted.”</i> The Safeguarding Lead was made aware of this.</p>	
	<p>6-7 March 2020 – Pioneer Leaders Conference: GC shares a word with a young man (20yrs), hugged him and tried to maintain contact. The young man felt GC was gaining some form of sexual benefit from the contact. A Safeguarding report raised the concern about GCs conduct at the conference in March 2020. The complainant shared their concerns with the Safeguarding Lead, both in relation to their own experience and more generally regarding GC’s relationships with young men and his use of the holy kiss. There is also a record of GC approaching another young man at the same conference.</p>	
<p>2022 – Police, Crime, sentencing, and Courts Act amends the 2003 sexual offences act. Amongst other things, the act broadens the scope of Position of Trust provisions to include religious leaders and sports coaches.</p>	<p>3 April 2022 – Gerald Coates dies</p>	
	<p>July 2023 - complaint raised with Pioneer Trust in via social media about their late founder and network leader, Gerald Coates (GC). The complaint related to ministry and pastoral practice. It did not meet the threshold for referral to statutory services such as the Police</p>	

	or Social care, however, it did raise significant concerns.	
2023 – Working Together to Safeguard Children further updated		

Appendix B: Notes of meeting 18th March 2015 following advice from Thirtyone:eight (formerly CCPAS - Pioneer's external specialist safeguarding advisors)

Meeting – Pioneer 18/03/2015

Present: DB, BK, CW.

We discussed the email sent by ED following her meeting with JH from CCPAS.

JH's advice was that a meeting was arranged with GC.

1: Be clear before you meet that even though there have been no official complaints, it is a safeguarding 'concern'. Although nobody is drawing any conclusions from this about intent etc., the style of ministry in use over the conference is evidence of a breach of commonly understood guidelines on prayer and ministry. As a leader, especially so well known, it allows them a position of trust and influence that when breached, in current safeguarding practice, is viewed seriously. (Praying on own for unknown individuals, giving out personal details can look deliberative/proactive.)

2: Ensure he is told clearly this style of ministry puts 'at risk' 3 sets of people:

i: Himself. His reputation is open to misinterpretation. Very few people are ministering individually to those they don't know and giving their personal contact details (this breaches all best practice and safeguarding guidance).

ii: The individuals. He prays and shares prophetic words over young adult males who are unknown to him and could be quite vulnerable 'at risk' in some areas. One was under 18 and is also vulnerable, but where vulnerability is concerned, age doesn't have a limit.

iii: Pioneer. Our reputation is linked to his. He is out and about very publicly with a Pioneer connection.

3: What you need from the meeting

i: an admission / acceptance that his style is open to misinterpretation (or he won't really change)

ii: a commitment to change his style to best practice ministry guidelines (we can send them on but in essence

talk him through what you expect/how you both do it)

iii: Justin feels it is serious enough to put this in writing to him and get acknowledgement of his agreement to it.

4: If he doesn't agree then being clear before the meeting what the consequences are, how far you are prepared to go.

ACTION:

- BK and CW to meet with GC on Monday 30th March to discuss all the points raised.
- In the meeting we decided that we would have to sever links with GC should he fail to agree to the guidelines outlined. This would involve the ending of our financial support.
- DB to write to TA to ask for a review of the events team response to the incidents and GC's subsequent written complaint.
- Pioneer to review its prayer guidelines ethos statement.

LEARNING:

- What is the process for dealing with safeguarding issues during events?
- Who makes the decision to eject a delegate from a Pioneer event?

Appendix C: Letter from Pioneer to Gerald Coates in response to his complaint about his treatment at the 2015 conference.

Please note that the names have been abbreviated or redacted by the reviewers.



30th April 2015

Dear G & A

Following receipt of your email 9th March, 2015 to B, C, Pioneer Team and Trustees, I am writing to share the outcome of our review into the events that took place at the Pioneer Conference this year. When B and C, met with yourselves on 30th March 2015, they shared our intention to respond by the end of April. My apologies that it has taken longer than hoped to provide our response.

Firstly, in respect to your complaint concerning the response and behaviours of members of the (removed by the reviewers) team and specifically the (role removed by the reviewers), we requested NCN who provided the venue and people to review the matter on our behalf. Together, we wholeheartedly agree that the behaviours were not consistent with the ethos and values of Pioneer, nor that of NCN. NCN have apologized for the behaviours that were displayed. Furthermore, they are implementing a number of changes into the team selection, processes and management of future events like the conference. Pioneer Trust also acknowledges the need to revise our approach to the management of incidents of this nature for future events and will be implementing changes to its' procedures. On behalf of Pioneer, I apologise for the way in which you and your friend, (redacted by the reviewers), were made to feel by members of the event staff, and for any distress this may have caused you both.

Secondly, I can confirm that to date, Pioneer has not received complaints from any of the three persons involved in the events that triggered our conversation at the conference.

Finally, Pioneer believes that our decision to bring the concerns to your attention was entirely appropriate and consistent with our Safeguarding responsibilities and ethos. I am appreciative of [name removed by the reviewers] guidance in raising the concerns with you. It is paramount that Pioneer operates and aspires to the highest standards of safeguarding, that keep all our people and those that work with us safe from harm. When you met with C and B, you acknowledged that those in ministry, specifically leaders, must recognise what is appropriate and what is not, to protect both themselves and others. In support of our leaders, and churches

across the network, we are continuously improving our guidelines taking advice from CCPAS and the NSPCC. I have enclosed a copy of our Safeguarding Code of Conduct, which we promote across the network outlining current best practice for ministry and activities. It is available and maintained on our website.

Please could I ask you to confirm receipt of this letter, and secondly your support to promote and uphold the guidance in our Code of Conduct.

We are committed to providing the safest place on earth for everyone to encounter the fullness of His Kingdom and Love.

Thank you for your continued support to B, the team and the work of Pioneer.

Yours truly,

DB

For and on behalf of the Trustees & Executive Leadership

Pioneer Trust, Central Hall, St Mary Street, Southampton, SO14 1NF

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