**Annual Report 2021: 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 continued throughout 2021 and the report indicates throughout 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**.**

**Safeguarding Team**

Rebecca Boswell - Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA)

Sharon Gage - Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (ADSA)

Sarah King - Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO)

Kelly Nott - Safeguarding Training Administrator

Lisa Pearson - Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (ADSA)

Jackie Williamson - Safeguarding Administrative Support - DBS checks

The team have all worked remotely from March 2020 until the present time.

**Policy and Practice Guidance**

All safeguarding work within the Diocese is undertaken within the context of Statutory and House of Bishop’s Policy and Practice Guidance. The following Practice Guidance Documents have been published during the last 12 months:

*Safer Recruitment and People Management (Effective from 04.01.22)*

*Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework (April 2021)*

*Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse (Effective from 04.04.22)*

*Declaration of Conflict-of-Interest Policy (November 2021)*

*Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults (December 2021)*

*Identifying and Reporting Safeguarding Serious Incidents to the Charity Commission: Guidance for DBFs, PCCs and Religious Communities (2021)*

It is noted that safeguarding Guidance is issued by the House of Bishops under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016.

Section 5 requires all authorised clergy, bishops, archdeacons, licensed readers and lay workers, churchwardens and parochial church councils to have “due regard” to safeguarding Guidance issued by the House of Bishops. A duty to have “due regard” to Guidance means that the person under the duty is not free to disregard it but is required to follow it unless there are cogent reasons for not doing so. ‘Cogent’ for this purpose means clear, logical and convincing.

Failure by a member of the clergy to have “due regard” to House of Bishops’ safeguarding Guidance is an act or omission which may constitute misconduct under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 (‘CDM’). Failure by a Reader or lay worker to have due regard to House of Bishops’ safeguarding Guidance would be grounds for the revocation of that Reader’s or lay worker’s licence by the Bishop, and failure by a churchwarden or parochial church council could result in an investigation being carried out by the Charity Commission and the churchwarden or PCC members being disqualified as charity trustees.

**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. Referrals include but are not limited to: disclosures from survivors of abuse (both current and non-current), allegations against an identified person, issues concerning a person who has been convicted of offences against children, safeguarding and welfare concerns raised by or about a member of a congregation, conduct issues relating to a member of the clergy, laity or volunteer, information arising from DBS applications, and so on.

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| **Year** | **Number of referrals** |
| 2016 | 109 |
| 2017 | 131 |
| 2018 | 158 |
| 2019 | 188 |
| 2020 | 177 |
| 2021 | 215 |

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. There has been a marked increase of 21% to 215 during 2021.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Primary Category of Referral** | **Child** | **Adult** |
| Sexual Abuse | 1 | 16 (Reporting Non-Current experience in childhood)  1 |
| Physical | 6 | 3 |
| Emotional |  |  |
| Neglect | 3 |  |
| Domestic Abuse |  | 18 |
| Financial |  | 1 |
| Spiritual |  | 2 |
| Health and Welfare | 6 | 29 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Other reasons for referral** |  |
| DBS or Confidential Declaration Information | 17 |
| Information about an adult who may pose a risk of harm | 15 |
| General safeguarding issues/advice | 65 |
| Enquiries from Statutory Agencies | 4 |
| Allegations about current or former clergy, parish employees or volunteers | 25 |

**Risk Assessments and Safeguarding Agreements**

The church welcomes all, including those individuals who pose a potential risk to other people. 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 2021 there were 19 Safeguarding Agreements in place across the Diocese with a further two pending completion. 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 Church of England Standard Risk Analysis and Assessment Template (STRAAT) and all new cases are now assessed using this template. To date there have been 9 new risk assessments (STRAAT) completed, although the subjects of 3 of these chose to withdraw from the process in 2021. There are a further 3 STRAAT’s currently pending completion. Due to the pandemic in 2020 and a reduction in face-to-face meetings during 2021, planning to reassess the remaining Safeguarding Agreements, of which there are 12, using the new STRAAT has recommenced. These 12 Agreements were reviewed on a regular basis during 2021 and with public health guidance permitting this work is expected to be completed over 2022.

**Safer Recruitment and People Management**

All church officers are required to be recruited in accordance with the Church of England’s Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance (2021). The updated guidance has introduced changes, including an increased focus on post-appointment support and management for staff and volunteers. This guidance has also changed the requirement for DBS renewals from 5 to 3 yearly. Advice has been given to all officeholders and Parish Safeguarding Officers that all church officer involved in recruitment should complete the new online training module which aligns with the new guidance, read the new guidance and complete a parish self-assessment in preparation for full implementation on January 04 2022.

During 2021, 1379 DBS checks were undertaken across the Diocese, in comparison with 2020 where there were 1082 (lower figure directly attributable to churches closure during lockdown). The Disclosure and Barring Service issued interim guidance in relation to COVID-19 allowing DBS checks 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 and 2021.

|  |  |
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| **Year** | **DBS Disclosures** |
| 2016 | 999 |
| 2017 | 1192 |
| 2018 | 1692 |
| 2019 | 1525 |
| 2020 | 1082 |
| 2021 | 1379 |

The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer manages all the DBS accounts in parishes across the Diocese. Where safeguarding 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 were 16 such assessments over 2021.

**Safeguarding Training**

(See Training Strategy 2022 – 2025)

As a result of COVID-19, all face-to-face training ceased in March 2020 and has continued to be delivered virtually over 2021.

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.

Safer Recruitment was delivered virtually by the Safeguarding Team from June 2020 until July 2021 when an updated online training course, *Safer Recruitment and People* Managem*ent* was published on the Church of England Training Portal.

Responding Well to Domestic Abuse was delivered virtually by the Safeguarding Team from November 2020 to November 2021, when the updated *Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse* online module was published on the Church of England Training Portal.

The Team began delivering the new national Parish Safeguarding Officer’s Induction Module in September 2021.

Ely Safeguarding Team also deliver local bespoke training, briefing and workshops including Churchwardens Safeguarding Briefings and DBS Workshops.

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. Some people who have been personally affected by safeguarding issues have reflected that they have found attending virtual training problematic and distressing and in those cases we are aware of, additional supports have been put in place to enable the person to access the training.

The table below includes the 2019 training figures for comparison

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Module** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** |
| **Basic Awareness** | 1544 (online) | 877 (online) | 1210 (online) |
| **Foundation (online)** | 922 (online and face to face) | 538 (online) | 731 (online) |
| **Leadership** | 517 (face to face) | 471 (virtual) | 344 (virtual) |
| **Safer Recruitment** | 107 (face to face) | 71 (virtual) | 95 (virtual)  187 (online) |
| **Domestic Abuse** | 125 (face to face) | 113 (virtual) | 179 (virtual)  89 (online) |
| **Parish Safeguarding Officer Induction** | NA | NA | 20 (virtual) |
| **Churchwardens Briefing** | NA | NA | 129 (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. Lisa Pearson works for the Cathedral one day per week as Cathedral Safeguarding Advisor.

**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**

The National Project Management Board noted a unanimous agreement to accept the Final PCR Report from Ely Diocese in November 2021. They commended the planned work to quality assure survivor engagement, partnership working and the strength of the Safeguarding team.

The Board noted their belief that this was a thorough review and that the Reviewer made it clear they were impressed with the Diocese. They expressed that the improvements required in decision making with be aided by the National Casework Management System. (The Reviewers had recommended that a decision log process is maintained to ensure consistent decision-making, for example with grant of PTO authority and visits to the Diocese of persons with Worship Agreements due to offending history.)

An independent review will be commissioned to quality assure the work of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team with victims and survivors and make any recommendations in order to assist in planning for the implementation of Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse by the Diocese in April 2022.

**Support to Parishes**

The Safeguarding Team continues to provide advice and support 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 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 2021.

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. 60% of parishes are currently using the Dashboard and we continue to advocate that all parishes register for the Dashboard.

Numbers of Parish Dashboards

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Unused** | **Level 0** | **Level 1** | **Level 2** | **Level 3** | **Total Live** | **Total All** |
| [Archdeaconry of Cambridge](https://tools.parishdashboards.org.uk/stats/3036/3042) | 35 | 6 | 16 | 49 | 36 | 101 | 142 |
| [Archdeaconry of Huntingdon & Wisbech](https://tools.parishdashboards.org.uk/stats/3036/3037) | 70 | 14 | 31 | 30 | 32 | 93 | 177 |
| **Total** | **105** | **20** | **47** | **79** | **68** | **194** | **319** |
|  | 32% | 6% | 14% | 24% | 21% | 60% | 100% |

**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.’

An action plan is now in place to address the recommendations made by the Past Cases Review and the further recommendations of a Panel convened from the Diocesan Safeguarding Liaison Group. The purpose of that Panel was to review the work undertaken by the Safeguarding Team in respect of individual casework recommendations highlighted by the Independent Reviewers.

A key area for development is reviewing how we respond well to survivors and we are seeking independent quality assurance in this area in preparation for the implementation of the new House of Bishop’s Guidance in April 2022.

Ely Safeguarding Team have been part of the development group for the national safeguarding Casework Management System and are hoping to be a Phase 1 adopter of the system, alongside the Cathedral during 2022.

The team provide a full training offer of all currently available House of Bishop’s safeguarding training courses with additional bespoke local training. All parishes are routinely reminded of the free safeguarding training available through the local Safeguarding Partnership Boards for Adults and Children.

The Safeguarding Team will continue to support parishes with embedding new House of Bishop’s safeguarding guidance. This will also include ongoing advice and support to parishes in relation to their compliance with House of Bishop’s Practice Guidance while noting that compliance is the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council in each parish.

Rebecca Boswell January 2022