

DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH
Safeguarding Office

SAFEGUARDING STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
2021 - 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Implementation Plan sets out the purpose, priorities and essential activities for safeguarding within the Diocese of Plymouth up to April 2022.

It was created by the Safeguarding Coordinator in discussion with the rest of the safeguarding team and the Sub-Committee of Trustees.

The purpose of safeguarding is to prevent, respond to and repair abuse within the Catholic Church in Plymouth Diocese. This endeavour enables the mission of the Church through building trust, respect and belief in the Church as an institution.

In the last year, both the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and the Elliott Review of Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in England and Wales have reported on the current state of safeguarding. Both have highlighted the need for transformational reform: to make safeguarding central to each Diocese's mission; to improve safeguarding, particularly with regard to the response to victims/ survivors; to increase accountability; and to evidence good practice.

This is an opportunity for the Diocese to take action and to communicate its commitment to safeguarding.

The priorities that arise from this need for transformation are to: refocus on safeguarding; ensure appropriate resources and systems; continually learn and develop; and put victims/ survivors at the heart of all we do.

The Implementation Plan highlights the actions that are needed to meet the fundamental expectations arising from the national reviews and that the Diocese should hold. The Plan should ensure that we meet the essential standards expected of us by the new Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency. Actions include: establishing the Sub-Committee; delivering essential training; supporting Parishes; having a strategy for victim/ survivor support; having a communications plan; and developing a clear audit process.

The Implementation Plan relies on three elements of resourcing:

1. Input to the supervision of staff and audit of case work – this has already been agreed by Trustees and should be in place by September.
2. A dedicated resource to support victims/ survivors which will free up capacity in the small team to undertake other strategic work – the rationale for this is set out in the Structural Plan.
3. Trustee input to the Sub-Committee including a Trustee to take up the role of Chair for the next term – at least two more Trustees with an interest in and some experience of safeguarding are needed.

The Sub-Committee commends this Implementation Plan to the Board of Trustees. We ask the Trustees to approve the resources requested in the Structural Plan and to agree a plan for the recruitment of additional Trustees. We recommend that the Bishop and Trustees communicate the developments in safeguarding to the Church community.

Geraldine Nosowska

Vice Chair Safeguarding Sub Committee of Trustees

INTRODUCTION

In May 2019 Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Letter entitled [Vox Estis Lux Mundi](#) (You are the Light of the World) regarding the Church's handling of issues relating to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. At the same time society in England and Wales as a whole was being held to account by the [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse \(IICSA\)](#) in respect of how a wide variety of organisations, including faith, groups failed victims and survivors and in many cases placed the needs of the organisation above the need to acknowledge and address the pain and hurt caused to those individuals. This abuse, and failure to tackle it effectively, has occurred over many decades. Abuse in any form must not be tolerated and, for the Church, protecting those hurt by abuse and addressing that pain goes to the heart of Christian values.

In addition, the Catholic Church in England and Wales commissioned an independent review in 2020, [The Elliot Review](#). Coming out of the review is a series of recommendations relating to both national and local structures and to both diocesan and consecrated life. We need to effectively respond to this.

A key aspect of moving forward is the development of a standards-based approach, set out in the Elliot review, ensuring that effective leadership at all levels, accountability and the maintenance of the highest of standards is achieved across the Diocese.

In cases where we fail to reach these standards, swift and appropriate action must be taken to address any failings or shortcomings.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. ENSURING THAT SAFEGUARDING IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

We must ensure that safeguarding is everyone's business, it is at the centre of the Church's mission. It is nothing new and should not only be driven by personal and societal needs, but should be seen as a theological imperative, an authentic part of ministry and mission and an exercise in charity and of justice, helping the Church to remain faithful to its mandate.

2. HAVING IN PLACE APPROPRIATE RESOURCES AND SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE SAFEGUARDING

We must be "organisationally fit", having in place appropriate resources to develop and deliver safeguarding, to support Church leaders at all levels in their responsibilities and to reach out and support those who have been hurt by abuse, wherever that abuse occurred.

We must always respond with dignity and respect and with an informed understanding.

We must ensure that all those in ministry are aware of their responsibilities and are equipped to deal with any concerns that might be raised, as well as being provided with all relevant and appropriate professional support.

3. LEARNING, DEVELOPING AND EVOLVING

We must continue to learn, develop and evolve. Recent years have seen significant advancements in our understanding of not only how and why abusers operate but also the devastating and ongoing impact that such abuse has on victims and survivors. In addition, we further understand the traumatic effect on victims and survivors, particularly where complaints are handled badly or ignored.

We must continue to be a learning and reflective organisation which constantly looks both outwards and inwards, redefining its approaches as our understanding and organisational consciousness evolves over time.

4. VICTIM AND SURVIVOR CENTRIC APPROACHES

We must proactively seek out and support those hurt by abuse wherever and in whatever form it occurs, listening to their voice and using it to inform our practice.

The Lord is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble (Psalms 9:9)

HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS - OUR PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Our initial target is to ensure that fundamentals are in place by April 2022 when we will undertake the first annual review of this plan. The plan will be reviewed against standards set by the Catholic Standards Safeguarding Agency and will be modified appropriately should development and changes in those standards take place.

The time line set out is dependent on a number of key factors which are central, these being;

1. The movement of the Safeguarding Commission to a Sub-Committee of the Trustees. This ensures that there are direct lines of accountability around the delivery of safeguarding. This transfer has been undertaken and whilst further work is required, this is reflected in the plan below.
2. Ensuring that the main safeguarding function of the diocese is appropriately resourced to deliver the plan as set out. Without this resourcing being in place, the plan fails. The associated document **FUTURE STRUCTURE TO SUPPORT SAFEGUARDING IN THE DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH** sets out the case for this restructuring.

With the above two conditions met, the plan set out below is in my professional opinion challenging but achievable.

No	Action Required	Comment	Responsible	Initial Target Date
STRUCTURAL				
1	Trustees to agree plan	Plan to be agreed, hopefully in its entirety	Trustees	30 th July 2021
2	Structural Plan for Safeguarding Office to be agreed	Resourcing and Structural plan to be agreed	Trustees, proposed by COO/Chair of Safeguarding Sub-Committee	30 th July 2021
3	Resourcing and structural changes to be made as agreed by Trustees	Implementation of 2 above	COO/Safeguarding Coordinator	30 th October 2021
4	Safeguarding Sub-Committee of Trustees – review and update Trustee representation	Ongoing	Trustees	Review October 2021 and June 2022 to be finalised October 2022
5	Safeguarding Sub-Committee of Trustees – review specialist advisors	Ongoing	Chair of Sub-Committee	Review October and then ongoing
TRAINING				
6	Development of a detailed training plan	Defining training aims. Timescales for provision and route map moving forward	Safeguarding Caseworker (Training)	31 st December 2021
7	Delivery of training to key parish roles for 2021 (Clergy and Safeguarding Reps)	Key aspects a. <i>Caring Safely for Others</i> , codes of conduct and boundaries. b. Impact of IICSA and Elliot c. Diocesan Strategy 2021 – 2024 with key focus on communications and responding to the needs of victims d. Future training requirements	Safeguarding Caseworker (Training)	30 th September 2021
PARISH DEVELOPMENT				
8	Undertake a Parish Audit to ensure standards are being adhered to, identify areas of weakness and where additional support is required	Consider best practice elsewhere	Safeguarding Caseworker (Parish Support)	30 th October 2021

9	Consider all roles in Parish with direct connection with children and adults at risk, agree role description and training requirement for that role	In the interim, implement training and retraining for all roles at point the DBS is required	Safeguarding Caseworkers (Training and Parish Support)	30 th March 2022
10	Development of a diocesan Standard for delivery of safeguarding in parishes linked to the national standards	Linked to Parish Audit	Safeguarding Caseworker (Parish Support)	30 th March 2022
SUPPORTING VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS				
11	Develop an agreed strategy for the support of victims and survivors, to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to complaints • Providing additional support • Development of victim support and advisory groups • Working with victim's groups • Communications 	Subject to approval of Trustees and having specialist support person in post	Safeguarding Caseworker (V/S and Communications)	30 th March 2022
12	Develop a communications plan, looking at specifically at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How we reach out to victims • How we promote all aspects of safeguarding in the diocese • Particularly Information provided on the diocesan website • Information provided in other formats i.e., Parish Newsletters, communications from Bishop's Office and communications from Safeguarding Office 		Safeguarding Caseworker (V/S and Communications)	March 2022
AUDIT AND SUPERVISION				
13	Develop an internal audit programme to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • case review (ensuring ongoing 	Review operational delivery against standards	Safeguarding Coordinator and Vice-Chair of	October 2021

	compliance with standards) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Welfare • Parish Audits 		Safeguarding Sub-Committee	
	PLAN REVIEW			
14	The plan to be reviewed annually and, if appropriate, modified. Also link to budget setting and feedback from CSSA	Formal review to be set at end of financial year. Any issues in the interim to be picked up by Trustee Sub-Committee	Chair of Sub Committee and Trustees	Review 1 31 st March 2022 Review 2 31 st March 2023 Review 3 (Final) 2024
15	Produce an Annual Safeguarding Report	Coincide with formal plan review – public document	Chair/ Vice Chair of Sub-Committee and Safeguarding Coordinator	