

## Working with Sensitive Matters

Guidance for working with survivors of abuse and in managing disclosure  
(For Candidates in the discernment process with Vocations Advisers)

### The purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to show transparently how the Vocations & Training Team will deal with disclosures from survivors of abuse, and how we provide support. This is a guide for both Vocations Advisers and Candidates. Candidates are not expected to discuss sensitive matters with Vocations Advisers however, if candidates choose to share personal life experiences that relate to safeguarding, this document shows how those matters will be addressed by the Vocations and Training Team. This document is shared publicly so that candidates know what to expect from the Vocations & Training Team, which includes Vocations Advisers.

Below is our commitment to those who disclose abuse in the process of discernment with Vocations Advisers. Whether the abuse is recent or happened many years ago, we want to, and aim to, respond to survivors in a caring and supportive manner whilst ensuring church safety and compliance with the law.

### How we respond to disclosure:

- Vocations Advisers will listen and believe. They will always start their relationship from a point of believing the candidate making a disclosure. They will be sensitive, compassionate and always show care.
- Whether the abuse is recent or has happened a long time ago, Vocations Advisers are obligated to share the disclosure with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and the Bishop's Director of Ordinands. Confidentiality is kept within the Vocations and Training Team.
- Vocations Advisers have a duty of care to you and others. If you share information regarding potential harm to yourself or others, Vocations Advisers are obligated to share this information with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.
- Where Vocations Advisers are given information by candidates that indicates a church, group of people or an individual are unsafe, they are obligated to share this information with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. Vocations Advisers will not share information with people who do not need to know.

- Vocations Advisers will need to contact authorities and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team where a crime may have been committed or a current risk to others is identified.
- Vocations Advisers, with support from the Vocations & Training Team, will always look to provide pastoral support for candidates who make a disclosure.
- Unless advised by a professional or care giver that it will cause harm, the Diocese will follow up a historic concern. If the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) has the information as to who a survivor is, they will make every effort to speak with that person. The DST will be sensitive, compassionate and always show care.
- The Law and Church rules do require us to report suspected crime or situations of potential harm to statutory agencies such as Social Care or the Police. We will be transparent with survivors about this.
- The DST will assist survivors seeking to acquire information required to support legal claims against church or insurance for abuse. DST will check files and records and be transparent about any relevant information.
- DST will record survivors' information sensitively, appropriately and securely. We will only disclose information if a crime has been committed, if we need to share information to keep others safe or if requested to by a consenting adult, parent or guardian.
- Records may be disclosed to statutory workers with a relevant 'Request for information' under data legislation.

### **Pastoral Care**

Everyone involved in the discernment process has received the appropriate safeguarding training and continues to grow in their professional development. We are committed to ensuring the safety of those who have experienced abuse as they journey through the discernment process. Pastoral Care is of the utmost importance to us.

Vocations Advisers will consider approaching the Bishop's Director of Ordinands with a request to fund clinical support from a qualified counsellor or psychologist where a person is unable to source support via health services, social care, or another route.

## Methods for candidates to make contact with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team

If you would value an early conversation with a member of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team to process any emotions this may raise or for support, please contact our safeguarding team. Any of the following methods can be used.

- Ask your parish priest or safeguarding co-ordinator to refer.
- Use contact form on the website:  
<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/safeguarding/>
- Telephone 9 to 5 Monday to Friday – 01543 306 030
- Out of Hours (including weekends) – 0303 003 1111
- Email: [safeguarding@lichfield.anglican.org](mailto:safeguarding@lichfield.anglican.org)

For the full Diocesan policy please visit:

<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/safeguarding-resources/>

For the Church of England safeguarding policy please visit:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/promoting-safer-church>

If you would value talking to someone outside the Diocese for support, please contact:

Child abuse - Survivors ([supportline.org.uk](http://supportline.org.uk)).

With very best wishes,

The Revd Romita Shrisunder, Bishop's Director of Ordinands &  
Neil Spiring, Senior Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser