**Annual Report 2020: Safeguarding Team**

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 good safeguarding practice within the culture of all those working, volunteering, or worshipping across the Diocese.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made 2020 an unprecedented year and the report indicates how the Safeguarding Team have adapted and responded to the pandemic within the various areas of our work.

All aspects of work by the Ely Safeguarding Team are consistent with House of Bishops’ Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance. Local strategies and practice guidance are based on these and endorsed by the Diocesan Safeguarding Liaison Group**.** As interim national practice guidance in response to COVID-19 has been issued, it has been incorporated and disseminated by the Safeguarding Team.

**Safeguarding Team**

Rebecca Boswell - Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA)

Sharon Gage - Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding (ADSA)

Sarah King - Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO)

Kelly Nott - Safeguarding Training Administrator

Lisa Pearson - Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding (ADSA)

Jackie Williamson - Safeguarding Administrative Support - DBS checks

The team have all worked remotely from March 2020 until the end of the year. Two team members were furloughed during the year.

**Safeguarding Referrals**

The Safeguarding Advisors provide advice, guidance, and leadership whenever concerns arise about the possible abuse of a child or adult at risk, in relation to allegations against church officers and where there are concerns in relation to adults posing a risk within congregations. Responses to referrals can include the provision of advice, internal casework management and/or referral onwards to statutory agencies.

There were 177 referrals in 2020 which represents a 6% decrease from 2019 when there were 188. This slight fall can be attributed to the closures of churches during lockdowns.

**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 probation and the police.

At the end of 2020 there were 18 Safeguarding Agreements in place with three pending. The subject of the Agreement participates in this process and the Agreements are regularly reviewed and monitored. Where statutory agencies are involved, they participate in this process. The purpose of such Agreements is to protect all within the church community, including the subject. All Safeguarding Agreements are now informed by the new Church of England Standard Risk Analysis and Assessment Template (STRAAT) and all new cases are now assessed using this template. Plans to reassess existing Safeguarding Agreements using the new STRAAT over 2020 were paused due to the pandemic. The Agreements that were not reassessed using the STRAAT were reviewed on a regular basis during the year. With public health guidance permitting this work will be completed over 2021.

**Safer Recruitment**

All church officers are required to be recruited in accordance with the Church of England’s Safer Recruitment Practice Guidance 2016. One part of this process is the Disclosure and Barring Service Check (DBS). During 2020, 1082 DBS checks were undertaken across the Diocese, in comparison with 2019 where there were 1525. The Disclosure and Barring Service issued interim guidance in relation to COVID-19 allowing DBS checks to continue to be processed with a virtual check of identity documents. This enabled parishes and the Safeguarding Team to ensure that new requests for checks and renewals could be undertaken without delay during 2020.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer manages all the DBS accounts in parishes across the Diocese. Where information is disclosed on a DBS certificate or Confidential Declaration, this must be assessed by the Safeguarding Team who will make a recommendation regarding the individual’s appointment. There have been 12 such assessments over 2020.

**Safeguarding Training**

As a result of COVID-19, all face to face training ceased in March 2020.

The modules which apply mainly to employees and volunteers in our parishes are: Basic Awareness and Foundation both of which are available online via the Church of England Training Portal.

The Safeguarding Team adapted the Leadership module and began to deliver this virtually from May 2020. The National Safeguarding Team (NST) updated the Leadership module, specifically for virtual delivery in July 2021. The Safeguarding Team began delivering this version from November 2020 when team members returned from furlough.

Safer Recruitment has been delivered virtually since June 2020 and Responding Well to Domestic Abuse from November 2020. There has been no NST update of the Safer Recruitment and Domestic Abuse training materials, so the Safeguarding Team continued to offer adaptations of existing national training materials to ensure that people can access appropriate training for their roles.

Virtual safeguarding training has received a positive response from most participants, who appreciate the convenience of accessing the training from home. However, the fact that fewer numbers of people can be trained per virtual course has increased the workload of the team.

The table below includes the 2019 training figures for comparison

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Module** | **2019** | **2020** |
| **Basic Awareness**  | 1544 (online) | 877 (online) |
| **Foundation (online)** | 922 (online and face to face) | 538 (online) |
| **Leadership**  | 517 (face to face) | 471 (virtual) |
| **S1 Safer Recruitment (virtual)** | 107 (face to face) | 71 (virtual) |
| **S3 Domestic Abuse (virtual)** | 125 (face to face) | 113 (virtual) |

**Ely Cathedral**

There is a Service Level Agreement between the Diocesan Board of Finance and the Chapter of Ely Cathedral agreeing terms of the provision of safeguarding advice and support to the Cathedral by Ely Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

**Diocesan Safeguarding Liaison Group (DSLG)**

Ely DSLG 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, guidance and quality assurance on policy and practice matters. 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, the Church of England's National Safeguarding Team undertook a reassessment of the work undertaken by Dioceses during the 2009 Past Cases Review (PCR). On the basis of the information reviewed, the Ely Diocesan Safeguarding Team concluded that the 2009 PCR should be repeated and subsequently welcomed the recommendation and guidance of the Independent Scrutiny Team to undertake a new full review.

Independent Reviewers have completed the reviewing of files, including the Cathedral records. The final report is now under completion.

**Support to Parishes.**

The Safeguarding Team has worked throughout the year to continue with the advice and support we offer to parishes in relation to safeguarding concerns, safer recruitment, good practice and training. We have had two virtual Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) meetings over the year. Our PSOs have largely welcomed the convenience of a virtual meeting and this has been reflected in the high attendance at these events. Ely Safeguarding Team note our appreciation for the vital contribution to safeguarding work by all PSOs.

The Safeguarding Team works with Parishes to support their compliance with Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance. Parishes who for a range of reasons are at risk of not having ‘due regard’ are offered Focussed Support. This process brings together the Safeguarding Team and Parish in a coordinated response to help parishes overcome their difficulties. Several parishes have been supported during 2020.

The Safeguarding Dashboard software is available free of charge to all parishes. The feedback regarding the Dashboard from Parishes has been very positive, with PSOs reporting that it makes their role more straightforward and manageable. 193 parishes are currently using the Dashboard and we continue to encourage all remaining parishes to register for the Dashboard.

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

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) published its Investigation report into the Anglican Church in England and Wales in October 2020. The Report focused on common themes and issues identified in all three hearings, which included the main public hearings in July 2019 and case studies into Bishop Peter Ball and the Diocese of Chichester held in 2018.

The Report makes eight principal recommendations about a range of issues including the Church’s response to victims and survivors.  There is also a recommendation regarding the structure of safeguarding within the Church of England and the implementation of independent oversight. There are also important recommendations regarding revision of the Clergy Discipline Measure, information sharing between

Churches and statutory partners, and external auditing of the Church’s safeguarding work.

The Church of England’s initial response to the Report stated:

*“The report makes shocking reading and while apologies will never take away the effects of abuse on victims and survivors, we today want to express our shame about the events that have made those apologies necessary. The whole Church must learn lessons from this Inquiry.”*

A more detailed response to the Report including plans for implementation of the recommendations will be made in 2021.

**Priority areas**

The Safeguarding Team’s Strategy 2019-2022 identifies three specific priorities. These are ‘to learn from the past and implement that learning’, ‘to ensure that office holders, lay staff and volunteers are supported in effective and consistent safeguarding practice’ and ‘to develop a quality assurance framework for safeguarding activity.’

A key area for development is reviewing how we respond well to survivors including purchasing additional training for the safeguarding team and seeking independent quality assurance in this area.

It is expected that both the completion of the Past Cases Review and recommendations arising from it and the recommendations arising from the IICSA will be the foundation when reviewing the Safeguarding Strategy.