

EALING ABBEY – REVIEW OF SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS, POLICIES & PROCEDURES

SUMMARY NOTE

Background

The review into safeguarding arrangements at Ealing Abbey was commissioned by Abbot Martin via the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service. This followed the prosecution of Fr DP for offences committed whilst a member of the Abbey community.

The review was carried out by a recently retired Detective Sergeant with extensive experience of child protection investigations and serious case reviews, and an Independent Social Work Consultant with experience of these types of review within the Anglican Church.

Terms of Reference

To:-

- Examine what steps were taken to manage the risk identified in this case.
- Evaluate to see whether procedurally compliant.
- Identify what went wrong.
- Make proposals as to how to better manage such situations in future.
- Audit current safeguarding arrangements within the Abbey.
- Check for procedural compliance including any recommendations of the Cumberlege Report not currently reflected in procedures.
- Make proposals as to any identified improvements.

Conclusions

There are some areas of concern and vulnerability arising from this review of arrangements and documentation:

1. There was no formal review arrangement in place to consider Fr DP's restrictive covenant. This has subsequently been addressed.
2. There was no active work with Fr DP to address and confront the areas of concern about his behaviour, with a reliance placed on established pastoral and discipline arrangements within the community. In the context of sexual abuse concerns it would be sensible to explore opportunities for independent, specialist advice and consultation to support the internal governance processes.
3. Fr DP was able to establish and maintain his relationship with his victim whilst living within the community. It is unclear the extent of knowledge within the community about the details of the restrictions placed on Fr DP. Whilst it is important to treat information about individuals with care and confidentiality members of the community need to have sufficient information to enable them to exercise appropriate monitoring and reporting of concerns.
4. When there is a member of the community subject to restrictive contracts it is unwise to allow employment of young people under the age of 18 within the Abbey precincts.
5. The Abbey Child Protection Policy is undated, does not identify a review date and is a statement of intent rather than a clear guidance document to identify and support safe practice. The absence of provenance details and review arrangements can allow such documents to be treated in a rather mechanistic manner rather than viewing them as a contribution to active, positive safeguarding behaviour.

6. The Parish Child Protection Statement is again undated and the review arrangements are not specified.

Recommendations:

1. The Abbey and Parish should adopt and comply with the National Safeguarding Procedures of the Catholic Church in England & Wales (www.csasprocedures.uk.net). Use of the Safeguarding Resource Pack should replace current reliance on the outdated Abbey Child Protection Policy.
2. Consideration should be given to sharing opportunities for awareness-raising and training in Safeguarding across the Abbey, Parish and school communities. This would serve to drive consistency and model an active, engaged approach to safeguarding as core activity in all settings.
3. Particular emphasis should be given to not only the policies and procedures relating to Safer Recruitment practices but also Creating a Safe Environment and Responding to Allegations procedures.
4. Consideration should be given to provision of advice and consultation to the Abbot and community when concerns have been identified. This should be separate from established pastoral and discipline arrangements. Such advice would encourage development of opportunities to explore the associated feelings and distress, with a view to supporting a focus on future practice and behaviour to promote and support safeguarding in its broadest sense.
5. The Abbey should not employ young people under 18 within the community to reduce opportunities for inappropriate behaviour and minimise the likelihood of allegations.