



Plymouth Safeguarding Adults Board
Plymouth City Council
Ballard House
West Hoe Road
Plymouth
PL1 3BJ

08th April 2016

Dear Sir / Madam

Safeguarding and the Catholic Church in England and Wales

This year will see an increased focus on safeguarding in the Catholic Church in England and Wales with the start of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse, led by Judge Lowell Goddard.

It is timely therefore to write to advise you about the engagement of the Church with the Inquiry and inform you about the current safeguarding structures within the Catholic Church in England and Wales. The safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults is at the heart of the Church's mission and there is no place in the Church for abuse. Today, the safeguarding of children and the vulnerable is a Church priority from the top down, and there will be no place to hide for offenders.

Victims have not always come first and it is recognised and accepted that things have not always been done in the way that they should have been. The Church deeply regrets all instances of sexual abuse and the abuse of minors and vulnerable adults.

After years of addressing these issues, the Church is looking forward to assisting the Inquiry in any way possible and learning from its findings and recommendations.

The Conference of Bishops and the Conference of Religious in England and Wales has established a 'Council', chaired by Baroness O'Loan, to oversee the Church's engagement with the Inquiry by for example:

- Coordinating overarching submissions made to the Inquiry about, for example, Church structures and canon law;
- Identifying for the Inquiry the procedures that have been put in place over the past 20 years and the improvements/initiatives currently in progress with respect to safeguarding and child protection;

As the Inquiry progresses, and the interim reports that have been promised by Justice Goddard become available, the Council will work collaboratively with the NCSC, the National Catholic Safeguarding Commission, to ensure that:

- issues identified by the Inquiry and its recommendations regarding areas still requiring improvement to protect children are recorded and communicated to the relevant church authorities;

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- any recommendations made in the Inquiry report are recorded and communicated to the relevant church authorities for their implementation.

Current safeguarding structures

The National Catholic Safeguarding Commission (NCSC) is the independent body which is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the Church's safeguarding policy for children and vulnerable adults, and for monitoring compliance.

The NCSC directs the work of the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS), which was established to implement improvement in practice.

Each Catholic diocese within England and Wales has a Safeguarding Coordinator who is responsible for working closely and collaboratively with the statutory authorities. Additionally, there are Safeguarding Coordinators representing different Religious Congregations in England and Wales. Any allegation against a person working in the name of the Catholic Church should be referred to the relevant Safeguarding Coordinator who has a critical role in ensuring that appropriate action is taken to protect others, once an allegation is received by the Church. They ensure that all allegations of abuse are immediately passed on to the police and participate in statutory processes to ensure that information is shared and risk is assessed and managed. Importantly, the Safeguarding Coordinator ensures that following investigation by the statutory authorities, the Church conducts its own internal investigation, following Canon law.

Lastly, I would like to make you aware of national developments that are being established to complement the work already being done by Safeguarding Coordinators to support victims and survivors. The National Catholic Safeguarding Commission has appointed a Survivor Advisory Panel to act as a point of reference on safeguarding matters and is also developing a model of support for victims and survivors to be implemented across all dioceses and Religious Communities.

I do hope that you have found this letter to be informative and if you have any questions arising from its content, please contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colette Limbrick".

Dr Colette Limbrick
Director
Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service