

Clifton Diocese

Safeguarding Communications Plan

Audience:

- Internal - Clergy, Curia colleagues, volunteers and parish safeguarding representatives.
- External - parish and wider communities, other churches, media, victims/ survivors, action groups, statutory agencies (Police, social services, LAs).

Purpose/Objectives:

What do we want people to do as a result of this plan?

- Recognise Clifton Diocese is taking this issue seriously and it is a top priority.
- Know what to do if an issue arises: pastoral; reporting and media.
- Understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and prevent issues arising in future.
- Identify support for survivors/victims of any form of abuse.

Key messages:

- The safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults is at the heart of the Church's mission.
- The Diocese of Clifton is fully committed to safeguarding in the Church in order to ensure that we maintain peaceful, loving and safe Christian communities in which everybody, particularly young and vulnerable members, can confidently participate.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and is a priority in every parish. Our Churches are safe places for children and young people.
- We have adopted and implemented the policies and procedures of the Catholic Church of England and Wales, which is committed to safeguarding as an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church. We are a member of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA).
- We will liaise closely with statutory agencies to ensure that we: promptly and properly respond to any allegations of abuse, pass on allegations to the Police; appropriately support any survivors/victims; and hold perpetrators to account.

- Survivors/victims come first. We will provide sensitive, confidential support for survivors and victims who will be believed and never re-traumatised by failures to address their complaints.
- We recognise the personal dignity and rights of all vulnerable people, to whom we have a special responsibility. The Diocese, parishes and individuals in it will: take all appropriate steps to maintain a safe environment for all; practice fully and positively Christ's ministry towards children, young people and vulnerable adults; and will respond sensitively and compassionately to their needs in order to help keep them safe from harm.

Who owns the communications plan and its messages?

- The Safeguarding Committee. This is a standing committee of the Board of Trustees and comprises of Trustees and Lay Persons with a rich background in safeguarding who, assisted by the Diocesan Communications Officer, carry out this function on behalf of the Bishop and the Trustees.

How will we communicate:

Our safeguarding messages should:

- Be included in management and leadership meetings within the Church body.
- Demonstrate that the church leadership owns the safeguarding message.
- Be present throughout our print, digital and word-of-mouth communications.
- We should actively engage with survivors, volunteers, and our Diocesan communities when deciding how to communicate the safeguarding messages most effectively.
- Contain links with local organisations, voluntary and statutory, that are present within the community.

Methods of communication:

Any communication relating to Safeguarding with the media and press in the name of the Clifton Diocese will be undertaken in the first instance by the Diocesan Communications Officer, or a nominated substitute where appropriate, such as the Chief Operating Officer. In appropriate circumstances, communication will be directed to the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency before any press releases are made.

For any cases where there is an ongoing criminal investigation or a local authority enquiry, liaison will take place between the Diocesan Communication Officer, the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator, and the relevant statutory partner. The Communication Officer

will respond to media requests in collaboration with the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator, and where necessary, the Chief Operating Officer.

Dealing with media enquiries:

Issues may arise that are of interest to the media. Much of the safeguarding work undertaken by the Diocese of Clifton is confidential, and this confidentiality is fundamental. We will be open and transparent about our work, whilst protecting personal information and adhering to Diocesan Policies. All press and media enquiries should always be forwarded to the Diocesan Communications Officer in the first instance, and after consultation with the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator and the Chief Operating Officer, a decision will be made on how to respond appropriately.

If any parish, priest, or member of staff within the Diocese receive an enquiry, either from the press or another party, relating to safeguarding, the Communications Officer and the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator should be notified immediately, and a decision will be made on how to respond appropriately.

Proactive media / communications activity

The Diocesan Communications Officer will issue proactive information to the media, as well as to staff, the public and other stakeholders. Any press releases will be drafted by the Communications Officer in collaboration with the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator. Where appropriate, this will be in collaboration with communications personnel from relevant agencies.

The Diocesan Communications Officer will be responsible for issuing such communication, in collaboration with the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator, and where necessary, the Chief Operating Officer.

Print:

- Ad Clerum, parish newsletter and e-bulletins, other publications such as annual report. Posters and notices containing key safeguarding information/contacts in all diocesan locations.

Digital:

- Diocesan website (home page links for high profile) and social media channels. Parish websites, use of email for internal messaging, weekly e-newsletter.

External Media

- Be proactive about communications, open, honest, transparent, be on the front foot.
- Communications team and spokespeople need to bear safeguarding in mind in all relevant communications with external media.
- Reflect our communications principals:
 - Integrity, honesty.
 - Openness, transparency.
 - Inspiring, meaningful, engaging.
 - Timeliness.
 - Clarity and accuracy.

Word of mouth / community engagement

- Training sessions.
- Make safeguarding communications high profile on diocesan website
- Close working relationships between communications and safeguarding teams is vital.

Evaluation:

Regular evaluation of the plan (by the Safeguarding Committee) and obtaining feedback on it from clergy, safeguarding reps and parishioners using means such as surveys and focus groups.

Regular monitoring of our own and external media coverage in relation to safeguarding messages should be undertaken – and any lessons learnt.

REVIEW

The safeguarding communications plan is to be reviewed every two years, or after a major incident.

Date: March 2024

Review date: March 2026