

General Synod Safeguarding presentation from Bishop of Gloucester, Rachel Treweek, February 2018

I'm aware that when we talk about safeguarding it engages our hearts, our minds and our guts, and depending on our own experiences, our antennae will be set at different angles. So I hope that in our time of questions there will be opportunity for people to clarify what they've heard.

I have been asked to say something brief about the Diocese of Gloucester and I look forward to contributing more in response to questions.

It was not long after I arrived in Gloucester that Peter Ball, a previous Bishop of Gloucester was finally convicted of horrific abuse - You have the [Gibb report \(GS Misc. 1172\)](#).

As I have previously said publicly, I am deeply ashamed of that legacy and deeply sorry; just as I am deeply ashamed and sorry about the abuse people have suffered across the Church which has so often been compounded by wholly inadequate response and a lack of compassion and understanding...

.. I do believe that in the present I have the privilege of working with a committed and professional team in Gloucester. And that is not intended to sound defensive.

The starting place is the big picture of the good news of the Kingdom of God and the truth that every person is a unique individual with a name, made in the image of God. Transformation, flourishing and reconciliation is at the heart of who God is. Yet we live amid prolific broken relationship including abuse of children and adults, neglect, misused power... To quote St Paul "creation is groaning"... longing for the "freedom of the glory of the children of God" made possible through Jesus Christ. That day when, perfect relationship will be restored - with God, with one another and with all creation.

And therefore safeguarding is integral to our mission and ministry – it's not an 'add-on issue'.

In Gloucester we were encouraged by our SCIE audit and we're proud of our joint working between cathedral and diocese. Yet like other SCIE audits it flagged up **the ongoing challenge of getting safeguarding embedded in every parish.**

As bishop, safeguarding is one of my major responsibilities, yet I am acutely aware that the place where most day-to-day safeguarding takes place is in our worshipping communities. Clergy and volunteers from all sorts of backgrounds work together, and what we ask of nominated safeguarding reps can feel overwhelming. We're continuing to work hard at a culture of encouraging and thanking people, because safeguarding is paramount to living the good news of Jesus Christ.

Our training is good but I also know that good training does not automatically make a place of worship safe. And the message we underline is that **none of us can abdicate our responsibility for keeping eyes and ears open** - This is not always someone else's responsibility.

So, two key things we work hard at in Gloucester: **Relationship** and **Communication**:

When safeguarding is lived well (*from the perspective of a victim or survivor, or a worshipping community, or an offender with an agreement, or someone who has an accusation against them...*) – when safeguarding is lived well there is good relationship and strong communication. This includes listening; and saying what you are going to do by when and doing it.

When safeguarding is weak and people feel diminished, uncertain or ignored, there is poor relationship and unsatisfactory communication.

Communication and strong relational links are crucial at every point across the net of relationships (e.g. safeguarding advisers, bishops, survivors, clergy, volunteers, offenders with agreements, respondents...) The list is long and **it must include external agencies and networks**:

Our Safeguarding Board not only has an independent chair but also a Local Authority Designated Officer; a police officer and someone from the adult safeguarding team. And the **Diocesan Director of Communications sits on** both the board and our response group – and her remit is not merely public statements but also probing the how, why, when and who of communication.

And that brings me to our commitment to be **aware of every person and perspective in any safeguarding situation**. Particularly important when the response group (*'core group' in many dioceses*) meets.

Too often people's suffering has been exacerbated because someone in authority has been standing too firmly in one position and has not been willing to stand in someone else's shoes.

Much more I could say, but hopefully other things can be said in response to questions...

So key messages in Gloucester:

- **Safeguarding is a Kingdom issue and integral to Christian mission and ministry**
- **It is the responsibility of all of us**
- **Relationship and communication are key**
- **This must include external agencies and...**
- **..the communication officer is vital**
- **And there must be attention to every person in any safeguarding situation.**

