**Annual Report 2016 : Safeguarding Team**

**Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) : Rebecca Boswell**

**Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) : Sarah King**

The Ely Safeguarding Team seeks to contribute to ‘People Fully Alive : Ely 2025’ in its strategic aims of developing healthy churches and serving the community. We aspire to strengthen and integrate concepts of ‘safeguarding’ and ‘protecting the vulnerable’ within the everyday practice of all those working, volunteering or worshipping across the Diocese. This preventative aspect of our work includes raising awareness of the various ways in which abuse may be manifested, the processes by which it should be handled, and how it may impact on survivors. The complementary, responsive work of the Team is to provide advice, guidance and leadership whenever concerns arise about the possible abuse of a child or vulnerable adult of any age.

**Safeguarding referrals to the Team in** **2016**

In 2013 there were 55 referrals made to the (then) Bishop’s Safeguarding Adviser. During 2016 this number rose to 109. At this stage it is not possible to be certain of the reasons for this increase, but it may indicate an increasing willingness to ‘think the unthinkable’ and to raise issues of concern and seek professional guidance. Each referral is unique and has differing, sometimes far-reaching consequences for all concerned. Some may involve short-term consultation or advice, whilst others may require in-depth, inter-agency investigation.

The following table shows the 109 new referrals to the DSA during 2016 by their primary category.

* Allegations against an identified person : 39
* Safeguarding concerns raised by congregation member : 12
* Re person convicted of offences against children : 9
* Re information on DBS or Confidential Declaration : 10
* Re conduct issues (staff/volunteer/congregation) : 5
* Requests for information from police : 4
* Re known, ongoing cases : 4
* General safeguarding issues (events to be held, etc.) : 26

During 2016 there were a further 15 referrals to the DSA which involved information-exchange with other dioceses or were national cross-boundary cases.

During 2016 one Church employee was convicted in relation to downloading indecent images.

**Risk Assessments and Safeguarding Agreements**

Central to all safeguarding work are the holistic assessment of risk and the development of effective strategies to manage any identified risk. These are often complex, involving liaison with partner agencies in the community, such as statutory social care authorities and the police. Many alleged and convicted perpetrators of abuse move from place to place and thus thorough inter-diocesan and inter-agency cooperation is essential in seeking to protect the vulnerable.

During 2016 the DSA compiled 9 formal Safeguarding Agreements relating to newly reported cases or to the reviewing of known, historical cases. The subject of the Agreement participates in this process, and the requirements of the Agreement are subsequently monitored. The purpose of such Agreements is to protect all within the church community, including the subject him/herself.

**Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)**

The DSO has responsibility for ensuring that all relevant staff, volunteers and members of congregations have appropriate DBS checks completed. The DBS checking procedures are now available online but a large proportion are completed with the DSO. During 2016, 975 were applied for in the Diocese. These checks are an essential part of ensuring the safety of all participating in church community activities.

**Safeguarding Training**

During 2016 the National Safeguarding Team circulated its ‘Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework’ which details the types and levels of safeguarding training to be delivered by each diocese to all clergy, laity and volunteers within the church. A timetable for delivery of the new training modules was also included. This area of work will be subject to national audit at some stage. The resourcing implications of delivering this schedule and the increased requirements upon those to be trained have caused concern and prompted debate among the majority of dioceses. The Ely Safeguarding Team is seeking to face this challenge, attending ‘training for trainers’ courses for the new modules, and beginning to fulfil the commitments of the ‘Learning Framework’. The National Team is reviewing the document in December 2016 and any changes will be reflected in the Ely Team’s Strategic Plan 2017. There are clearly resourcing issues to be faced. The lead trainer is the DSO, assisted by the DSA, and our small group of volunteer trainers continues to contribute by delivering some courses, for which the Ely Team is very grateful.

The Ely Team also expresses its appreciation for the contribution to safeguarding work of all Parish Safeguarding Officers, who provide a helpful ‘front-line’ link in their parishes and keep safeguarding issues on local agendas.

**Diocesan Safeguarding Management Group (DSMG)**

During 2016 the National Church required that each diocese should appoint an independent, lay Chair to its DSMG. Thus in July 2016 Janet Perrett, Ely’s DSMG Chair, stood down after many years of much-appreciated service in that role. The new Independent Chair, Katharine Jeary, was appointed from September 2016.

Ely DSMG has strong multi-agency and inter-departmental representation which allows robust discussion on safeguarding issues, drawing on a wide range of professional experience and expertise. It is also a supportive group, offering advice and guidance on policy and practice matters. During 2016 the DSMG assisted particularly with the challenges of preparation for the Ely safeguarding audit and the implications of the new training requirements. Ely Safeguarding Team is very grateful for all the contributions to its work made by diocesan and partner-agency members of the DSMG.

**Past Cases Review**

During 2016 a review was undertaken by the Church’s National Safeguarding Team of all dioceses in relation to the Past Cases Review of 2009 and its continuing legacy. The Ely DSA completed a screening questionnaire and interview as part of that review. The responses of all dioceses are being considered currently, and we await a decision about how this process will be taken forward.

**SCIE Audit, July 2016**

In line with the National Church’s policy of auditing safeguarding work within each diocese, Ely underwent this process in July 2016. The Social Care Institute for Excellence were the auditors. Their written report was received in September 2016. Whilst the majority of the report was positive, there were also constructive pointers to areas for improvement. Following the audit, for example, new Complaints and Whistleblowing policies were compiled and published, and changes were made to the safeguarding website. Other issues will be addressed in the Team’s 2017 Strategic Plan. The outcomes of the audit were verbally presented by the DSA and the DSMG Independent Chair to the Bishop’s Council and to the Diocesan Synod in the autumn 2016.

**Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)**

The Church of England is a Core Participant in the Independent Inquiry. The Inquiry has confirmed that the first public hearing relating to the Church of England will be held in March 2018. The Diocese of Ely, along with all other dioceses, has responded to four formal information requests from the Inquiry during 2016. The scope of information required has necessitated considerable research of historical records in relation to the criteria. In 2017 the Inquiry plans to undertake further research into how the Church of England has implemented safeguarding policies.

**Looking beyond the diocese**

The essence of the Safeguarding Team’s work is promoting the safety of vulnerable people within the church community. Everyone is also subject to society’s legislative framework and the Ely Safeguarding Team seeks to strengthen community liaison, whilst also putting forward the perspectives of Church safeguarding policies and practice. The DSA represents the Voluntary Sector on the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The DSO is the diocesan representative on the Local Adult Safeguarding Board Training Group and is also a member of the LSCB’s Local Practice Group Planning Committee.

The DSA, the DSO and the DSMG’s Independent Chair are all active in their respective regional and National Church safeguarding fora. During 2016 the National Safeguarding Team produced a raft of consultation documents on revised or new policies and procedures, followed by meetings to discuss the changes. Useful, strong links have been developing between Ely and the National Team, which regularly provides helpful, timely advice.

**Looking forwards**

Whilst continuing all the work outlined above, during 2017 the Ely Safeguarding Team plans to give priority to three specific strategic areas. These are : to learn from the past and to implement that learning; to ensure that office holders, lay staff and volunteers are supported in effective and consistent safeguarding practices; and to develop a quality assurance framework for safeguarding activity.

*RB, SK and KJ March 2017*