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Safeguarding – Current and Past Case Reviews for all church officers*.

Dear Colleagues

The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. [John 1.5]

Darkness often hides things that need to come into the light and this includes not only deeds which have been concealed but also the victims of sins who have kept from view and silenced.

Allowing light to shine on what has been hidden is a first step towards healing and justice not only for those who have been abused but also for those whose consciences are, or ought to be, troubled by those sins they have buried away. Bringing things into the light allows for the possibility of walking a path to penitence and forgiveness.

Through the Past Cases Review, we are asking you to help shine a revealing light on any instances of abuse that have occurred in your benefice and to help ensure that everything that ought to be brought into the light has been. Shining a light on what has hurt or frightened someone is a matter of justice for those who have been victims; sometimes it may also prevent further harm and sometimes it may be the first step towards healing.

In 2007, the Church of England commissioned a national Past Case Review (PCR) which sought to look at the handling by the Church of child protection cases over many years. This entailed an independent scrutiny of the files of clergy and church officers to identify any persons presenting on-going risks to children and young people (a child or young person is anyone under the age of 18) which had not been acted on appropriately.

A *church officer includes all clergy, including those with PTO and clergy such as hospital, school and prison chaplains who hold the Bishop's licence, retired clergy and deceased clergy. It also includes Readers, licensed lay workers, diocesan and parish lay employees and volunteers whose role includes (or has included) direct involvement with children and vulnerable adults.

This is a wide definition, however the judgement to be made is whether the role has in the past, does currently, or is likely in the future, to provide opportunities for the abuse or neglect of children or vulnerable adults whilst engaged in church organised activities and whether the role involves a relationship of trust.

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As a follow up to our initial PCR, in 2016 the Diocese of Gloucester undertook another review of all our clergy and church officer files for both the diocese and the Cathedral.

The House of Bishops wants to ensure that all our worshipping communities and church related activities are as safe as possible for children and vulnerable adults. All Dioceses have now been asked to undertake a further review process and the terms of this new national review which is known as the PCR 2.

I'm aware that this letter arrives during a hugely busy time for you, but I and our Safeguarding Team felt it important that you were aware of what is being requested, so you can be prepared to undertake the next steps in January.

It is important that all known cases of concern about the behaviour of clergy and church officers towards children and vulnerable adults have been considered and dealt with appropriately. Please would you check that all known instances of concern about the behaviour of church officers within your worshipping communities, both non-recent and current, have been notified to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST). **(see contact details below)**

This is obviously a sensitive task, which may require looking at parish/other files and making some discreet enquiries. Where there is a concern it may be appropriate to consult a previous incumbent to obtain fuller details. In the spirit of the Gospel we all want to protect and care for our children and vulnerable adults. At a time when the Church's safeguarding policies and practices are under close scrutiny, I am sure you will recognise the importance of being as sure as possible that all known instances of concern have been addressed.

Information is sought on persons who have or have had a role in the Church where their role brings them into contact with children or with adults at risk of abuse. We are not seeking information about worshippers and those attending church activities who do not hold formal office in the Church (and this includes people who are already known to us where they are subject to a local safeguarding agreement). The advice of the DST should be sought in any instances of doubt.

Please ensure that all records that the parish/other holds, safeguarding and pastoral, are checked. Any records that hold the following behaviours should have been, or need to be, referred:

- Behaviour which has harmed, may have harmed or is likely to harm a child or vulnerable adult, including neglect.
- Possible criminal offence against or related to a child, including the viewing, downloading or possession of indecent images of children.
- Possible criminal offence against or related to an adult.
- Behaviour which indicates that the person might be or is unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults.
- More than one low level concern which would not, taken individually, meet the threshold for a safeguarding referral, but when taken together may justify further exploration.
- Cases of alleged abuse to people over 16, who have later said they gave their consent, which have not led to prosecution or caution.
- Cases where victims have reported abuse, which have been, and do need follow up.

These behaviours may include: physical, sexual, psychological, neglect and acts of omission, self-neglect, financial, modern slavery, organisational, discriminatory and domestic abuse including controlling or coercive behaviour. Advice on whether a particular circumstance should be reported may be obtained from the DST.

Please refer any matters which have not already been reported immediately to our Diocesan Safeguarding Team by email at safeguarding@glosdioc.org.uk or calling 01452 835516 or out of office hours 07944 680320

I realise that this might be a difficult task and particularly at this time of year. We are asking that you return some forms to us by the end of February 2020. Below are bullet points to help summarise what needs to be done and by when. Please ensure that everything that is relevant and currently known has been passed to the DST and that further information which may emerge in future is promptly notified to the DST.

Next steps for all PCC's

- Check your parish/other records for all known incidents of concern about the behaviour of church officers within your parishes/other (see above for further details).
- Report any previously unreported incidents to the DST immediately.
- Complete the attached Table 1A for each parish/other (we cannot accept one form for the whole benefice), detailing all known cases of concern.
- Complete the attached Parish/other Declaration form (we cannot accept one for the whole benefice).
- Send your signed Parish/other Declaration form and completed Table 1a to Laura Evans, reception@glosdioc.org.uk, 01452 410022, Reception, Church House, College Green, Gloucester, GL1 2LY.
- We would prefer to receive these forms electronically and electronic signatures are fine. Please save your forms in PDF and email them to us on – reception@glosdioc.org.uk
- Please ensure that your signed **Parish/other Declaration Form and completed Table 1a** are returned by **Friday 28 February 2020 at the latest**.

If you have a general question about any of the information here or any part of the PCR2 process, please do not hesitate to contact Laura Evans on 01452 410022 and she will arrange for a member of the Safeguarding Team to call you back.

In addition to this, there are details about our safeguarding support processes on the diocesan website. www.gloucester.anglican.org

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in working towards a safer Church.

This comes with my good wishes and thanks as ever in this season of Advent.

Yours sincerely

+ Rachel