

Safeguarding presentation to the Ely Diocesan Synod, 21 10 17 by Rebecca Boswell, Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor and Katharine Jeary, Independent Chair (Safeguarding)

KJ :

Rebecca and I welcome this opportunity to update you on safeguarding work within the Diocese during 2017. We will be focusing on the major recurring themes and developments within both the Safeguarding Team and the Diocesan Safeguarding Group.

Firstly, Rebecca will present the main issues which the Ely Safeguarding Team has dealt with during 2017, and then I shall talk about developments specifically within the Diocesan Safeguarding Group.

RB :

By way of reminder, all aspects of work by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team takes its formal guidance from House of Bishops' policies and practice guidance, as directed by the National Safeguarding Team. Local strategies and practice guidance are based on these and endorsed by the Diocesan Safeguarding Group. During 2017 five new policy and guidance documents relevant to safeguarding have been published, these are:

- **Promoting a Safer Church; House of Bishops policy statement (2017)**
- **Responding Well to Domestic Abuse (2017)**
- **Safeguarding Training & Development Practice Guidance (2017);**
- **Responding to, assessing and managing concerns or allegations against church officers : Practice guidance (2017)**
- **Key roles and responsibilities of church office holders and bodies : Practice guidance (2017)**

In January 2017 the Ely Safeguarding Team, together with our Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Group, devised our first formal Strategic Plan for 2017 – 2018. Its preparation focussed our minds on the key strategic areas of safeguarding work in Ely Diocese. During 2017 the key areas are defined as : ensuring that office holders, lay staff and volunteers are supported in effective and consistent safeguarding practices, learning from the past and implementing that learning, and developing a quality assurance framework for safeguarding activity. The detailed objectives and time-scales are spelled out in the Strategic Plan. Everything Katharine and I will talk about now, dovetails with that Plan.

We undertook an Interim Review which showed that our core work of responding to referrals relating to concerns or allegations involving a child or vulnerable adult, has increased by 20% during the first 8 months of 2017 over the equivalent figure for 2016. There were 85 such referrals up to the end of August 2017, a few being dealt with fairly

quickly, whilst others required inter-agency meetings and considerably more in-depth and time-consuming work, sometimes spanning several months.

Another key element of the Team's work is more preventative and includes delivering compulsory, nationally-devised safeguarding training modules to specified groups of clergy, laity and volunteers across the diocese. The 'Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework' national document, which first appeared in 2016, gave rise to considerable concerns across most dioceses in terms of its resourcing implications and the increase in requirements upon those to be trained. Some of you may recall the heated discussions. Thankfully the National Safeguarding Team listened to some of the concerns and have altered some of their requirements. Nevertheless, the challenge of complying with the current training requirements continues to face the Ely Safeguarding Team.

The good news, however, is that a half-time Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser has been appointed, whose primary responsibility is to assist Sarah King with the delivery of the required training. Sharon Gage took up this post on 09 October. She is social work qualified and will also act as my deputy when I am not available. We are fortunate in also having appointed a part-time admin assistant, Jane Moore, who now has responsibility for arranging all aspects of training sessions and keeping our training database.

During the period January to August 2017 we have delivered 141.5 hours of face-to-face training at all levels. An innovation during 2017 has been the availability of on-line training for the most basic module, and 296 people have so far completed it in this way. Of course, many people lack either the confidence or the facilities to do this, so Sarah still delivers this module face-to-face, as necessary.

Even with our much-welcomed additional resourcing, the logistical issues, delivery and recording of all the training remain challenging.

Moving on now to assessment of risk, which is another aspect of preventative safeguarding work. Holistic assessment of risk and the compilation of strategies to manage identified risk is crucial to protecting everyone involved in a church community's activities, including the subject of the assessment. This year so far, 8 formal risk assessments and Safeguarding Agreements have been put in place on either new or previously known cases. This is complex and sensitive work, which sometimes entails long explanations and negotiations. But, as I have said, these Agreements are formulated to safeguard all concerned. They need to be monitored conscientiously.

The DSA and DSO roles within a diocese benefit greatly from formal regional and national groups of people in similar roles. They also have close links with local partner-agencies. Safeguarding issues do not respect geographical or diocesan boundaries. Sarah and I attend our respective groups, and thereby bring new learning and ideas back into Ely Diocese.

Finally, I shall mention the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, IICSA. As you know, this is a complex and wide-ranging national inquiry, and the first hearings relating to

the Church of England are due to be held in March 2018. During 2017 so far, the Diocese of Ely has responded to 5 formal information requests, and more are expected. We are required to retain all records, of whatever type, relating directly or indirectly to the sexual abuse of children or to child protection and care, according to IICSA criteria.

I hope that gives you a good overview of the Team's work during 2017 and I shall now hand over to Katharine, the Independent Chair of our Safeguarding Group, to speak specifically about developments within that group.

KJ :

2017 has been a busy year for the Safeguarding Group, and, as you've heard, for the Diocesan Safeguarding Team more generally. My first year as Independent Chair ended in August, so it's an appropriate time to reflect on developments within the Group.

You may recall from our visit to this Synod last October that safeguarding work in this Diocese was audited by an independent body in July 2016, and their report was with us just over a year ago. In relation to the Diocesan Safeguarding Group, it highlighted several aspects which could helpfully be reviewed. Foremost amongst these were the frequency of meetings, to ensure a better sense of continuity, a shift of emphasis from looking at casework to setting and monitoring strategic plans, and a strengthening of the Group's quality assurance role in relation to safeguarding work. The auditors also commented on the membership of the Group. Their report flagged up the risk of collusion among professionals who know each other well from other fora, but it acknowledged too that there is a commitment to attendance and participation in our Group which is very valuable.

As Rebecca mentioned, several documents produced by the House of Bishops and the National Safeguarding Team have also provided guidance which has been influencing the Group's development. Similarly to the DSO and DSA groups, there have also been productive discussions about the function of safeguarding Groups within both national and regional meetings of Independent Chairs, which I attend. And, of course, our Diocesan Safeguarding Group has discussed these issues too.

So, what progress has been made? The first change was to increase the number of meetings per annum from two to four. That may sound simple and uncontroversial, but for some of our inter-agency partners it was a significant move. Statutory agencies particularly are prone to re-structuring and re-organising, so we are fortunate that this requested doubling of time-commitment has generally been accepted.

It may have come to your notice that the name of the Group has changed. It's previous title referred to the 'Management' Group. This felt inappropriate, as the Group has no formal management mandate. Other dioceses refer to Advisory Groups, Safeguarding Panels, and so on. The name which is seen to fit our Group best is the Diocesan Safeguarding Liaison Group, which I believe makes us unique! The name is intended to reflect our aspiration to a holistic, collaborative approach, with our partner organisations, to safeguarding all those

who work, volunteer or worship within a Church setting. Of course everyone will have aspects of life beyond the Church, like personal relationships, family activities, employment, etc., so a holistic approach to safeguarding is crucial, as is effective liaison with other organisations and agencies who offer additional perspectives on any given case.

The emphasis of our Safeguarding Liaison Group has shifted away from case discussions. If required, in exceptional circumstances, a small sub-group of the DSLG, will be convened, whose focus and time-limits will be stated at the outset. The Minutes will be held separately from routine DSLG Minutes. So far we have convened one such sub-group. In most cases where additional discussion is required, Rebecca, as some of you know from experience, will call a Core Group together in line with national policies, and this is separate from any Liaison Group remit.

During the past year a great deal of time and effort have been expended by the DSLG on the Safeguarding Team's 2-year Training Strategy. There was a sub-group which grappled long and hard with the regularly changing demands of the National Safeguarding Training Team and with the resourcing implications. A lot of time was spent scoping the task ahead. These were difficult, and sometimes fraught, times, and I commend Sarah King (DSO), Rebecca and the DSLG sub-group for sticking with the task. Now, though, I simply want to use this as an example of how the DSLG is gradually turning its focus onto more strategic issues and advising the Safeguarding Team on appropriate ways forward.

Another significant change to the DSLG relates to its Terms of Reference. Following endorsement by the Liaison Group, the Terms of Reference now spell out the contextual framework within which we work, the principles underpinning our work, the functions of the DSLG, and its required membership. The full text is available online. In essence the underpinning principles encompass striving for best practice, strengthening inter-agency liaison, respect for confidentiality, and seeking to embed an ever-increasing understanding of abusive behaviours and their impact on survivors among all those working, volunteering or worshipping within the Ely Diocese.

As far as the functions of the DSLG are concerned, clearly the primary task is to focus on safeguarding children and adults who may be at risk of harm within the context of Church activities. The new Terms of Reference emphasise the centrality of the DSLG's quality assurance role. This relates particularly to its scrutiny of policies and their implementation, its involvement in identifying and implementing learning from past mistakes, and its advice in terms of both preventative and reactive safeguarding work in the Diocese. The DSLG aspires to be a forum for collaboration, challenge and mutual learning. The Group members also provide support, sometimes individually and sometimes as a group, to both Rebecca and Sarah, in the operation of their roles.

As far as the membership of the DSLG is concerned, the auditors considered whether our inter-agency partners should come from more senior, strategic levels within their organisations, as they do in some dioceses. On balance, however, they opted for the 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' approach. Rebecca and Sarah each have strong, mutually respectful

working relationships with the DSLG members and thereby with their organisations, and these links are very valuable in their safeguarding work. We have to be realistic, though, that attendance at, and commitment to, the DSLG is essentially dependent on goodwill. As Rebecca and I know all too well from our previous local authority roles, the vast majority of allegations against adults working with children arise in the education sector, with a very small proportion of allegations coming to their attention from a church context. Thus for many of our members, involvement with the DSLG is additional to their core work. To retain them, and for it to be seen as effective use of their time, we have to ensure that there are benefits both to them and to our Safeguarding Team.

I hope that Rebecca and I have now covered the key issues regarding safeguarding in the diocese during 2017 thus far. Thank you for listening. I'll now hand back to the Chair.

Presentation ends