

NSSG summary – May 2022

Following an introduction from the chair Bishop Jonathan Gibbs, the Church's lead safeguarding bishop, the Group received an update from the interim national safeguarding director.

This included:

- IICSA Recommendations 1 & 8
- National Safeguarding Casework Management System (NSCMS)
- Information Sharing
- Survivor Engagement
- Redress
- Interim Support Scheme
- Learning Lessons Reviews

Questions and discussion followed around a number of items particularly on the legal issues on the proposed redress scheme and the importance of them being survivor-focused.

Bishop Jonathan noted that the national director recruitment was ongoing and recorded a huge vote of thanks to Zena Marshall for her work as interim director.

Meg Munn, independent chair of the National Safeguarding Panel, NSP, provided an update including minutes of the previous NSP meeting which had focused on the Interim Support Scheme. She noted that the next meeting was on the Clergy Conduct Measure. Members were reminded that Meg writes a blog after each NSP meeting, part of her commitment as chair to transparency. Further NSP good practice webinars were being planned again after the success and positive feedback from last summer's sessions and it was noted that a parish rep had been appointed to the Panel.

A discussion on independence followed noting that there would be a presentation at July Synod from both the NSP and the Independent Safeguarding Board.

An update on PCR2 stressed the importance of survivor engagement along with ensuring the overall report was comprehensive noting it involved independent reports from 42 dioceses, two Palaces and the NST. It was agreed the NSSG would receive the recommendations to review before

then signing off the final overall report for publication

Members then took part in a planned strategic discussion, looking at the role of the NSSG over the next three to five years, noting it must be more than a tactical body, and should look more at prevention for the future, rather than looking back on the past. It was noted that IICSA had been a driver for this change. Members contributed various practical points for discussion followed by a wider discussion on how safeguarding, like health and safety, should be part of any organisation's DNA. Members agreed that the majority of safeguarding in the Church was carried out at the local parish level and the NSSG's role was to continue to link with dioceses who in turn supported their parishes.

The Group then considered the recommendations in the Graham Gregory Reivew, noting that all were underway or being looked at with further action being taken.

Members also received an update on Safe Spaces, the free and independent support service, funded by the Church of England and the Catholic Church in England and Wales, and run by charity Victim Support. Members discussed the service, which has had very positive feedback from an independent evaluation and agreed next steps for this service which had started in September 2020.

The Group agreed to continue the reciprocal arrangement for recognising safeguarding learning with the Methodist Church so that those working in leadership roles in ecumenical settings only need complete the training from the appropriate denomination.

The last item was a paper on the Independent Audit Proposal for IICSA Recommendation 8 which set out the proposals for the next round of independent external audits of safeguarding practice in dioceses and other church bodies. There was a discussion around timing and audit work that had effectively already taken place due to PCR2. Members agreed to endorse the direction of travel, principles and criteria with further details being brought to the next NSSG meeting.

Short summary of March NSSG meeting

Bishop Jonathan Gibbs, as chair, provided an update on membership of the group, now published with the NSSG's Terms of Reference.

The main item was a presentation from Maggie Atkinson, Chair of the Independent Safeguarding Board, about plans for its work with questions and comments from members.

In other business the Group received an update from the National Safeguarding Team, NST on its range of projects, including an update on advice to churches and members wanting to host Ukrainian refugees.

Members also received its regular update on the National Safeguarding Panel, NSP from its independent chair Meg Munn and an update was also provided on PCR2, Safe Spaces and the national Safeguarding Programme.

Members welcomed the Graham Gregory Review report and asked for further detailed work to be done to identify how recommendations can be appropriately implemented within Church structures. It was agreed this item would be presented again at the May meeting (see report above).

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