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Diocese of Ely - Review of Responding to and Supporting Survivors and Victims:

An analysis of Strengths, Challenges and Areas for
Improvement.

An Executive Summary
September 2022

Context to the review

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) recognised in the report of October 2020, the importance of responding appropriately to victims and survivors

“The Church has failed to respond consistently to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse with sympathy and compassion, accompanied by practical and appropriate support. This has often added to the trauma already suffered by those who were abused by individuals associated with the Church.”¹

The Diocese has been keen to demonstrate continuous improvement and development and has, through the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP), decided to undertake a review of the identification and support afforded to victims and survivors.

The Diocese of Ely approached thirtyone:eight, an independent reviewer, in March 2022, to commission the undertaking of this review.

The terms of reference were drafted, based on the Church of England’s *Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse Practice Guidance 2021* (Implementation date 04.04.2022). The areas of focus will be reviewed in accordance with the Past Cases Review Survivor Care Strategy 2019.

The key remit of the review was to diagnose organisational functioning in the following areas.

1. Whether the Diocese can demonstrate a safe and conducive environment and culture for safeguarding disclosures to be made?
2. Whether the Diocese can demonstrate that the policies, processes, training and experience are in place to respond appropriately to safeguarding disclosures and to provide the necessary support?
3. Is the Diocese able to connect victims and survivors to support services?
4. Is the Diocese able to respond to and support Church based abuse?

Relevant information was gathered through the development of a series of questions for Ordained Staff and Lay Staff in different roles and at all levels of seniority. Survivor voice was a key aspect of the review. Each individual with information relevant to the Review was invited to share information with the Reviewer. A statement was issued on the Diocese of Ely Website which gave options for people to contact the Reviewer or the Diocese to express interest. Separate questions were asked of survivors and victims’ to determine their experience of the Diocese of Ely safeguarding processes and survivor support.

There was a total of 10 participants, with 3 of these individuals identifying as a survivor.

¹ 1 IICSA Anglican Church Investigation Report 2020 - <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/publications/investigation/anglican-church/executive-summary>

Summary of findings:

Strengths

The information gathered by this review has demonstrated a high number of strengths in all areas of the Diocese of Ely's Safeguarding arrangements. The proactivity in developing safe and conducive environment for disclosure and in supporting parishes to achieve this is commendable.

This is facilitated through strong safeguarding training provision. Engagement from senior team to parishes in the training provision was noted as well as a commitment to support those who may require additional support to enable their attendance.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Team were found to have a wide breadth of experience and safeguarding knowledge. Their professionalism was highlighted by survivors who reported feeling validated, supported and taken seriously. This was further supported with the observation that, "there is a culture of listening and support including in the local church."

One of the key benefits observed across the practice of the team was the value of reflective practice. There is a strong process to help gain feedback from survivors at the end of their involvement with the diocese, coupled with further opportunities for team reflection created at DSA group level meetings, team meeting and supervision.

Positive relationships with multi-agency partners were identified, providing positive accountability and scrutiny from external bodies, such as Cambridgeshire Statutory services. This is one example of how the importance of ensuring healthy, compassionate and safe cultures, which facilitate disclosures, threads through the organisation from top to bottom.

There are number of formal systems for data about safeguarding compliance to be gathered by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. The Archdeacon's Articles of Enquiry including questions about safeguarding are undertaken annually. The Parish Dashboard is a really useful source of current information where parishes are engaged and use the Dashboard. It was recognised that there was a priority to continue to push the uptake of Dashboard in order to get a wider picture of compliance with minimum standards. Where standards are not met the safeguarding team are able to offer parish focused support to improve compliance.

The review found that there is a clear understanding at all levels of the potential for misuse of power, bullying and harassment, coercion and control at all levels. Where there are breakdowns in relationships, there is the appropriate expert support available. Wider support and advocacy were key in multiple areas. Support is survivor-led, with strong clinical as well as financial support being available. This includes third party engagement where needed to help ensure the survivor's voice is heard in a way that respects their wishes, for example if they did not wish to address this directly through the church. This same survivor focus is extended to the apology process. The review found evidence of genuine apologies being made, which presented as undefended and sincere.

This strategic priority and leadership given to both safeguarding and survivor support is worthy of note. It is important that the strengths of the organisation are recognised as these need to be maintained and used as solid foundations for further development.

Aspirations

Those interviewed were asked for aspirations that they had for safeguarding and survivor support. This has been useful in determining strategic focus and has been useful in demonstrating the culture, values and appetite for continued quality safeguarding and further development of survivor support and voice within the Diocese of Ely. It is recognised that there needs to be realism here in relation to the challenging environment around resources, capacity within the Diocese of Ely and in most Dioceses.

This information clearly demonstrates a common aim across the Diocese and will be useful in any change management and interventions in developing survivor support and voice within the Diocese.

Key aspects that arose in relation to Survivor Voice included, the development of survivor narratives (for example, how does the Diocese respond when things go wrong? What stories do they tell about themselves?), importance of collecting ideas from survivors on what the diocese can do better and to become more survivor led; being keen and willing to have 'what matters' conversations with survivors. It was also identified that using the 'If I told You What Would You Do?' videos and resources created by Diocese of Newcastle and Safe Spaces as an aspiration would be a useful recommendation. Alongside this, creating a safeguarding champion role with the staffing and resources to allow this to be successful, was noted as important.

Key aspects that arose in relation to Survivor Support included, the possibility that support is available without question and without time limit. The 12-month cut off that there was previously in place in relation to making a Clergy Disciplinary Complaint, put survivors under pressure to disclose prior to the 12-month cliff edge. It was also identified that people are taken seriously from the outset. They are listened to and heard and a recognition that their story is important. Furthermore, there was an aspiration to having information available of survivor reviewed services to signpost to, including counselling services. In relation to support person work there is a real risk that as a support person they will never be used. There is therefore a plea for there to be a cross diocesan regional bank of all support persons, so that skills can be used and retained. It is also recognised that there is good communication to ensure that survivors are totally informed on progress in investigations and in terms of arranging support. With regards to Safe Spaces, it is important that feedback and link is maintained throughout the support process. One comment made summarises this section well: "To apply resources to restoring peoples present and future to give back power over their lives, to restore trust in human relationships and give them hope. The opposite of faith is not doubt but despair. The aspiration I would have, is to move them from despair to hope." Key aspects in relation to support for Staff and Clergy identified the need and usefulness of clinical supervision (for DST) and also supervision and support opportunities for reflective practice for clergy, and also for there to be greater support for those staff working from home.

Key aspects in relation to moving from reactive to proactive safeguarding identified that aspiration that people will not have been abused in the first place. Some members of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team did express a desire to spend more time on proactive safeguarding and survivor support rather than dealing with very low safeguarding concerns where an alternative process may be more productive. Many were keen to further develop parish focused support.

Key aspects in relation to capacity and resources identified the usefulness of having an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor and a part time trainer/ domestic abuse trainer which would help in taking some of the pressure off. The need for a clearer domestic abuse link within the Diocese was also identified. It was also noted that there is a realism in relation to outcomes, timescales and the expectations are managed within the limited resources and capacity within the Church of England. It is therefore vital that the first encounter of survivors is with those that know the sector and are able to communicate and manage those expectations at an early stage. This also involves being able to manage the expectations around practice from the NST.

Challenges

There are challenges as the Diocese of Ely exists within a set of complex relationships both in the Church of England structure, within the Diocese and within the wider secular world (as do all Dioceses). There are challenges around resources and capacity in the face of increased demand for safeguarding and survivor support. There is also a key challenge around the breadth of definition of safeguarding and managing expectations around this. A key challenge is seen in the alignment of multiple processes that the DST are responsible for. These challenges should be considered in the planning of change and the further development of survivor support and voice within the Diocese of Ely.

A few key aspects identified as challenges include the breadth of Safeguarding Definition and wider work for DST. The width and perception/communication of what defines safeguarding was critical. This also then leads to the management of expectations from across the board and the breadth of work it lays out for the safeguarding team. It was recognised that there needs to be clear communication of multiple non safeguarding processes that can be used to deal with concerns; and also, where possible an alignment of multiple other processes. E.g. safeguarding, complaints, HR, Practice and Conduct issues, whistleblowing, DBS, practice concerns etc including matters relating to disability adjustments.

With regards to resources, capacity and complex and challenging relationships, it was noted that there is a downward pressure on budget. Defending and adequately resourcing safeguarding was identified as absolutely key. It is recognised that for many Dioceses their finances are on a knife edge. As not all parishes are equal and complex relationships exist with parishes, it was noted that there is a need to develop capacity within smaller parishes.

With regards to culture, it was noted that maintaining and continually developing culture is difficult and challenging, more so with levels of clerical deference. Therefore, it was noted as important to capture where things were going well, affirming this and using as best practice

example for others. There can be a tendency to focus on where things have gone wrong. One can equally learn from what is being done well.

With regards to ensuring the breadth of survivor voice, it was noted that it is important to get a breadth of survivor voices, included that of smaller groups who sometimes may not have full representation (e.g., LGBTQ+). This would require making use of national Church of England survivor groups in order to gather survivor voice of smaller groups at scale and then feeding this through to Diocese and parish level. Allowing all survivors opportunity to input into survivor voice in a way that is comfortable for them is essential. This also includes having a balance of survivor voice with other stakeholder voice

Areas of Development

This section discusses areas of development rather than areas of improvement in recognition that the Diocese of Ely is building on strong foundations of effective safeguarding processes. This also recognises that the development of survivor support and survivor voice is a relatively new development for the Church of England. It also needs to be recognised that the strategic priority given to survivor support and voice, and the fact that the Diocese of Ely has commissioned this piece of work demonstrates the commitment to survivors in the Diocese of Ely.

There are a number of areas of development for the Diocese of Ely to consider as they develop their strategy for survivor support and survivor voice.

Please see below for details. These serve as the recommendations from this review:

- 1. A. Safeguarding Definition, clarity of criteria/ thresholds between areas of DST work and how cases may move between these processes.**
 - B. Communication of these processes and management of expectations for survivors.**

To develop a clear document outlining the different areas of work for the DST. This document could:

- Define what is safeguarding, what is HR, what is a practice concern e.g., reasonable adjustments for disability.
 - What criteria is used?
 - Where do overlaps exist?
 - What factors de-escalate/ escalate a situation?
- 2. A. Vexatious complaints policy**
 - B. Victims who may pose a risk**
 - C. Survivors who engage in abusive behaviours themselves**

It would be useful to develop a vexatious complaints policy.

In addition, some communication of minimum standards of behaviour towards staff would be useful. In a similar way that one finds clear messaging in the NHS around unacceptable

behaviour and the consequences of this, this may be useful as a proactive means of managing some of these behaviours.

3. Continue to further develop Parish Safeguarding Support

Parish Focused Support is an excellent initiative and the further development of this should be considered.

It is recognised that each Parish has different needs. There does need to be some balance here as an individual response to each parish could become very resource intensive.

DST should consider developing a menu of options that parishes can access e.g. bespoke training, review, audit, risk assessment, support around compliance, team around the parish, opportunities for support and supervision for reflective practice etc. This would allow for a tailored approach/ individual parish response without the same level of resource and capacity issues.

4. Congregational bullying of clergy.

Consideration should be given to developing a Clergy and Congregation Conduct Charter. This could set clear expectations of behaviour of congregation to clergy. This could send a clear message to all that healthy Christian culture is the responsibility of all.

In addition, some communication of minimum standards of behaviour towards clergy and lay staff would be useful. In a similar way that we find clear messaging in the NHS around unacceptable behaviour and the consequences of this, this may be useful as a proactive means of managing some of these behaviours.

5. Awareness and Confidence raising in Whistleblowing

The DSAP have recognised that there is a need to raise awareness of the Whistleblowing and Complaints policy. There is a plan to run a campaign to raise awareness around this. Consideration could be given to developing a concerns, complaints, suggestions, and compliments campaign to capture some positive feedback as well.

It may be worth considering a wider range of options for communication phone, web form, letter etc. At events consider having suggestion and compliments box etc. Demonstrate an intentional communication plan.

This engagement and communication campaign should form part of the engagement strategy.

It would be worth the Diocese considering reviewing the Whistleblowing and Complaints policy to reassure themselves that the issues raised about support for those that whistleblow or raising concerns are adequately addressed within the policy. These issues were related to the difficulty of those named as giving support facing a number of barriers or conflicts in giving that support e.g., line management conflict, protecting independence for potential later disciplinary processes etc. There may be potential for cross diocese working here.

6. Ensuring consistency of safe and conducive environment especially gender and sexuality issues and theological positions

Ensuring consistency across parishes is a real challenge.

Survivors had very different response from their parishes and between parish and diocese.

This is a challenging area and is going to need to continued work. The Diocese may need to consider an audit process to determine the level of and exact nature of issues in this area. Further intelligence in this area may bring some clarity as to the way forward, the necessary actions and potentially some solutions.

In this area of work a focus on theological position and providing a safe and conducive environment for disclosure cannot be mutually exclusive

Intelligence from survivor voice would be useful here, in – contributing to the knowledge of parishes. It would be useful to consider how survivor voice and congregation voice could feed into risk-based visiting/ parish focused support. Needs to be consistent response and LGBTQ+ response is needed in some areas

7. Create Survivor Champion/ Ambassador Role – what does it need to deliver?

The concept of a Survivor Champion/Ambassador would be an excellent consideration. This role could be a key conduit for intelligence from Survivors.

The Diocese should carefully think through the purpose of the role to ensure that maximum potential is achieved in the role.

Some potential areas for the role to cover would be:

- Collecting and sharing survivor narratives.
- Getting feedback from survivors on Safeguarding and Support Practice and Process – what is useful and what is not.
- This may provide opportunity for a more independent supervision of support persons
- Facilitating the sharing of wider survivor voice from national networks/initiatives especially LGBTQI+ community and communicating this through the Diocese and out to parishes.
- Quality assurance of survivor resources and developing a wider menu of support and counselling services that have a level of quality assurance.
- Feeding in survivor voice to policy review and service development and at all levels
- Longitudinal engagement with survivors and also after process has concluded.
- Developing Information, resources, and engagement with survivors

Communication and feedback to survivors about the impact/ outcome their voice has had on service delivery/ culture etc.

8. Communication of Lessons Learned Review to PSOs and to clergy across Diocese more intentionally

Consideration should be given to communicating the messages from Lessons Learned Reviews to PSOs and to clergy. There are already a number of processes in place to share safeguarding messages and the addition of practice messages in this area will be of benefit.

9. a. Supervision and Support for clergy. b. Reflection opportunities

Consideration should be given to the business case for offering clergy regular supervision, support and reflection opportunities. This is recognised to have significant resource implications and this need to be recognised.

c. Training support for survivors – consideration of safeguarding

It would be useful to consider a process for highlighting training delegates who may struggle or be triggered by some safeguarding training content.

It would be useful to consider some further equipping of trainers or support arrangements in training may be useful where we know survivors will attend. The expectation of the survivor approaching the trainer with concerns in front of others or when packing away may be unrealistic.

One potential solution suggested by a survivor was to develop a supportive environment for survivors to train. This could develop on existing initiatives such as Safeguarding Training Parties and practice of giving options to survivors for training. There are resource implications here and it may be that creative and balanced solutions can be found.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident from this review that the Diocese of Ely has a strong strategic and thematic leadership in relation to safeguarding and survivor support. There is strong engagement and partnership working and this is seen at all levels through DSAP and the DST. Safeguarding Training has a high strategic priority.

This all results in a Diocese where in the majority of parishes there is a safe and conducive environment for disclosure. There is clear audit and monitoring of compliance and culture to enable constructive challenge to be undertaken where necessary. There is an excellent initiative of Parish Focused Support that facilitates that constructive challenge in a supportive way.

There is a clear aspiration in the Diocese of Ely to move to more proactive safeguarding and to further develop survivor support and voice within the organisation.

There is a recognition of the challenges of resource, capacity, and the complex and challenging relationships and environment that the Diocese works within. Addressing the constant challenge of setting and maintaining culture is recognised as an ongoing and important priority. There is a wider challenge that is seen across all Safeguarding Teams in relation to the breadth of the Safeguarding definition and the need for clarity of communication of the limits and boundaries to the definition and to multiple other areas of work that the DST are responsible for.

The term 'areas of development' recognises that the areas where further work is needed are not short comings but are building on strong foundations in a new area of development and work within the Church of England. The commissioning of this Review and the aspiration for better survivor support systems and the embedding of survivor voice in the organisation is credit to all in the Diocese of Ely.

The areas of development touch on every area of the Diocese from further development of Parish Focused Support, through consideration of the breadth of the safeguarding definition to creation of a Survivor Champion. These areas of development also encompass all who come into contact with the Diocese from parishes and congregations, survivors, trainees, clergy and the Diocesan staff.

These areas of development, when implemented with consideration of the aspirations and challenges within the Diocese, will give the opportunity for any change and development to be managed well. This will give the Diocese of Ely the maximum opportunity to blaze a trail and to set the standard for safeguarding, survivor support and a survivor voice that impacts future service delivery within the Diocese of Ely and potentially beyond.

This Executive Summary has been compiled by Karen Eakins (Head of Safeguarding, thirtyone:eight) in consultation with Simon Plant, the author of the main Report.

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