



Diocese of  
**R**ochester

*Proclaiming the Word and Work of God*

# **Responding Positively to those who have Suffered Sexual Abuse**

## **Diocesan Guidance and Good Practice for Pastoral Care within Parishes**

**First edition: February 2012**

*This document is subject to revision*

 **THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND**

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP OF ROCHESTER

Sex offenders are present in all cultures regardless of age, gender, ethnicity and religious affiliation. Therefore it is imperative to promote good safeguarding principles and we should not be naïve when working with charismatic individuals who are personable and use their inter-personal skills to manipulate us.

Contrary to popular belief, research shows that children are far more likely to be sexually abused by someone they know than by a stranger. The most common abuser is a member of the child's family or a friend or neighbour, but the Church recognises that it can be a refuge for those who have perpetrated abuse and see church membership as an opportunity to be close to children and vulnerable adults in order to continue their devious and predatory patterns of behaviour. It is important to acknowledge that abuse has been perpetrated by some clergy and others within the Church and that some officials within the Church use their position of power over the vulnerable.

The Diocese of Rochester will respond positively and responsibly to all victims who have had to endure sexual abuse. We recognise the long painful journey these victims have to travel and some never reach their journey's end. We must acknowledge the pain and suffering of the victim and their partner, family and friends, as well as the person hearing the disclosure. We must also be aware that other members of the congregation may be affected through past experiences or conflict of loyalties that may arise within the Church community, causing division.

The Diocese will assist parishes when dealing with the complexities and issues that impact on survivors of sexual abuse, thus requiring different approaches at different times throughout their recovery.

The following guidance has been written in order to support parishes in their duty to provide a culture that shows compassion, support and commitment to anyone disclosing sexual abuse and should be read in conjunction with the following Diocesan Policies, Procedures, Good Practice and Guidance:

*The Protection and Safeguarding of Children 2012*

*The Protection and Safeguarding of Adults when they are Vulnerable 2012*

*Careful Recruitment and Selection Guidance 2012*

*Responding Appropriately to Domestic Abuse 2012*

## THEOLOGICAL APPROACH

Children are innocent; they trust and have a desire to please, each one is precious in the sight of God and we have a duty to protect and safeguard those entrusted to us. Often the victim has had to suffer further hurt when they have taken the risk and broken the silence only to find family, friends or even someone in the Church has not been able to cope with the disclosure and has responded inappropriately. Sometimes they have been met with disbelief and told to hold their counsel as the consequence would result in shame upon the Church or a prominent member of the congregation.

Victims should not be placed in a position where they are made to feel more guilt or be judged by their disclosure. If we judge them and make them feel less valued, we devalue God's teaching. We must therefore examine our hearts and actions and ask forgiveness for any injustice we have been part of, or for our failure to act through disbelief which has compounded their suffering

The Church should provide a culture that gives confidence and reassurance that everyone will be treated with the respect that is due to all human beings made in the image of God and precious to God. The Church should provide an environment where the victims can feel empowered, safe and supported, making recovery possible. We can gain great knowledge and humility from listening to our survivors who want to be believed and helped. It takes courage to disclose and survivors want to be heard and have their pain acknowledged.

It is our Christian duty to give pastoral care to sex offenders who wish to worship and be part of the congregation. Through frank discussion they need to be clear of set boundaries and the management of that process, in order to support them in their quest to seek a non-abusive way of life. It should also be recognised that they may have suffered physical, emotional or sexual abuse themselves.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In spite of increased awareness, child sex abuse remains a serious issue. A Study of the Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect in 2000 by P Cawson, et al. stated that 1 in 6 children are sexual abused before they reach the age of 16. Three quarters of children who are abused do not tell anyone about their ordeal and many keep their secret all their lives.

In 2002 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland published a report "Time for Action: Sexual Abuse, the Churches and a New Dawn for Survivors". The Church has since become increasingly aware of the need to minister to those who have been abused and protect from those who abuse.

In 2009 The Church of England completed an extensive exercise reviewing the outcomes of the Church's handling of past concerns about child protection. The review – believed to be the most comprehensive of its type – involved analysis of more than 40,000 diocesan files dating back more than 30 years, with independent reviewers appointed in each of the Church of England's 44 dioceses. These reviewers conducted comprehensive surveys of personnel files held on diocesan staff, clergy, and lay ministers.

Following the historic past cases review, the Diocese of Chichester commissioned a report by Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss which was published in May 2011, the aim of the report being to undertake two case reviews of child abuse allegations against two priests who had served in the diocese. See pages 17-19 for the report's recommendations.

Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors (MACSAS) published the findings of their first survey conducted in 2010, highlighting how allegations of clergy and minister sexual abuse/exploitation have been handled by church authorities and the support and redress offered to victims. The report published in May 2011 was entitled "The Stones Cry Out".

Subsequently, the Joint Safeguarding Liaison Group for both the Church of England and Methodist Church responded to the Butler-Sloss and MACSAS reports by issuing Safeguarding Lessons to be Learned (Autumn 2011). See pages 20-24.

All the above reports will help to improve the Church's safeguarding policies, procedures and good practice and assist the Church to respond constructively and appropriately when dealing with survivors.

The House of Bishops released Responding Well to those who have been sexually abused, Policy and guidance for the Church of England, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 2011. This document should be read in conjunction with:

Protecting All God's Children (safeguarding policy for children and young people, 4th edition, November 2010)

Promoting a safe church (safeguarding policy for adults, 2006)

Responding to domestic abuse (guidelines for those with pastoral responsibility, 2006)

Safeguarding Guidelines relating to Safer Recruitment (interim policy, November 2010)

## **DIOCESAN RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMITMENT**

The Diocese will respond positively and in a constructive manner assisting all parishes where there has been a disclosure of abuse made against a member of the clergy or church employee (paid or unpaid).

The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser will assist all parishes where there has been a disclosure not involving the clergy or church employee (paid or unpaid).

The National Safeguarding Adviser will be informed by the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser of any disclosure of abuse made against a member of the clergy or church employees (paid or unpaid).

The Diocese will carefully choose appropriate support and treatment for any person who has been abused by a member of the clergy or church employee (paid or unpaid). Due to the complex nature of sexual abuse, there is no one prescriptive course of treatment, therefore the Diocese will consider each disclosure on a case by case basis.

The Diocese will provide training and support for both clergy and employees (paid and unpaid) in safeguarding and responding appropriately to the disclosure of sexual abuse.

The Diocese will undertake and assist all parishes with communications and media involvement through the diocesan Communications Department.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser will assist all parishes with the compilation and monitoring of any safeguarding agreement.

The Diocese will seek to offer pastoral care and support, including supervision and referral to statutory authorities, of any member of the church community known to have offended against a child or adult.

It is diocesan policy that anyone convicted of or who has accepted a caution, reprimand or warning for a sexual offence against a child or adult will not be permitted to work, in a paid or unpaid position which may bring them into contact with any vulnerable group.

It is diocesan policy that all people with a blemished CRB disclosure will undergo a risk assessment from a suitably qualified person. The nature of the assessment will be proportionate to the information disclosed. Cases of a serious, complex or borderline nature will require a multi-disciplinary risk assessment panel.

## PARISH RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMITMENT

### **Each parish should:**

Ensure a safe environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults in line with Diocesan Policies, Procedures and Good Practice.

Ensure a culture of compassion and love allowing disclosure to be made without discrimination, judgement or shock.

Inform the Bishop, the Diocesan Secretary, the Bishop's Communications Officer and the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser of any "disclosures" or concerns of sexual improprieties relating to clergy and employees (paid or unpaid).

Encourage and promote training in safeguarding and recruitment management.

Ensure that pastoral support is available for all those who have suffered abuse.

Be aware of appropriate personnel within the church who can provide support and who understand the needs of those who have been abused.

Ensure that support is available for the listener or support worker.

Ensure safeguarding agreements are in place for all ex-offenders and that effective monitoring of the ex-offender takes place. See pages 54-56 of the diocesan policy The Protection and Safeguarding of Children 2012.

Ensure that pastoral care is available for perpetrators of sexual abuse. See pages 15-17 of the diocesan policy The Protection and Safeguarding of Children 2012.

## **LISTENING AND RESPONDING POSITIVELY**

Those who wish to disclose that they have experienced sexual abuse may try to do so within the context of a local church community, either to their priest or to another trusted individual. In order for someone who has survived sexual abuse in the past to tell another person their story, they will need to be able to trust the listener and be in a safe environment.

***It is imperative that when a survivor is ready to tell their story the listener must respond with great sensitivity and care.***

### **Hearing a child's disclosure of abuse**

If a child begins to speak of abuse then listen carefully in accordance with the procedures given on page 12 of the diocesan safeguarding policy The Protection and Safeguarding of Children 2012.

***As this is a child protection issue, seek the assistance of the police and then make a referral to children's social services. If a child needs emergency medical attention this should be sought immediately and directly from the emergency services.***

### **Listener's questions when hearing an adult disclosure:**

#### **Is the time and place appropriate?**

If not, care must be taken to assure the person making the disclosure that any suggested change is because there is a willingness to listen well but in a private environment. Do not suggest they come back another day or at another time and allow the survivor to tell the story in the words of her/his choice and at her/his own pace.

#### **Does another person need to be present?**

Check carefully that this is going to be acceptable to all involved.

#### **What do we mean by listener?**

The person listening should never venture into the area of counselling or giving advice unless they are trained. They are there to walk alongside the survivor at the survivor's own pace, providing friendship and support.

#### **What is the expectation of the person making the disclosure?**

They may simply want to be heard. On the other hand, they might be seeking further help or hoping for some action to be taken regarding the abuser if he or she is still alive.

#### **What should I do next?**

Stay calm!

Staying calm, but not distant can be hard when you are shocked, angry, disgusted or otherwise upset, but an overly emotional response creates a risk that the person may not tell everything about their abuse and may even retract the disclosure. It is acceptable to say to the discloser that you find the information distressing, shocking or disgusting, which will validate the experience of the discloser. Show that you take seriously all that you are

being told and you recognise that they have been deeply hurt. While it is clear that you are only hearing one side of a story, possibly the most important thing you can do for a victim of abuse is to let her or him know that you believe their statements. This is often a crucial factor, especially to those who have made a previous unsuccessful attempt to be heard.

### **What are the possible options for the survivor?**

Talk through in a calm manner what the possible options are.

If the incident is recent, is the person still at risk? Are others at risk?

Is there someone more competent to offer pastoral care or counselling?

Is this a matter that you should refer to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser or consult her/him about?

Take care if at all possible not to take the matter out of the hands of the person who has made the disclosure. Sexual abuse involves a loss of personal control, so be careful not to add to that, while remaining supportive.

If at all possible it should be jointly agreed to make contact with the police or other authorities.

If at all possible it is helpful to identify the abuser and their whereabouts, but do not insist as it may take several meetings to gain the confidence of the survivor before they are able to disclose. Often survivors will disclose once they gain confidence and understand they may be protecting someone else from a similar ordeal in the future.

Whether as a listener or as the person responsible for the provision of pastoral support, the person making the disclosure needs to know that you will continue to be there for them.

### **Confidentiality - children**

Do not promise confidentiality. You have a duty to refer any child or young person who may be at risk. It is important to remember that confidentiality is not keeping secrets; it is handling the information in a confidential manner.

### **Confidentiality - adults**

Offer confidentiality but be clear about the limits on confidentiality where there is any continuing risk/harm to others. An important part of recovery is for the abused adult to maintain control over their own history; therefore dilemmas can occur for the listener. However it is important to recognise that others may be at risk.

### **Awareness in worship**

Warm welcomes are appreciated by some, but survivors of abuse may find certain physical contact very uncomfortable. Sharing/passing the peace can be a threatening experience and environment especially with physical contact such as a hug. There should always be acceptance for someone to stay quietly seated without inappropriate gossip or comment afterwards

A survivor may not want to sit beside other members of the congregation and prefer a solitary place

Kneeling in front of others may invoke memories of abuse

Special services such as Mothering Sunday or Father's Day may be very difficult for the survivor; therefore advance notice of service content may be helpful preparation.

### **Record keeping and storage**

Good record keeping is fundamental. Accurate, clear and well organised records can assist in identifying patterns of inappropriate behaviour. It enables an audit trail, assisting in risk assessments and investigations, ensuring accountability and avoiding confusion.

Records should be kept secure and retained after the people concerned have left the diocese. Records of child protection matters should be kept, together with a note of the outcome. These should be retained even if the information received was judged to be malicious, unsubstantiated or unfounded.

### **Pastoral care**

The role of pastoral care of a victim of abuse should always be separated from anyone carrying out further investigations into the complaint.

The parish should not allow the victim of abuse and the abuser to meet or have the same support (individuals or groups). The survivor at a later date may want to confront the abuser, but in their own time and on their own terms.

Support and treatment should be offered. If the survivor refuses or feels unable to accept, they should be allowed to proceed at a later date.

***Allegations of historic sexual abuse must be responded to in the same way as contemporary allegations and not dismissed due to the passage of time.***

### **Treatment**

Children who disclose sexual abuse will always need specialist help.

Adults who disclose childhood abuse will require a varied approach to recovery as their needs differ. Some may have turned to alcohol, drugs, self-harm or suffer mental health issues, poor relationships and loss of faith. The impact varies from person to person

### **False allegations**

There can often be greater concern for someone who might be falsely accused. Fears that an allegation could be wrong should not distract from legitimate concern and action for those who disclose sexual abuse. Ensuring the investigative process is undertaken by the statutory authorities is the most effective way of proving if an allegation is false and is far more constructive than failing to respond.

### **Forgiveness**

Forgiving is never easy and abusers should not expect instant forgiveness from their victims.

The abused person should not be judged if they are never able to forgive.

Forgiveness by the abused person is a very difficult concept and does not negate the need for justice.

### **The impact on listeners**

The impact of disclosure on the listener should not be underestimated. Informed support needs to be given to those who listen to traumatic or disturbing accounts. All of us need to reflect carefully about how we respond and to increase self-awareness about the personal impact of these matters.

# **A P P E N D I C E S**

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **Sexual Abuse**

“Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children”. (Working together to safeguard children March 2010 HM Government)

### **Grooming**

“A transient feature that is difficult to capture and impossible to decide when it begins and when it ends. That said, it is not a new concept, and it is not restricted to online behaviour. It is generally seen as part of a cycle of abuse and broadly is the process of preparing a child for abuse. It can include, for instance, befriending a potential child victim to try to persuade the child to acquiesce to sexual activity. It can also involve building up trust with the adults that surround a child, in order to make that child more vulnerable. In a church context this can mean the building up of trust with the whole church ‘family’.” (Responding Well to those who have been sexually abused 1<sup>st</sup> edition 2011, House of Bishops)

### **Spiritual abuse**

“Spiritual abuse is not covered within the four-fold definition of abuse but is of concern both within and outside church communities.

Harm can be caused by the inappropriate use of religious belief or practice. This can include the misuse of the authority of leadership or penitential discipline, oppressive teaching or intrusive healing or deliverance ministries. Any of these can result in children experiencing physical, emotional or sexual harm. Religious beliefs and practices can also be deliberately twisted by a perpetrator to legitimise sexual abuse or to groom potential victims.

Those people who are abused by clergy suffer profound spiritual abuse. The abuse shatters the victim’s relationship and trust in the Church, severely impacts on the ability to maintain any connection with the sacred, and creates profound confusion and doubt about God’s love for the victim. Kennedy identified a dual traumatisation for these victims, namely the abuse itself and the response of the Church: ‘When women reported their experiences using official structures and avenues open to them; the response was at best mixed and at worst damaging.’ (Responding Well to those who have been sexually abused 1<sup>st</sup> edition 2011, House of Bishops)

### **Ritual abuse**

“Ritual abuse is the physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual abuse of children and adults in an organised and systematic way involving usually more than one adult abuser.

Ritual abuse may be used to imply some sort of religious or spiritual nature to events whether by a religious group or paedophile ring. Many of those who have contact with TAG

(Trauma and Abuse Group) report being ritually abused and state that it was by groups committed to satanic worship or those involved in witchcraft". (Responding Well to those who have been sexually abused 1<sup>st</sup> edition 2011, House of Bishops)

### **Cultural abuse**

"Sexual abuse happens to all children both males and females, irrespective of their social background, culture, their abilities, religious belief or any other factor.

It would be easy to dismiss cultural differences within our church communities as either not faith related, or not issues that concern the Church of England. This is to ignore both the reality of today's Church, which has at its core multi-cultural congregations, and where church growth is happening. Changes in immigration means that people are travelling to the UK from other countries, both within and beyond the European Union. People bring with them, as an important source of strength, their own cultural practices along with their patterns of religious belief and practice". (Responding Well to those who have been sexually abused 1<sup>st</sup> edition 2011, House of Bishops)

**RESPONDING POSITIVELY TO THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED SEXUAL ABUSE**

**ACTION PLAN**

If the person is not yet 18 years of age please refer to the diocesan policy The Protection and Safeguarding of Children 2012.

Name of the person disclosing .....

Name(s) and role(s) of the person(s) hearing the disclosure .....

.....  
.....

Does the alleged abuser hold a position in the church, if so, was he/she suspended?

.....

Date of the disclosure .....

Information received

Name of the abuser .....

Location of abuser .....

What would the survivor like to happen?

**CHECKLIST OF ACTION TAKEN**

		<b>Notes</b>	<b>Action and outcome sign and date</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Referral/consultation made</b>		
<b>2.</b>	<b>Has the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser been consulted or informed?</b>		
<b>3.</b>	<b>Has the Diocesan Communications Officer been informed?</b>		
<b>4.</b>	<b>Has the Incumbent been informed?</b>		
<b>5.</b>	<b>Has the Archdeacon or Bishop been informed?</b>		
<b>6.</b>	<b>Has the Diocesan Registrar been informed?</b>		
<b>7.</b>	<b>Have the insurers been informed?</b>		
<b>8.</b>	<b>Has the LADO been informed?</b>		
<b>9.</b>	<b>Who else is aware of the information?</b>		
<b>10.</b>	<b>What support is in place for the survivor?</b>		
<b>11.</b>	<b>What support is in place for the alleged abuser?</b>		
<b>12.</b>	<b>Does this case require a referral to ISA?</b>		

**INAPPROPRIATE RESPONSES TO SURVIVORS** (taken from The House of Bishop's Promoting a safe church 2006):

It is inappropriate to:

- tell a survivor it is her fault that she has lost her virginity;
- insist a survivor must forgive before he or she comes to communion;
- say to them, 'It was all so long ago, why don't you forgive and forget?';
- expect a survivor to move towards recovery without considerable support;
- tell a survivor that they cannot work with children or young people 'because abused people abuse others';
- have unrealistic expectations of healing such as 'We've prayed for you for over a year now so you must be better';
- try to arrange for the survivor to meet with the perpetrator or suggest reconciliation is a good thing – you could put someone in real danger;
- try to counsel survivors without having sufficient knowledge or awareness yourself of the dynamics and issues of abuse;
- use touch or anointing without clear boundaries and informed consent.

Survivors need time to work on their feelings and be able to accept that:

- it was not their fault;
- they haven't committed the unforgivable sin;
- they have no need to feel guilt and shame;
- God loves them unconditionally.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE *HISTORIC CASES REVIEW* (DIOCESE OF CHICHESTER) MAY 2011 – BARONES ELIZABETH BUTLER-SCHLOSS**

I support and endorse the current policy and the procedures of the House of Bishops and of the Diocese and shall not set them out in my recommendations.

The two priorities in historic abuse cases are

The protection of children in the Diocese

Support for adult victims of abuse suffered as a child.

Allegations of historic child abuse should be responded to in the same way as current allegations of child abuse.

It must be clearly understood that the decision of the police not to pursue an investigation or not to investigate at all or of the CPS not to prosecute does not relieve the Diocese of its duty to assess, on the civil standard of proof, any potential risk to children in the Diocese and to act appropriately.

The alleged abuser, if a priest or retired priest with a PTO, should, almost always, be suspended temporarily from his or her ministry pending both the police and/or the Diocesan investigation. A similar response should be put in place for lay employees or people in voluntary roles within the church.

It should be made clear to all priests and retired priests with PTOs in the Diocese that, if an allegation of abuse including historic abuse, is made, he/she will have to be suspended temporarily as part of the diocesan safeguarding policy, even if the allegations turn out eventually to be groundless. In those rare cases where suspension may not be necessary this decision should only be made by senior clergy in consultation with the DSA/Safeguarding Group.

The senior clergy and diocesan secretary should evidence leadership in their commitment to the principles of safeguarding; should recognise the importance of the roles of the DSA and the Safeguarding Group and support them financially, through inclusion in appropriate diocesan communications, and through attendance at the group.

The senior clergy should consult the DSA and the Safeguarding Group and agree the best way to implement the management of historic allegations of abuse both in general policy and in individual cases.

The advice of the Safeguarding Group, supported by the DSA, should be treated seriously and, generally, be accepted by the senior clergy.

If the advice of the Safeguarding Group is not accepted by the senior clergy in relation to allegations made against a priest in the Diocese, written reasons should be given and recorded in the Blue File.

The clergy throughout the Diocese at every level and lay leaders should have regular training in the recognition and understanding of the management of historic abuse

allegations and in understanding the effect of historic abuse on the victims as well as current child protection issues.

The clergy at every level and lay leaders should communicate directly with the DSA where issues of historic abuse and/or child protection arise in relation to any member of the church community including clergy.

If information is received by a priest or lay leader about abuse which might affect safeguarding of children, the Sussex Police as well as the DSA should be immediately informed.

In cases which might affect the safeguarding of children or other cases which are being investigated by the statutory agencies the priest or lay leader should not wait for a request before disclosing any relevant information.

There should be careful and meticulous record keeping both of issues of safeguarding and general personnel matters. All relevant information should be kept in two files, the Blue File held at the Palace and the Safeguarding File held by the DSA with cross-referencing of important information held in one of the two files.

Every grant of a PTO or recommendation within the Diocese should be preceded by a careful check of the Blue File and the Safeguarding File and all other information available from senior clergy in the Diocese.

Every giving a 'safe to receive' (otherwise 'Clergy Current Status letter') to another Diocese or a recommendation should be preceded by a careful check of the Blue File and the Safeguarding File and all other information available from senior clergy in the Diocese.

Adult victims disclosing abuse as a child should be treated with respect and compassion; their allegations treated seriously; they should not be seen as accusers or as problems and they should be kept informed of the progress of any investigation.

Victims should be offered counselling and support and, where appropriate, funding for therapy. There should be no automatic time limit on engagement with any individual victim, since the impact of childhood abuse can be lifelong.

Letters to individual victims should be addressed and signed personally and, where appropriate, apologies should be made to the victims.

All risk assessments of clergy should be undertaken by an authoritative and skilled professional body, mirroring the arrangements put in place by the Independent Safeguarding Agency.

It would be helpful to clergy and lay workers in the parishes if a two sided laminated note of the main points of the Diocesan procedures could be provided to them for easy reference. This should include what to do when an allegation is made, reference to standards of proof, and how to ensure an audit trail.

In a situation where the assessment of allegations against a priest reveals a serious risk to children in a Diocese, even though the priest has not been prosecuted or even where he/she has been acquitted, urgent consideration should be given of referral to ISA and

whether it would be possible to follow the CDM to achieve permanent removal of that priest from the ministry.

Elizabeth Butler-Sloss  
19<sup>th</sup> May 2011

# SAFEGUARDING LESSONS TO BE LEARNED (AUTUMN 2011) – PREPARED BY THE JOINT SAFEGUARDING LIAISON GROUP FOR BOTH THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND METHODIST CHURCH

## Safeguarding Lessons to be Learned (Autumn 2011)

from the Report ‘The Stones Cry Out’ by MACSAS (minister and clergy sexual abuse survivors) published 7<sup>th</sup> May 2011, and the reports by the Rt Hon Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss into two cases from the Chichester Diocese

Both reports carry important learning for all church communities. This briefing is prepared for the Church of England and the Methodist Church, based on consideration at the Joint Safeguarding Liaison Group (JSLG) The JSLG decided that this report should be circulated across both churches.

More detailed information about any points made here can be obtained from diocesan safeguarding advisers and district safeguarding coordinators. Should a specific situation arise, then you should seek advice immediately.

- 1. The impact of abuse can be lifelong and affect many or all aspects of life including spirituality. This applies not just to familial abuse but to abuse perpetrated by ministers /clergy / those with authority through their church roles. Adult survivors have the right to expect a constructive and compassionate response from the Church.**

Baroness Butler-Sloss states: ‘*adult victims disclosing abuse as a child should be treated with respect and compassion.; their allegations treated seriously; they should not be seen as accusers or problems ....there should be no automatic time limit on engagement with any individual victim since the impact of childhood abuse can be lifelong*’. Feedback from the contributors to these reports, and from other victims with whom I have had contact, is that we have much still to improve in this area. In the Methodist Church, this is addressed in the 2006 Conference Report ‘Tracing Rainbows’. This should be read – or re-read – by all those in authority within the Methodist Church. In the Church of England, the equivalent policy ‘Responding Well’ was launched at General Synod on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2011. The MACSAS report quotes from an address by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin (4<sup>th</sup> April 2011) ‘*A Church which becomes a restorative community will be one where the care of each of the most vulnerable and the most wounded will truly become the dominant concern of the ninety-nine others, who will learn to abandon their own security and try to represent Christ who still seeks out the abandoned and heals the troubled.*’

- 2. Information about historic child abuse should be responded to in the same way as current allegations of child abuse.** This is a key recommendation by Baroness Butler-Sloss. Such information should always be reported to the safeguarding diocesan adviser / district coordinator and the statutory authorities (police, adult/ children’s services, local authority designated officer) when there is any current risk. In those cases where there is no current risk, the adult making the disclosure can insist on confidentiality – but it should be reported whenever the consent is given, even where the alleged abuser is deceased. This is so that information of help to other possible victims can be compiled. This has been a requirement of both church’s

protection policies for many years but there is evidence to suggest that it is still not complied with in all cases.

**3. The fact that the majority of disclosures about child sexual abuse relate to historic abuse does not provide any room for complacency about safety today.**

The MACSAS report notes that it is usual for a child to take many years before s/he feels able to disclose to friends or family and to report to the authorities, if this happens at all. We will therefore only learn about many of the children of 2011 some years into the future. In addition, it is often noted that much historic abuse took place in institutional contexts (residential schools or children's homes) and the large scale closure of such institutions is thought to have limited access for abuse. Interestingly, in this survey the majority of settings related to normal parish or church activities and so the closure of institutions would not afford protection to these children or adults. We hope and believe that our current safeguarding commitments have created safer church communities – but we will not be able to evidence this for years to come.

**4. The nature of abuse – any individual's pattern will typically be repetitive with any victim; apply to many victims; and take a variety of forms.**

These are important lessons for us to learn. Church leaders cannot afford to be naive about abuse. The work done in response to the MACSAS report has highlighted the variety of abuse that one person may engage in over a lifetime. The behaviour noted in the table at the end of this report is a mix of allegations and proven fact in relation to six clergy / ministers / pastors, as it has been identified in the investigation of recent cases.<sup>1</sup>

**5. The reality of grooming<sup>2</sup> within church communities.**

With the benefit of hindsight in individual cases, we can identify grooming by the perpetrator of those in influence and authority, who may otherwise impose conditions and requirements which limit the potential for abuse; those who are in direct contact with victims, who might otherwise recognise the signs of abuse rather than assuming a more benign interpretation; and those who are current or potential victims so that the abuse becomes possible. The Chichester report notes the way in which CP over decades persistently minimised, normalised and excused his behaviour until his version became accepted and he came to be seen as 'more sinned against than sinning', with current danger signs misread, excused or overlooked. This pattern of grooming is frequently seen within church communities where the desire is to be open, accepting, and to focus on the possibility of benign interpretations. This positive aspect of church life becomes a direct threat to the safety of those who are vulnerable when it prevents us from grappling with painful

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<sup>1</sup> As another illustration of this learning point, the Commission of Investigation Report into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin 2009 noted: "It is important .. not to equate the number of complaints with the actual instances of child sexual abuse. Of those investigated by the Commission, one priest admitted to sexually abusing over 100 children while another accepted that he abused on a fortnightly basis during the currency of his ministry which lasted over 25 years. The total number of complaints recorded against these two priests is only just 70" (p173).

<sup>2</sup> **Grooming** – a transient feature that is difficult to capture and impossible to decide when it begins and when it ends. That said, it is not a new concept, and it is not restricted to online behaviour. It is generally seen as part of a cycle of abuse and broadly is the process of preparing a child for abuse. It can include, for instance, befriending a potential child victim to try to persuade the child to acquiesce to sexual activity. It can also involve building up trust with the adults that surround a child, in order to make that child more vulnerable. In a church context this can mean the building up of trust with the whole church 'family'. 'From 'Responding Well' House of Bishops policy due July 2011

realities. Although always difficult to withstand grooming behaviours, protection can be found through application in all cases of objective processes based on policies and through the regular checking of individual impressions and responses through consultation with relevant others. The role of the diocesan / district safeguarding workers and the safeguarding panels is crucial in providing a more detached and knowledgeable response.

6. Following on from the above, there is a need for **constant vigilance and the implementation of safer recruitment procedures.** This applies to all recruitment not just clergy. One particular weakness highlighted through both reports, is when clergy move between dioceses in the Church of England or between Anglican Communions in the UK. Similar difficulties can apply within the Methodist church, with ministers moving between districts or between countries. Within the Church of England, a 'clergy current status letter' (CCSL) should be obtained and the Archbishops' List checked, before a license or permission to officiate is granted for clergy moving from another diocese. The Blue File cannot be transferred before the license or PTO has been issued. For this reason, any relevant matters from the blue file should be incorporated into the CCSL. For clergy within the diocese, the blue file and safeguarding file should be checked. For a diocese sending information to a receiving diocese, the safeguarding file should be checked as well as the blue file. Within the Methodist church, all safeguarding information should be passed to the next District when a minister or any other church worker moves on.
7. For the Church of England, a particular lesson relates to the **need for great care in issuing a PTO.** The full process for safer recruiting, as spelt out above, should be followed. There should never be any assumption that greater age reduces the risk of abusive behaviour.
8. **The Church cannot rely on criminal convictions alone.** There is a very low conviction rate in the UK for all crimes of abuse, not just clergy / minister / pastor abuse. The burden of proof in *criminal* law is 'beyond all reasonable doubt'. The Church of England and Methodist disciplinary processes, and other important bodies such as the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA), operate to the *civil* standard of proof which is 'on the balance of probabilities'. Baroness Butler-Sloss states 'It must be clearly understood that the decision of the police not to pursue an investigation, or not to investigate at all, or of the CPS not to prosecute does not relieve the Diocese of the duty to assess, on the civil standard of proof, any potential risk ... and to act appropriately.' Safeguarding assessments and the implementation of disciplinary processes should occur whenever there are credible reports of abuse in relation to clergy / ministers / pastors, rather than only where there is a criminal conviction. Note that it is a legal requirement for the Church (along with other employing bodies) to refer individuals to ISA for possible barring not only where there has been a criminal conviction, but whenever there are significant safeguarding concerns.
9. **The Church faces particular challenge in responding well to information about abuse from within the church community.** Both Tracing Rainbows (Methodist) and Responding Well (Church of England) address how to respond pastorally to *all* situations of abuse. When the information relates to abuse by someone in the church, then not only is there a victim who has to be responded to with compassionate support, but safety issues for the church community have to be addressed, and issues of restorative justice need to be considered. Currently the policy guidance is located

within the protection policies and the Tracing Rainbows / Responding Well reports. Baroness Butler-Sloss recommends that the guidance should be collated into one short document. This will be developed in coming months by the Joint Safeguarding Liaison Group, for consideration by the relevant decision-making bodies of each church.

10. **The importance of apologising.** This is important for victims in many different areas of life but there can be anxiety that an apology may render an organisation liable for damages. This has been recognised and responded to by Government: the Compensation Act (2006) states: '*An apology, offer of treatment or other redress, shall not of itself amount to an admission of negligence or breach of statutory duty*'. (Part 1 section 2)
11. **Adult abuse.** The Chichester report relates to historic abuse of children by members of the clergy. The MACSAS report also outlines situations where adults have approached their minister / priest / pastor and have experienced abuse. Research suggests that the impact can be equally damaging. If abuse of an adult is reported, the same steps should be taken in terms of reporting the information (see Lesson 2.) The other lessons also apply, however the legal position about the disclosure of information is more complex than with children. Advice should always be taken from the safeguarding diocesan adviser / district coordinator.

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October 2011

**ATTACHMENT: (from Section 4)**  
**The Varied Pathways of Abusive Behaviour**

Individual clergy / ministers	Pathway of abusive behaviour (earliest incident at left, reading through to right)						
A	Sexual abuse of young adults in church setting	➤	Domestic violence	➤	Familial sexual abuse	➤	Abuse of children in church role
B	Sexual abuse of children in previous professional role	➤	Sexual abuse of young adults in successive church roles	➤	Domestic violence	➤	Abuse of adult in church role
C	Sexual abuse of child in church setting	➤	Concerns about failure to implement safeguarding processes in local church	➤	Reports of bullying behaviour towards women in pastoral role		
D	Adultery with colleague in the church	➤	Inappropriate behaviour with adolescent girls in church setting	➤	Accessing child abuse images on-line		
E	Breach of the peace (drunk and physical assault)	➤	Abuse of child in church setting	➤	Accessing child abuse images on-line		
F	Abuse of children alone, within a church setting	➤	Abuse of children with a clergy colleague	➤	Abuse of children with a clergy colleague from another denomination	➤	Abuse of children with a man who was not clergy

## References

A Study of the Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect 2000 – P Cawson et al.

Time for Action: Sexual Abuse, the Churches and a New Dawn for Survivors 2002 – The Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

Historic cases review (Diocese of Chichester) May 2011 - Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss

The Stones Cry Out May 2011 - Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors (MACSAS) CCPAS

Safeguarding Lessons to be Learned (Autumn 2011) - Joint Safeguarding Liaison Group for both the Church of England and Methodist Church

Responding Well to those who have been sexually abused (1<sup>st</sup> edition 2011) - House of Bishops

Protecting All God's Children (4<sup>th</sup> edition 2010) - House of Bishops

Promoting a safe church (2006) - House of Bishops

Responding to domestic abuse (2006) - House of Bishops

Safeguarding Guidelines relating to Safer Recruitment (interim Document 2010) - House of Bishops