

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the Summer Safeguarding Newsletter. It seems strange writing to you from home when our churches have been closed since March and most activities seriously curtailed. The restrictions imposed for the pandemic have had a significant impact on the safeguarding arrangements in the diocese and the parishes. In this newsletter we want to share some of the changes that have occurred and may well shape the future safeguarding arrangements in the diocese. For example, like many churches we are now familiar with holding meetings through Zoom and Microsoft Teams. This may well become the future norm, where face to face meetings and time taken to travel are not essential to get the job done or to enable some participants to join a meeting which they would otherwise have missed.

I hope that most of you will have read the announcement that I am soon to leave the diocese to take up a new role in the Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham; so this will be my last edition of the newsletter.

Safeguarding in the diocese today has changed enormously from the role I took on 11 years ago. It has been a privilege to work alongside so many committed and enthusiastic colleagues in the parishes. We started with Child Protection co-ordinators, moved to Safeguarding Links and ended up with Parish Safeguarding Officers. This was a journey that was far more than a change of name, it reflected the change in role and status for those working tirelessly to ensure that our churches remained safe worshipping environments. Changes were needed due to national developments (both inside and outside of the Church of England) and internally as we aimed to meet the increasing demands on the services. What has struck me over the years is the willingness of most parish officers to do their best to implement new procedures or encourage reluctant delegates to attend new training and to report safeguarding concerns when needed. The strength of a diocesan safeguarding system is dependent on how the parishes implement the procedures and guidance and form a healthy relationship with the Parish Support Office. My views on the effect of Covid-19, is that this will become evermore important as we discover a new 'normal' for worship, ministry and safeguarding.

Cover arrangements

My last day of employment with the diocese is Friday 19th June 2020. An advert has gone out for a replacement, so if you know anyone who may be interested, please do let them know. It is a crucial role and important that it is filled with an experienced safeguarding professional, Sue Griffin will be the Interim DSA whilst this process takes place. Over the past month Sue and I have been working closely to ensure that there is a smooth handover and that parishes are not left without support. Many of you will know Sue from her role as the Safeguarding Coordinator and I am confident that she will be able to provide good cover until the replacement DSA arrives.

You may have also noticed the advert for an Independent Chair of the DSAP. This is also a vital role and one that has now been vacant for over a year. It is encouraging that the diocese has not rushed to appoint but has taken time to try to fill the position with someone best suited. Sue will keep you informed about the progress of both vacancies in the next newsletter.

Post Covid-19 impact

Some of you will have read news articles about the increase in concern for children and vulnerable adults arising from isolation and lockdown. For example, some secular organisations are reporting that there could be an increase of 25% in concerns about Domestic Abuse. The Department of Education has shared concerns at the large number of children already at risk and offered priority school places, who seem to have dropped off the radar and not attended during lockdown. It is likely that as churches start up again, you will have an increase in cases you wish to report or discuss. Partner agencies in safeguarding are relying on everyone keeping their eyes open as we resume conversations and contacts within the local communities. Never has the idea that “safeguarding is everyone’s business” been so important and the Diocesan Team is ready to take your calls. While we have needed to furlough some staff, please be assured that there will be staff able to take your calls when needed.

You may wish to be discussing how you start back safely from a safeguarding perspective and there is guidance from the National Safeguarding Team, posted on the Diocesan webpage. For those who are involved in supporting Safeguarding Agreements on those who pose a risk to others, please ensure that you make contact with the Caseworker before the individual starts to attend worship (once we are allowed to hold services again). We are here to ensure that they and congregations stay safe and adjustments to their Safeguarding Agreements may be needed in the light of the current restrictions.

DBS restart

One of the areas where we did not maintain a service for a while, was in the processing of DBS applications. We have found that the number of enquiries has started to rise in the last couple of weeks and you will be pleased to know that while not completing DBS applications we have completed the changes to the DSB/Training database and run trials to ensure that it is working effectively. This means that all the data processed while the database was being repaired has now been uploaded and is part of the main system. You will recall that we offered parishes the opportunity of completing the validation section on their own and a few parishes have expressed an interest in doing this. Perhaps now is a time for your parish to consider taking on this part of the process? We are anticipating that as parishes start to resume some of their activities there is likely to be a delay in the need to get DBS checks done, so now might be a good time to consider your parish taking this on. We believe that it speeds up the process for the parishes and reduces the backlog at Church House, so that we can concentrate on the more complex ones. The change was introduced as a response to parishes frustration at the time needed to respond to queries across the diocese which individual parishes would not encounter.

The gradual lifting of lockdown may also provide an opportunity for those parishes who have yet to access the Dashboard to register and start inputting data. The team are happy to talk through the process and there have been no problems thus far that we have not been able to overcome. We can also put you in touch with a parish near you who are using the Dashboard already to share just how easy it is and how time saving. It really is an amazingly simple programme which makes the task of completing the parish audit almost effortless. It will produce the PSOs annual report to the Parochial Church Council automatically and enables more accurate data to be provided on the work parishes are achieving in keeping churches safe. Whilst we work through these difficult times Judie is available 9 till 5 to discuss any DBS or training issues and is available on **07783 088769**.

Training

With Social Distancing likely to remain for the foreseeable future, face to face training is not going to resume until it is safe to do so. Those of you who are aware that your training has run out and you need to complete the renewal, to have a License issued, please note that we have made arrangements with the Registrar that you can be issued a License so long as you have completed your Foundation (C1) Module. If not, simply go to the safeguarding website and apply to do it online using the hyperlink

<https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/> you will then need to complete the Leadership Module (C2) within six months of the date on your License. The NST have produced the Leadership Module available to be delivered virtually using Zoom and we are currently working on ensuring that the technology is reliable and training staff members to deliver the training remotely before rolling out a number of sessions later in the summer. The sessions will be for a reduced number of delegates so booking will be essential, through Eventbrite, in the usual way. While I don't see virtual training replacing the face to face experience, it is a helpful addition to the variety on approaches to the delivery of safeguarding training.

There are a number of new training modules planned for later in the year. The NST are currently reviewing Basic Awareness and Foundation materials and are developing new courses for a targeted audience, which will include a Parish Safeguarding Officer Induction course and Managing Risk at Local level Module. In addition, the NST is developing CPD courses for DSAs and Assistant DSAs and Trainers.

Lessons Learned

As part of the process for investigating safeguarding cases in the dioceses many of you know that we hold Case Management Meetings (CMM) to plan and oversee the work of the safeguarding team. At the end of the inquiries, the CMM meets for one final time to consider whether there are any lessons to be learned and shared across the diocese. This is an important way of sharing good practice and learning how we can improve our safeguarding arrangements from the experiences of others. The national policy requires that lessons learned are shared widely and if undertaken independently (for the most serious safeguarding concerns only), that they are published. We have decided that the newsletter is a helpful medium to reach those who need to hear the lessons learned. All lessons are anonymised so that it is not possible to identify the case, although parishes directly involved may remember the details.

We have one incident to report to you which came from a complaint of non-recent abuse by a now deceased member of clergy. The opportunity for the member of clergy to establish an inappropriate relationship with children came through encouraging the children to participate in an activity that was described as the member of clergy's hobby and to be employed directly by the member of clergy to complete odd jobs around the vicarage. The CMM recognised that many clergy will engage in appropriate activities with their congregation that are perfectly appropriate in the pastoral relationships. However, the CMM felt that it was appropriate to give a timely reminder about safe working practices. The two lessons learned were as follows:

1. Where a member of clergy engages u18s in social activities they should follow lone working guidance. Where 1:1 contact is unavoidable, the member of clergy should ensure that the Church Wardens or Area Dean are aware before the event and take appropriate advice if there is risk that their actions could be misunderstood. The Safeguarding Team is also available to advise if in doubt.

2. Young people under 18yrs must not be asked to complete work on church property without the knowledge of the Parochial Church Council's knowledge and the agreement of the Parish Support Office. Where any payment is given, this should be through the PCC funds so that it is properly accounted for and audited.

PCR2 Progress

Many of you will recall that by now we should have been in the throws of having files reviewed as part of our PCR2 process. Covid-19 put a halt to most of the PCR2 activity, but we have used the restrictions to get ready for when the review can resume. We have appointed James Gormley as an Independent Chair to oversee the PCR2 Reference Group (in the absence of a DSAP Chair), and appointed Moira Murray as one of the Reviewers. Moira used to work for the NST and prior to that headed up safeguarding for the 2012 Olympics; we feel she will make an excellent Reviewer when the process re-starts. The NST had pushed the date for completion back from the end of 2020 to Spring/Summer 2021. This is a provisional timeframe and no date has been agreed. It is likely that it will be further delayed as the full impact of the pandemic on dioceses and parishes becomes apparent. It is likely that there will be financial constraints at all levels of the church and priorities will need to be adjusted accordingly. Moira has other commitments in the autumn so could not start to review files until next year.

The PCR2 reference group will start to re-order the timeline for PCR2 in July, once the restrictions are eased and the other impacts of the pandemic become clear. Thanks to all those parishes who have submitted their Appendix 1a return, it is not wasted effort as the parameters for the PCR2 remain unchanged, so data already submitted remains valid, if you have not submitted your PCR2 return please do so to Sue at sue.griffin@derby.anglican.org as soon as possible.

Farewell and Thanks

When I joined the diocese in 2009, I worked part time and there were only two national policies. It seems strange looking back that this was considered acceptable at the time. As the safeguarding landscape has grown, I have been astonished by the overwhelming support of parish volunteers to provide safeguarding services on a voluntary basis to the high standard that has been achieved over the years. I have been blessed to get to know many and have valued your commitment, encouragement and cooperation over the years.

There have been some significant changes in the diocese, the new procedures in 2016 and the expansion of the team to enable us to cover all the work. However, no matter how well resourced the safeguarding team is, and however skilled its members, the task of developing safer worshipping environments ultimately resides at a parish level and as I move onto to a new challenge in Southwell, I want to express my thanks for all those who have worked so tirelessly in the field of parish safeguarding. I am confident that the safeguarding team will continue, even though there will be changes, as there will be for everyone following the past three months. I wish you all the best and remember that safeguarding is central to our Gospel message and a true expression of local mission, in how we care and respond to the most vulnerable in our communities.

God Bless...

Julian Hodgson DSA