**CHURCH OF ENGLAND NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING PANEL**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2019**

**Introduction**

The National Safeguarding Panel was established in 2014 and was chaired by the lead bishop for safeguarding. In May 2018 the Church advertised the role of independent chair of the panel, in order to bring greater independence to its work. Following a recruitment process, Meg Munn was appointed and took up her role in September 2018. She undertook a review of the panel and recommended changes to the terms of reference, the frequency of meeting and the approach to the discussion of items. The changes to meeting format and frequency took effect in 2019 with the new terms of reference agreed by the National Safeguarding Steering Group in April 2019.

At each meeting the panel examines one issue in depth and receives updates on the work of the National Safeguarding Team. Relevant people are invited to submit written information on the matter for in-depth consideration and then attend the meeting to answer questions. The panel make recommendations which are communicated to the National Safeguarding Steering Group.

This report covers the work of the National Safeguarding Panel during the calendar year 2019. The panel has met 6 times for two and a half hours each meeting.

**Subjects examined**

The panel seeks to examine issues at a time when it can influence the thinking of the Church and therefore have impact. Below is a summary of the issues and key recommendations. The Chair writes a regular blog and more information on the discussions can be found at <https://chairnsp.org/>

***Training***

Early in 2019, the National Safeguarding Team published proposals to change its national training framework. Key issues were the volume of training required, how that is resourced and monitored and the importance of case studies and real life examples. The panel were pleased to learn that dioceses are very committed to delivering the training. While evaluation forms are completed, there is currently no way to know whether the training has changed behaviour. The panel would like to see that considered in the future. Panel members have had the opportunity to undertake some of the training and this has led to a further recommendation of greater involvement of survivors in the development of case studies.

***Clergy Discipline Measure***

The clergy discipline measure was examined over two sessions, the first focusing on a detailed presentation of the working of the measure. The second considered a consultation by the National Safeguarding Team with Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors, Registrars and Bishops and the results of a survey of diocesan Bishops undertaken by two of them. The Church had already determined to review the measure and a working group was due to begin work. The Independent Inquiry in to Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) has also expressed significant concern about the operation of the measure, including the understanding of clergy in relation to their reporting responsibilities.

The panel identified a significant number of areas that the working group should consider in relation to safeguarding concerns. It was felt strongly that there needs to be a different process for safeguarding to other complaints or disciplinary matters. Difficult areas include managing different burdens of proof required in criminal and civil processes and the difficulties for bishops who have both a discipline and a pastoral role.

The panel has asked to be kept updated on the progress of the working group and would expect to have a further question session once there are proposals for change.

***Prevention***

The panel was keen to ensure that there is focus on the issue of prevention. In addition to hearing from the National Safeguarding Team, the panel also questioned the Chief Executive Officer of the organisation[Thirtyone:eight](https://thirtyoneeight.org/)*[,](https://thirtyoneeight.org/)* a Christian charity of independent safeguarding specialists.

The Church has not specifically had a preventative strategy or framework, although much of the work to put policies, procedures and resources in place, over the last few years, will have contributed to prevention. It was suggested that few organisations have grasped the comprehensive nature of safeguarding work and the importance of having prevention running through it. Understanding what makes places less safe, and what helps to produce safer places, is essential.

Key recommendations included the need for more direct work with children, more explicit prevention work, recognition of the risk to children and vulnerable adults from families and people close to them and early reporting of concerns.

***Complaints***

The panel’s examination of complaints’ processes identified a lack of clarity about which processes should be used outside of the Clergy Discipline Measure. There are issues which are of a minor nature which are being addressed as discipline matters. The working group will address this issue.

The panel felt that one standardised process across all dioceses would be preferable with a focus on the wishes of the complainants and training and resources focused on achieving informal resolution wherever possible. Where complaints relate to the handling of safeguarding concerns the panel recommended that independent advocates should be available for all stages of the process.

The panel also recommended that the Church of England should learn from the complaints processes of other churches and other professions and organisations.

***Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse***

The panel asked to be updated on the response of the Church to the first report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) which was published in May.

The panel noted that all recommendations had been accepted and good progress has been made in all areas. The development of safeguarding guidance for religious communities was welcomed along with an update from the Clergy Discipline Measure Working Group. In relation to safeguarding guidance, work is under way to specify strict requirements. The panel recommended clear and simple language be used when explaining legal terms.

The panel stressed the importance of changing the culture within the Church. Key elements are the requirement to be proactive in safeguarding, that inaction in response to concerns is unacceptable and that protecting the reputation of the Church by concealing safeguarding issues is wrong. Only openness and transparency can restore the Church’s reputation.

**Cross cutting themes**

In examining a range of issues, a number of themes have emerged that impact on safeguarding issues. These are:

* Tension between national aspirations and the autonomy of dioceses
* Opportunities for working across dioceses, possibly within regions, to provide greater internal challenge and support, to improve transparency and to avoid conflicts such as the need for independence in investigations and also pastoral support
* The benefit that could accrue to the Church of learning from other churches, other faiths and secular organisations
* A need for improved clarity and understanding about safeguarding both within the Church and in the way the Church communicates its stance on safeguarding to the public
* The importance of survivor input in to training and policies
* The need for the church response to be proportionate to the concerns raised

**Evaluation**

Two on-line surveys have been completed by panel members to gather views on the new meeting format. There is strong support, with panel members noting that they are able to contribute and have found the sessions engaging and informative. It is recognised that the panel will need to follow up on issues where recommendations have been made. This will be considered when planning agendas.

**Other activities**

* The Chair and survivors representative Phil Johnson, along with lead bishop on safeguarding, Peter Hancock, presented information on the work of the panel to the General Synod in July in York. This was an opportunity to update Synod members and also to raise awareness of the importance of safeguarding throughout the church.
* A number of panel members attended the safeguarding summit organised by the National Safeguarding Team in York in September. Survivor representatives took part in leading the first day of the summit.

**Future plans**

The panel will continue to examine issues in depth and aim to cover issues related to prevention, responding to concerns and support for victims and survivors. There will be requests for updates on recommendations from previous issues.

An associate has recently been appointed to provide more expert research support for the panel’s examination of subjects in depth. This will allow the panel to receive more detailed briefing and for systematic follow up of recommendations to the Church.

Possible subject for meetings in 2020 include but are not limited to:

* Safeguarding of adults
* Quality assurance
* Working with other faiths on safeguarding
* Past Cases Review 2
* IICSA recommendations and progress
* Review of progress on issues previous considered

**Annex**

**National Safeguarding Panel**

**Terms of reference**

The National Safeguarding Panel is an independent panel led by the Independent Chair. Its Terms of Reference and composition are determined by the Archbishops’ Council.

It will:

1. Provide high level strategic advice and offer guidance on policies and practice in safeguarding seeking to ensure that the Church of England meets accepted best practice.

2. Provide scrutiny and challenge to the church for its work on safeguarding including examining existing and proposed policies in depth and the regular analysis of the data compiled in the areas of   
  
• Prevention through promotion of safeguarding,   
• Responding to current concerns or disclosures,   
• Responding to non-current concerns or disclosures,   
• Support for survivors.

The panel will determine a work programme. Outside of meetings the Chair will consult with three representatives of the panel regarding items for the agenda. These to include one survivor representative, one person from the Church of England, and one representative of the expert members.

The panel will consider and comment on the National Safeguarding Team’s annual work plan and make recommendations for priorities. It will consider papers on matters prepared by the National Safeguarding Team. It will undertake in-depth consideration of key areas of concern and proposed developments and ensure appropriate input to the National Safeguarding Steering Group. The Director of Safeguarding will ensure that the Chair is kept informed of its work.

The panel can ask for Church personnel to attend to speak to papers and to answer questions. The panel will ensure complementarity with the church’s work with survivors. However, the panel does not have a role in relation to individual cases. Specific approaches or enquiries will be referred to the Director of Safeguarding.

The Chair will provide regular reports on its work and present an annual report presented to the National Safeguarding Steering Group. Role of Independent Chair In addition to chairing the panel, the Chair will work closely with the Director of Safeguarding in preparation of agendas and to ensure the effective functioning of the panel. The Chair will maintain oversight of key business, attending other meetings as and when required and will meet panel members outside the meeting as required.

Composition of the panel

* Independent Chair - externally recruited with 3-year term renewable for a further maximum of 2 years
* 2 representative members one from each of the Catholic and Methodist churches
* 3 survivors of church abuse from organisations that support survivors

**Five independent expert members**

* 2 members with expertise in children’s safeguarding
* 2 members with expertise in adult safeguarding
* 1 member with expertise in working with offenders

The following Church representatives will be “in attendance” at the Panel’s meetings: lead and deputy lead bishops on safeguarding; representatives of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York; and the Director of Safeguarding.

**Membership of the panel 2019**

Meg Munn Independent Chair

Henry Lewis Methodist Church

Chris Pearson Catholic Church

Graham Wilmer Lantern Project

Jo Kind MACSAS (Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors)

Phil Johnson MACSAS

Roger Singleton (from October 2019) Independent expert

Amanda Edwards Independent expert

David Cooper (from December 2019) Independent expert

Donald Findlater Independent expert

Peter Hancock Lead Bishop

Mark Sowerby Deputy Lead Bishop

Daphne Green Archbishop of York representative

Tim Thornton Archbishop of Canterbury representative