THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Introduction

4 minutes read

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This Framework sets out details of the Church's safeguarding learning pathways, and expectations of Church officers[1] in respect of those pathways.

The Church has an ambition to make a paradigm shift in its relationship with safeguarding. This requires recognition that safeguarding needs to move away from something that is in some respects external / imposed upon the Church, to something that flows from within the soul of the Church. Safeguarding is at the centre of our faith, in our practice, in our worship, in our praying, and in our believing. In other words, safeguarding needs to become integral to the very DNA of the Church rather than an appendage, with good safeguarding behaviours flowing naturally and intuitively. Theology, by which we simply mean clear thinking about God and the faith we share, has been interwoven into all our learning and the development pathways. As IICSA identified, this will require a significant shift in the Church's culture.

Achieving a paradigm shift in safeguarding requires a "whole system" approach within which change is achieved by the inter-relatedness of different strands. One developmental strand is "safeguarding learning". This framework sets out the form that safeguarding learning needs to take to contribute effectively to the paradigm shift envisioned and to overall organisational change. The safeguarding learning pathways support participants in developing and maintaining the necessary values, beliefs, knowledge, and skills to safeguard and protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults[2] as outlined in 'Promoting a Safer Church'.

It replaces and updates the 'House of Bishops Learning and Development Framework Practice Guidance' (2015) and the second and third editions of this document published in January 2017 and July 2019, respectively. The revisions to this edition are driven by a programme of change designed to strengthen the opportunities for learning and development in safeguarding.

The Framework sets out:

- The vision, model, standards and requirements for safeguarding learning and development in the Church context.
- Details of the range of learning and development pathways available and the requirements for their delivery.
- Details of additional learning and development opportunities.

This practice guidance is for use across all Church bodies[3] .

Once published in 2021, Church bodies must plan for full implementation of this framework from January 2022. The framework will not be revised again until 2024, ready for the next three-yearly cycle of safeguarding learning to commence in 2025.

- [1]A 'Church officer' is anyone appointed/elected by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid.
- [2]In their policies and procedures our statutory partners have now moved away from the terminology of 'vulnerable adults' towards 'adults at risk of harm', usually shortened to 'adults at risk'.
- [3]Church bodies includes parishes, dioceses, cathedrals, religious communities, theological education institutions, National Church Institutions (NCIs) and other associated bodies.

Status and structure

This document is safeguarding guidance issued by the House of Bishops under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016. It is intended that section 5 will be amended in 20211 , but as the law currently stands all relevant persons must have due regard to guidance issued by the House of Bishops on matters relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

Relevant persons are:

- A clerk in Holy Orders who is authorised to officiate in accordance with the Canons of the Church of England.
- A diocesan, suffragan, or assistant bishop.
- An archdeacon.
- A Cathedral Chapter
- A person who is licensed to exercise the office of reader or serve as a lay worker.
- A churchwarden.
- A parochial church council.

A duty to have “due regard” to guidance means that the person under the duty is not free to disregard it but is required to follow it unless there are cogent reasons for not doing so. ‘Cogent’ for this purpose means clear, logical, and convincing.

Failure to have “due regard” to House of Bishops’ safeguarding guidance may be considered misconduct under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 (‘CDM’), may be grounds for the revocation of a reader’s or lay worker’s licence by the Bishop or may result in an investigation being carried out by the Charity Commission and the churchwarden or PCC members may be subject to disqualification as charity trustees.

This document is written for those responsible for implementing, or co-ordinating the implementation of, the guidance issued by the House of Bishops but especially for those providing, or co-ordinating the provision of, training on safeguarding matters.

- 1It is intended to amend the law to allow the House of Bishops to put in place a new code of practice on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults which will specify both requirements (which will be mandatory) and guidance (which will be advisory). The amendments will also expand the categories of person to whom the section applies.