

PROGRESS REPORT

Elliot Review - one year on

Background

In 2015 the Church of England commissioned an independently-led lessons learnt review of the case of 'Joe', a survivor of clerical sexual abuse and offered an unreserved apology. Joe reported that he had disclosed his abuse to a number of different people on separate occasions, both within and outside the Church. On each occasion, he said that he had not received a response which he felt adequately addressed his needs. The main alleged perpetrator died in 1990. 'Joe' also reported two other allegations of abuse - one by a senior church figure.

The National Safeguarding Adviser, Graham Tilby, along with the diocese of London, formally commissioned CCPAS (Churches Child Protection Advisory Service) to undertake the review. They engaged Ian Elliott, a Safeguarding Consultant, with whom they had a joint working agreement, to undertake this work to establish what lessons could be learnt from an independent examination of the case.

The Elliot Review report was published in **March 2016** and received by a senior woman in the Church, the Bishop of Crediton, Sarah Mullally at the request of 'Joe'.

The report contained 11 recommendations and on receiving the report Bishop Sarah said that the Archbishop of Canterbury had seen the important recommendations and would ensure they were implemented as quickly as possible. She added: "How we respond to those who have survived abuse in any form, whether as a child or an adult, is a measure of our humanity, compassion and of the Church's mission in the world."

Her full response and the Review can be found here <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2016/03/elliott-review-findings.aspx>

The full list of recommendations and the Church's ongoing response to them are listed below. One year on both Bishop Sarah and Graham Tilby have provided short reflections on lessons learnt for the Church and how they will inform its ongoing safeguarding work.

Statement from Graham Tilby, National Safeguarding Adviser

"Joe's abuse should never have happened and as a Church we have offered an unreserved apology and have continued to remain in dialogue with Joe since the review was published. The Elliott Review reinforced the importance that any disclosure of abuse by a survivor must be heard and acted upon, in a consistent and timely manner. As the review showed it is important that all clergy, at whatever stage of their ministry should have training in this area and we are well underway to implementing dedicated training across all areas, part of our 'whole Church' approach to safeguarding. More specifically we will be training all bishops and their senior staff in handling disclosures and how to respond to allegations relating to a church officer as recommended by the report. We are also developing plans to follow-up the independent safeguarding audits being undertaken

by the Social Care Institute for Excellence. The House of Bishops *Promoting a Safer Church* policy statement (2017) makes it clear that the care and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults is an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church."

Statement from Sarah Mullally, Bishop of Crediton

"I continue to be absolutely committed to ensuring that the implementation of these recommendations is carried out at all levels of the Church, I know this was the promise of the Archbishop of Canterbury when he read the Report. I have had personal contact with Joe throughout the year and am aware of the ongoing suffering and pain he has endured as a survivor of this terrible abuse. As a Church we must do better in our response to all survivors and I am encouraged that by working through the implications of this review we are already starting to see a more unified approach to safeguarding training and awareness. Practical changes resulting from any review are always important but these must be accompanied by a hearts and minds sea change so we respond with compassion to all who come forward. I know for Joe progress may not be fast enough but I am reassured by that we are moving in the right direction."

March 2017

Recommendations and ongoing response

1. All those who may receive a disclosure of abuse should be provided with training that is aimed at ensuring that they have the skills, and knowledge necessary to respond in accordance with the stated policies of the Church.

Response

The core modules within the Training & Development Practice Guidance <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/3791799/approved-practice-guidance-safeguarding-training-and-development.pdf> have been strengthened with regards to handling disclosures. The most recently updated course materials for modules were circulated to all dioceses, Cathedrals and Theological Educational Institutions in January 2017.

2. All those who have received a disclosure of abuse should record what information has been shared with them and ensure that they explain to the person making the disclosure, what actions they will take, when they will take them, and why.

Response

The joint practice guidance on recording emphasises the importance of recording concerns and disclosures. This is also emphasised in current and draft revised guidance concerning responding to serious safeguarding situations relating to church officers, which has just been out for consultation. All core safeguarding training modules address when and how pastoral encounters involving safeguarding information should be recorded.

3. Those in positions of seniority in the Church are more likely to be approached by a survivor of abuse to report what has happened to them. It is particularly important that

these people have a comprehensive understanding of the policies of the Church, and also have an ability to implement those policies. Where help is needed to develop skills or knowledge in this area, this should be provided.

Response

The National Safeguarding Team will be delivering a newly revised C4 module to all bishops and their senior staff from June 2017. The materials will include handling of individual disclosures from survivors as well as how to respond from an organisation perspective to allegations and disclosures related to church officers, in accordance with the new practice guidance. A specialist module with regards to pastoral encounters, confidentiality and the seal of confession will be implemented from 2018 for all incumbents.

4. Where the abuse is communicated through correspondence, guidance should be produced that is available to those handling correspondence to support them in determining how to respond to this situation. It is important that this guidance is fully compliant with the stated policies of the Church.

Response

This has been included within revised practice guidance currently out for consultation. The revised guidance does not cover this specifically – it states that regardless of how safeguarding information comes to light the response should be in accordance with the procedures outlined. The C4 training includes a scenario whereby a survivor makes a disclosure via a letter to the bishop and we have worked closely with an independent domestic and sexual violence adviser in order to inform the advice and guidance given on the correct response to survivors who wish to disclose abuse.

5. All advice received by agents employed by the Church, should be referenced against the stated policies of the Church before it is followed. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring that financial considerations are not given a priority that conflicts with the pastoral aims of the Church when engaging with survivors of abuse.

Response

In June 2016, Ecclesiastical published independently its Guiding Principles on handling physical and sexual abuse (PSA) claims, making transparent its existing practices and commitments.

The purpose of making its practices transparent was threefold:

- To help the victims and survivors of PSA better understand the processes and principles EIG follows when handling PSA claims
- To help all its policyholders understand the processes and principles EIG follows when handling PSA claims
- To help all its policyholders understand how they can support and care for victims and survivors without prejudicing their insurance position throughout the claims process

The Church has and will actively support the development of similar protocols produced by Insurers in this field.

6. The Church should seek to create written down guidance with regard to how it will respond to claims for compensation from survivors. This guidance should be shared with

survivors from an early juncture in the process. Every effort should be made to avoid an adversarial approach, placing emphasis on the provision of financial compensation as an aid to healing and closure for the survivor.

Response

Draft guidance has been produced for the Church Commissioners emphasising the importance of arranging pastoral support alongside any claim for compensation. This is aimed to complement a revised protocol and statement of principles now finalised by EIG, to which the Church of England was invited to contribute (*see 5*).

7. A first response to a survivor of abuse within the Church should be the issuing of an apology

Response

Guidance on the issuing of an early apology is included within *Responding to Serious Safeguarding Situations relating to church officers*. Training for church leaders and those who are ordained, licenced, commissioned or holding permission to officiate covers the issue of apology to survivors.

8. The Church should create a means by which it can inform itself as to what the reality of safeguarding practice is across the entire Church, as experienced by those receiving a service. The National Safeguarding Team should be given the power and the responsibility to monitor practice and to intervene where it is thought necessary to do so. It cannot do this if it is limited to an advisory role alone. The reviewer would believe that this can be achieved without diminishing the authority of the bishop in their diocese if carefully constructed and approached as part of the structure of the Church as a whole body.

Response

The Archbishops' Council has commissioned and funded a programme of independent safeguarding audits by the Social Care Institute for Excellence, to be concluded by the end of 2017. The Church of England has considered future audit and regulatory options and proposes to introduce a safeguarding Progress Review for each diocese with the National Safeguarding Team, subject to their piloting during 2017. A further round of independent audits will be commissioned post 2020.

The Church is producing more comprehensive guidance on church officer's respective roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding, in support of its recently published Policy Statement. Work will also be progressed from 2017 on strengthening national and diocesan complaints, whistleblowing and escalation processes. This will build on Regulations in respect of the appointment and function of Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors, which came into force on 1 January 2017 as part of the Safeguarding & Clergy Discipline Measure 2016. The Regulations place a duty on the Diocesan Bishop to consult the Archbishops' Council (National Safeguarding Team) on the appointment of a Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.

9. Safeguarding decisions as they occur across the Church, should be subject to review by an independent body within the Church, which has the skills, knowledge and expertise to do this. The role of the National Safeguarding Team should be looked at again to enable it to possibly fulfil this requirement.

Response

Independent audits of diocesan safeguarding arrangements highlight the importance of clarity with regards to safeguarding decisions and this is being considered in the new draft guidance under development. The role of the NST has been extended with the appointment of Provincial Safeguarding Advisers based at Lambeth Palace and Bishopthorpe who are providing a support and challenge role with dioceses in responding to allegations against a church officer.

10. The experience of other Churches who have sought to respond well to the issue of clerical abuse should be carefully examined and attempts made to ensure that mistakes made elsewhere will not be repeated within the Church of England.

Response

The NST has been working closely with other key denominations including the Methodist Church and Roman Catholic to learn lessons and identify opportunities where ecumenical responses can be progressed. This is particular relevant to how the Church facilitates and provides support to survivors.

11. Survivors of clerical abuse hold great wisdom as to how the Church can prevent what happened to them reoccurring. To that end and where the motivation exists on the part of the survivor, a mechanism should be created that is aimed at creating a means whereby that knowledge can be directly shared with those involved in safeguarding in the Church.

Response

During 2016, survivors have been involved in the development of practice guidance and training materials, for example, the *Responding to Domestic Abuse* policy and practice guidance, and they are at heart of the development of the Safe Spaces Pilot project. The aim is to strengthen the team by appointing a dedicated post to project manage Safe Spaces and develop a range of approaches to strengthening the direct engagement of survivors across the work of the NST