

Summary of September meeting

It was announced that the Bishop of Truro, Philip Mountstephen, is joining the NSSG and will take on the role as Chair of the Redress Scheme Project Board. It was noted that the extensive programme of work in safeguarding will need additional new episcopal members. The Terms of Reference of the group also need to be reviewed to ensure that they are fit for purpose in the context of the implementation of the Independent Safeguarding Board.

The Guidance on Dealing with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults was discussed in detail; most particularly the spiritual abuse section. Professor Lisa Oakley gave a presentation on the work of the Task and Finish group on the subject. It was made clear that this is not about censorship or curtailing free expression of views but promoting safer, healthier cultures in the Church. The core mission of the guidance is to protect the vulnerable and the approach is firmly based on the Gospels and the theology of safeguarding. Spiritual abuse is not a separate category of abuse. It is defined but this is about the aspects of emotional and psychological abuse that spiritual abuse can encompass. A key process will be education on what are healthy behaviours and what is unhelpful, unhealthy and abusive. It is integral to the Church's safeguarding duty and IICSA recommendations demand it. Following a detailed discussion and some proposed amendments being accepted, it was agreed to take the guidance to the House of Bishops for further discussion and approval.

The interim director's report noted good progress on PCR2. Any dioceses with issues are being supported to ensure that the desired December 2021 deadline for completion of reports is achieved. A number of independent lessons learned reviews continue notably regarding the sec 28 notice issued by a London coroner in the FR Alan Griffin case. 25 dioceses or cathedrals have expressed interest in the IICSA pilot; this will be refined to ensure a good mix of diocese types when the project parameters are decided. The selection process for the Independent Safeguarding Board Chair and survivor representative has been completed and will be announced once contractual matters are concluded. A review of the Interim Support Scheme will also be taken to the Archbishops' Council later this month.

The plans for Safeguarding Sunday on 10th October are well advanced and Bishop Jonathan's sermon is now available online. The ongoing independent review into the Smyth case, and a recently published book on the subject were referenced noting that any fresh information must be sent to the reviewers. A communications plan in relation to the Independent Safeguarding Board (appointment of chair and survivor advocate) is being developed so it is clearly not the NST speaking for the independent body; their appointments will be welcomed by the Archbishops. There continue to be a number of media issues regarding non-current cases.

The Serious Incident Reporting guidance was tabled and discussed. This will be applicable to all Church charitable bodies including Cathedrals when that status is attained. This was accepted to be taken to House of Bishops for implementation 1st January 2022.

The Conflicts of Interest policy related to core groups was tabled. This brings Church safeguarding practice in line with accepted practice in business and charities. It was felt it should be expanded to encompass all aspects of safeguarding delivery, not just core groups.

The Responding Well to Victims and Survivors guidance which has been comprehensively updated was tabled for discussion. It is intended to ensure that there are no barriers to reporting concerns in a safe and supportive way; to ensure there is an appropriate response; and to give clear guidance on the issuing of apologies. It fulfils IICSA recommendations regarding redress and properly implements responding aspects of the theology of safeguarding.

The guidance has been prepared following extensive consultation, particularly with survivor groups. It is intended to educate and support dioceses to have the revised guidance in place by February 2022. The guidance was discussed in depth, accepted in principle and agreed that it should be reviewed when the detailed implementation plan is available at the November NSSG meeting.

A progress update was given on the **Senior Leadership Safeguarding Pathway**. This is making excellent progress. It will be retained as an online course as that is the quickest way to maximise delivery to all relevant clergy and staff.

Proposed amendments to the **NSSG Terms of Reference** (and all current safeguarding forums) to align with working with the new Independent Safeguarding Board are being developed for consideration at a future meeting.

Training compatibility with the Methodist Church is under review and will be discussed as there has been some divergence at strategic level. This will be taken forward at a meeting on 13th October and reported back in due course.

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