



## Policy for internal review of serious safeguarding cases

### 1. Introduction

In response to a criminal case and subsequent case review, it is that while safeguarding concerns are not uncommon within the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich ('Diocese'), these are normally of a comparatively low level (which is not to belittle the suffering or potential suffering of victims and survivors of abuse). These common concerns would be dealt with frequently in partnership with Suffolk Police and the Local Authority. Where more serious abuses occur it is appropriate that the Church conduct a degree of self-examination, resolving to learn how this could have occurred, what might have been done to prevent this, and what might be done to restoratively bring justice and peace to the victims and survivors of this abuse.

### 2. How would such a review be undertaken?

Such a review ought to be conducted by someone familiar with best practice in safeguarding, familiar with the structures of the Church (and thus able to comment on the various roles played in the Diocese during the handling of the concern), but independent to the Diocese – neither liable to prejudice nor favouritism in recognising learning points. The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser or the Diocesan Registrar of a neighbouring diocese might be such a person. Such a model might be developed in principle with a neighbouring diocese that could be replicated in exchange should they face a similar issue, thus creating a reciprocal peer review partnership.

### 3. What would trigger such a review?

It should be recognised that the Police and Local Authority have dealings with such crime on a more frequent basis, and as such they might only commission a review when a criminal investigation had gone publicly and seriously wrong, e.g. the MacPherson report, the Laming Report. The Church, by contrast, exists to further the gospel of Christ and serve congregations and communities, and it should be hoped, though not assumed, that it be rare for those working in a position of trust on its behalf to commit such abuse or crime. Where it does occur it is appropriate that a lower threshold for review should be set, as any such concern substantially and materially impacts the mission of the Church and the trust placed in it by those who have been harmed.

It is suggested that where abuse conducted by any person within the Diocese who holds a position of authority, responsibility or trust on its behalf becomes subject to formal court proceedings, either in a Magistrates' or Crown Court, should trigger the Bishop's Safeguarding Panel ('Panel') to assess the potential need for such an internal review. Positions of authority may include the bishop, all clergy (be they stipended, self-supporting, permission to officiate or retired), readers, lay elders, licenced lay ministers, churchwardens and any regular helpers with any church group that is intended for children, young people or vulnerable adults. If an offence should not actually proceed to Magistrates' Court (through lack of evidence, or unwillingness of a witness to testify) such a review could still be considered by the Panel as the failure to bring a concern to justice could be deemed as serious as that an incident is brought to justice.

In assessing the need to commission a separate internal review, the Panel should consider the findings of the Local Authority Designated Officer's statutory review, which usually includes a multi-agency strategy meeting as part of the process, and whether there are additional areas of learning that could potentially be obtained for the Diocese as an organisation in its own right.

Additionally in assessing the need for a review; the Panel should consider the proximity to any previous review (if one has recently been required for another case), the nature of the abuse (and if it differs from other cases reviewed) and the age and gender of the victim (in comparison to those who have been subject to the abuse in other cases reviewed); as all of these could provide opportunities for further potential learning respectively.

#### **4. What should this cost?**

It is clear that if resources were limitless we might enjoy independent examination on even comparatively minor concerns. The Diocese currently endures financial constraints, and at any time is charged with the appropriate stewardship of funds generously donated by churchgoers throughout the county. Such a review must therefore be as efficient, effective and economical as possible, although it should be recognised that a catastrophic failure to safeguard would warrant a considerably more substantial review.

If the estimated cost of any review was greater than that available in the approved diocesan budget for safeguarding, the Diocesan Secretary & Chief Executive Officer of the Diocese should be consulted.

#### **5. Expected Outcomes.**

The review should seek to measure the impact on the lives of those most affected and the parish, benefice, deanery and/or diocese, identify both strengths and weaknesses, and make recommendations as to how any such given issue might be avoided or better responded to. Any such review will be added to the safeguarding file in respect of that case.

# Appendix I

## What questions might a review ask?

An independent or peer reviewer is likely to establish which might be most pertinent, but the following might be asked:

a) Reporting/referring the concern & responding to the potential victim:

- Who was it reported/referred to?
- Was this initially handled in an appropriate and prompt manner?
- Were details appropriately recorded?
- What did the victim expect when reporting the incidence, and did s/he get what s/he expected?
- Was the victim suitably supported subsequently; both by the church and external agencies (i.e. was there appropriate spiritual support as well as emotional and medical support?).
- Was an authorized listener offered and accepted? If not, why not?
- If the concern had been reported to the Bishop's Safeguarding Officer, was information appropriately shared internally (with the Bishop or an incumbent as appropriate) and externally with the Police and Local Authority

b) Responding to the concern:

- Was there a delay? If so, could this delay have been prevented?
- Was agreed procedure followed by the Diocese, (and where applicable; by the Local Authority and Police in partnering the Diocese)?

c) Issue relating to the alleged offender:

- If applicable, were they suspended at the earliest opportunity? If so, by whom and when?
- Were they offered the appropriate support?
- Had the alleged perpetrator been recruited to their position following diocesan safer recruitment procedure (i.e. interview, references, confidential declaration and CRB/DBS disclosure)?
- Had these revealed anything that might have caused concern? If so, was a proper risk assessment taken by the Bishop's Safeguarding Panel, or by the incumbent of the church, or by any other means?
- If a priest, was the blue file consulted? If a priest transferred from another diocese, did the previous diocese have any intimation of an increased risk?

d) Issues related to the parish/benefice or community where the abuse took place?

- Were they following national church policy and diocesan procedures?
- Had the priest and Parish Safeguarding Officer in the parish received group 2 or higher training in the last three years?
- Did the parish/benefice receive the necessary support?

- What might have been done to improve awareness that abuse could occur in that community?
- Had practice improved as a result?

e) Press and Media

- Was this reported in the press? If so, was this appropriate?
- How was press liaison handled?
- Was the reporting accurate?
- Did the reporting cause unnecessary suffering to the victim(s)?
- Did the reporting (disproportionately) damage the image of the Church, its ministers or the Bishop?

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