# Report for the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel

# – A View from the Parish(es).

I write this as volunteer safeguarding trainer, Chaplain to Readers/ Licensed Lay Ministers and Safeguarding coordinator for the Benefice of Redruth with Lanner and Treleigh which has five churches and three PCCs. The main administrative vehicle is the “Team Council’ which represents all the churches and is the hub of decision making.

The congregations range in size between 10-25 at three of the churches and up to 35 at the other two. The demographic is largely of retirement age which means that most who are prepared to volunteer for key roles are operating with little back-up and are doing multiple jobs.

The attitude to safeguarding across the benefice is generally very positive with a recent face to face basic awareness course attracting several dozen participants.

Four of the churches have a named safeguarding lead, one is covered by the other leads, and I oversee them all of them as Safeguarding coordinator. As a diocesan volunteer trainer, I teach face to face sessions as well as supporting Mandy Wells on ZOOM leadership training.

I am attempting to use the Safeguarding Dashboard as a tool across the Benefice rather than running 5 individual versions – one for each church. I am also trialling the Safer Recruitment hub.

**Key Issues:**

The safeguarding dashboard seems to be a good indicator of how the central Safeguarding team in the Church of England think safeguarding should be covered and it is indeed comprehensive however, because it is so comprehensive it is also quite onerous to complete.

Ideally there would be one dashboard for each church but appointing a volunteer with the time, training and motivation, not to mention the computer confidence has proved an almost insurmountable task.

* The Safeguarding Officer at A has not been able to do anything for a year having accompanied their spouse through cancer treatment.
* The Safeguarding Officer for B is the manager for a number of care homes, is widely experienced and knowledgeable but has little time to do paperwork /computer work in her spare time.
* The safeguarding officer for C has changed three times in a short space of time following congregation changes making obvious problems.
* The SO for D is enthusiastic, has done the training but is very nervous about using the computer.
* There is no SO for E because it is a small, elderly or vulnerable congregation which alternates buildings with the local Methodist church each week and nobody is prepared to do it although a handful have attended basic awareness.

As the coordinator (in theory) I:

* managing the secure online cloud space,
* collate the emails and reports
* fill in the dashboard and safer recruiting hub
* advise or provide risk assessments
* listen to and collect reports from safeguarding officers
* attempt to write reports and provide agenda items for all major committees
* encourage people to train
* attempt to put an administration system in place to record training and dbs checks

I do not accomplish all of this because of pressure of work for other things, sermons, funerals, chaplaincy and trying to find some time for myself to walk the dog!

*One of the things I hear most as Chaplain to Readers in Conversations about safeguarding is, “we are volunteers, we are not getting paid for this.”*

Safeguarding is vital. The spirit of safeguarding as outlined in basic awareness particularly so. But… all the safeguarding volunteers in the churches I know across the diocese are amateurs being asked to do a job that would be a good part time post for a professional.

The professional in areas such as social services, teaching etc all have their own jargon to be able to communicate and the world of safeguarding is no different which provides a hurdle for those who do not speak the lingo.

Training:

In the main, responses to training at any level have been largely positive.

* Some Readers / LLMs and others wonder why they have to do C0/C1 again before doing Leadership in order to renew their certificates.
* I have had a number of conversations about the daunting nature of the leadership course written questions. I reassure them that this is flexible and that they can talk to the safeguarding trainer or use bulleted notes, but the wording used in the pre course blub has already done the damage and put people off. This is a typical example of the professional writing for the professional and not for the amateur who they want to volunteer.
* I have lost at least three Readers from work in the diocese this year, who cite the requirements of safeguarding training as the last straw that broke the camel’s back. That they should do the safeguarding training is, of course, imperative, however a more diplomatic approach at encouragement rather than threat of losing a license might help here. For each reader who left I know three or four others who did the training under sufferance and a sense of duty rather than willingly.

My father, who was an Educational Psychologist once gave me an essay quote that he attributed to Walter Lipmann, but as I can’t find it I will attribute it to my father…. It applies here.

*“If in the pursuit of the perfect, we wreck the best that is possible, then the longing for the absolute is akin to madness!”*

I feel that we need somehow to simplify out training and our approach. The paperwork and invitation needs to be more friendly and approachable and should emphasise the spirit of safeguarding through good discipleship. The largely administrative, back-covering focus on the filling of forms and ticking of boxes alongside the sheer weight of tasks is undermining the purpose which is to have everyone aware and working together to make the church a safe place, and its people, the ones to go to for others outside the church.