



Parish Safeguarding Audit Concerns about an Individual

Introduction

The Diocese of Coventry has developed a process for conducting parish safeguarding audits. The outcome of each audit is summarised in a public report, which includes recommended areas for further development by the PCC.

A parish safeguarding audit might also uncover a significant concern about a specific individual (e.g. the Incumbent, the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO), or another church member). The concern could be about their behaviour, attitude or competence.

It will usually not be appropriate to mention a concern about a specific individual in a public report; nevertheless, the diocese has a robust and transparent process that ensures that all such concerns are handled in a proper manner.

This paper describes the process for the handing of a significant concern about an individual that arises from a parish safeguarding audit.

Is this a safeguarding issue?

If the Auditor has a significant concern about an individual, the first question they must consider is, “Is this concern a safeguarding issue?”

A safeguarding issue would include:

- Someone posing a significant risk of harm to a child, young person or vulnerable adult; or,
- The disclosure of current or past abuse.

If the concern is deemed to be a safeguarding issue, the Auditor must follow existing diocesan safeguarding procedures. This would include the immediately reporting of the issue to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) and, where appropriate, the statutory authorities.

The safeguarding issue would not be explicitly mentioned in the parish audit report, since this could prejudice any investigation. However, it might have a bearing on the recommended areas of development by the PCC.

The remainder of this paper only applies to a concern that is not deemed to be a safeguarding issue.

A concern about an individual who holds the Bishop's licence or permission to officiate

This section covers any significant concern (not deemed to be a safeguarding issue) about an ordained minister, a Reader or a licensed lay worker. The concern might include:

- Inappropriate behaviour;
- An inappropriate attitude;
- A significant lack of understanding or competence;
- A failure to fully cooperate with the parish safeguarding audit.

The Auditor must give details of the concern in a letter to the Archdeacon Pastor and the DSA, with a copy to the Bishop of Coventry. This letter must be sent within one week of the parish audit visit.

If, contrary to the Auditor's view, either the Archdeacon Pastor or the DSA considers this to be a safeguarding issue, they must follow existing diocesan safeguarding procedures (including the creation of a safeguarding Core Group within 48 hours). The remainder of this paper would therefore no longer apply.

Depending on the role of the individual and the nature of the concern, the Archdeacon Pastor might:

- Initiate a relevant disciplinary procedure;
- Initiate a relevant competency procedure;
- Recommend that the individual undertakes relevant training, supervision, mentoring or a placement.

Within two weeks, the Archdeacon Pastor will write to the Bishop of Coventry regarding the proposed action. A copy of this letter will also be retained in the relevant confidential personnel file.¹

Where an individual is recommended to undertake training, supervision, mentoring or a placement, this will be referred to the Diocesan Training Partnership (DTP) by the Bishop of Coventry. The DTP will make the necessary arrangements and will monitor progress. The individual will meet with the Archdeacon Pastor every six months to discuss progress; this will continue until the Archdeacon Pastor is satisfied that no further action is required.

A concern about a church officer

This section covers any significant concern (not deemed to be a safeguarding issue) about a Parish Safeguarding Officer, a churchwarden, a member of staff or a volunteer. The nature of the concern might be similar to those mentioned in the previous section.

The Auditor must give details of the concern in a letter to the Incumbent,² the Archdeacon Pastor and the DSA. This letter must be sent within one week of the parish audit visit.

If, contrary to the Auditor's view, either the Archdeacon Pastor or the DSA considers this to be a safeguarding issue, they must follow existing diocesan safeguarding procedures (including the creation of a safeguarding Core Group within 48 hours). The remainder of this paper would therefore no longer apply.

The Incumbent and the Archdeacon Pastor will discuss the nature of the concern and will agree what actions need to be taken. It is the responsibility of the Incumbent to ensure that actions are carried out and to keep the situation under review; however, the Archdeacon Pastor, the DTP and the DSA are always available to provide advice and support upon request.

¹ In the case of clergy, this will be the individual's 'Blue File' at Bishop's House.

² In this paper, the term 'Incumbent' also refers to a Priest-in-Charge where appropriate. During an interregnum, the letter is to be sent to the Area Dean.