

Diocesan Core Groups FAQs

Thank you for agreeing to attend a core group. The FAQs are designed to explain the reason and operation of core groups. If you have further questions, please do talk to the safeguarding team.

What are core groups for?

The Church needs to have in place a fair process for responding to safeguarding concerns or allegations against a church officer (respondent) who has a role with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults. A church officer is anyone appointed/elected by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid. When there is a safeguarding concern or allegation against a church officer the safeguarding team will review the referral and convene a core group.

The core group process concerns the assessment of risk. It is not concerned with establishing if respondents are guilty or not. The core group needs to decide if the risk to children and vulnerable adults means the person should be suspended from their current role or are there measures that can and should be put in place to manage this risk.

Who attends Diocesan core groups?

Diocesan Officers: The Area Safeguarding Adviser and the Archdeacon or Associate Archdeacon. Other diocesan senior staff may attend if relevant to the case and legal advice may be sought from the Diocesan Registrar.

Parish Officers: The incumbent, churchwardens, parish safeguarding officer and other relevant parties by agreement.

Statutory services: Statutory services representation will be sought where there is a statutory investigation.

Other Organisations/Employment: If a church officer is involved in other organisations/employment then representatives from these organisations may attend.

If anyone carrying out these roles is the subject of the allegation or has any conflict of interest or loyalty such as:

- Close friend of the respondent and/or the victim/survivor
- is witness in the investigation
- are pastorally supporting the respondent and/or the victim/survivor

They should not be included in the core group.

What happens in a core group?

There are three main subject areas that are covered in core groups:

- Risk
- Support
- Information sharing

Risk

There will be discussion around the risk the person may or may not present and whether there needs to be an interim safeguarding agreement (ISA) in place to manage this risk. The interim

safeguarding agreement will be in place while an investigation and risk assessment are carried out and that will determine if there is need for an on-going safeguarding agreement (SA).

Support

The core group will explore support which may need to be put in place for the church officer, the victim/survivor and their families. The core group will seek to arrange a link person to support the church officer and a support person to support the victim/survivor as well as whether there is a need for further support for the victim/survivor.

Information Sharing

The core group will also discuss if any information needs to be shared with other agencies and if there is need for involvement from the Diocesan Communications Department, for example if a statement to the parish is required or if there is the possible of media interest.

What happens after a core group?

A dedicated note taker for the core group will be appointed and will circulate the minutes to all attendees of the core group.

Any actions or decisions agreed will be recorded by the note taker and undertaken within the timescales agreed by the core group.

Information from the core group will be shared with both the church officer, survivor and impacted persons (if appropriate) via the Area Safeguarding Advisor or the Archdeacon/Associate. Please do check with the Area Safeguarding Advisor before sharing information.

If it has been decided that there needs to be an internal investigation, interim safeguarding agreement (ISA), risk assessment or safeguarding agreement (SA) these will be actioned following the core group.

Please do contact the safeguarding team if you feel that you would like support following a core group. Distressing information may be shared in core groups and safeguarding processes can have a significant impact on individuals and parishes.