



The Church of England
in Essex and East London
Diocese of Chelmsford

The Rt Revd Stephen Cottrell, Bishop of Chelmsford
Bishopscourt, Main Road, Margaretting, Ingatestone, Essex CM4 0HD
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23rd September 2019

Dear friends in Christ,

Action Required

As you know it is our aim in this diocese to ensure that our churches and all church related activities are as safe as possible for children and vulnerable adultsⁱ. This aim is shared by the House of Bishops and by the Church of England nationally.

It is important that all known cases of concernⁱⁱ about the behaviour of clergy and church officersⁱⁱⁱ towards children and vulnerable adults have been considered and dealt with appropriately. Therefore we will be undertaking a further review of all our files to ensure that any past cases of abuse that have not yet been dealt with are properly addressed. However, I am also asking all Incumbents to check that all known instances within their parish(es) both historically and currently have been notified to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, and any which have not are reported immediately.

This is obviously a sensitive task which may require looking at parish files and making some discreet enquiries. Where, prima facie there is a past concern, details of which are not known, it may be appropriate to consult a previous incumbent where possible. In the spirit of the Gospel we all want to protect and care for our children and at a time when the Church's safeguarding policies and practices are under close scrutiny incumbents will recognise the importance of being as sure as possible that all known instances of concern have been addressed.

Information is being sought on persons who have or have had a role in the Church where their role brings them into contact with children or with adults at risk of abuse. Information is not being requested on worshippers and those attending church activities who do not hold a role in the Church. You do not need to provide details of people subject to safeguarding agreements which are overseen by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team as protective measures should have been installed in such cases. The advice of the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser should be sought in any instances of doubt. Their number is 01245 294490.

Furthermore, if you are in any doubt on whether a particular circumstance should be reported speak to a member of our Diocesan Safeguarding Team however you are encouraged to report all safeguarding concerns or information which falls within the scope of this request.

Experience has shown that there have been some cases of alleged abuse to people over 16 who have later said that they consented. Any such cases should be included even though prosecution or cautioning has not taken place.





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I fully realise this is a difficult, sensitive and demanding task. I am asking you to ensure that everything that is relevant and currently known has been passed to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and that further information which may emerge in future is promptly notified to them. **Once you have completed your inquiries, could you return the attached confirmation form and table 1a to me at Bishopscourt, Main Road, Margaretting, Ingatestone, Essex, CM4 0HD by the end of October.**

It is vitally important that each of us makes this a priority. The scriptures often use the imagery of light and darkness, where darkness represents concealment and shame, and where light represents the revelation of truth. Darkness hides things that are forgotten, uncomfortable or broken and have been 'put out of the way'. They may be things that are inconvenient or of which we are ashamed or afraid. In darkness they lie where we can forget about them, but Christ is The Light of The World and brings to light things now hidden in darkness. He brings to light those deeds that have been concealed and the victims of sins who have been silenced or kept from view. The Light shines for those who need justice and healing and upon those misdeeds that have injured them.

Allowing light to shine on what has been hidden is a first step towards healing, not only for those who have been abused, but for those whose consciences are, or ought to be, troubled by those sins they have buried away beyond the sight of others. Sometimes it will take an external prompting for those things to be opened to the light of day and to the light of Christ but with such prompting may begin the path to penitence and forgiveness, the path to healing of long-hidden wounds.

Through this Past Cases Review, we are asking you to help shine a revealing light on any instances of abuse that may have occurred in your benefice and to help ensure that everything that ought to be brought into the light has been. Shining a light on what has hurt or frightened someone is a matter of justice for those who have been victims; sometimes it may also prevent further harm and sometimes it may be the first step towards healing. With that in mind, I thank you for your cooperation in working towards a safer Church.

Yours faithfully,

The Rt Revd Stephen Cottrell
Bishop of Chelmsford

ⁱ The term 'vulnerable adult' here refers to a person aged 18 or over whose ability to protect himself or herself from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability, illness, old age, emotional fragility, distress, or otherwise; and for that purpose, the reference to being impaired is to being temporarily or indefinitely impaired.

ⁱⁱ A **safeguarding concern** is a situation when there is worry about the safety or well-being of a child or vulnerable adult because of something seen or heard, or information which has been shared.

ⁱⁱⁱ A 'church officer' is anyone appointed/elected by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid, for example churchwarden, bell-ringer, organist or youth activity leader.