**Version 2 – 19/02/2017**



**Diocese of Lichfield; Core Groups and Major Safeguarding incident plan.**

*Guidance for the protection of Children and Adults within the Diocese of Lichfield*



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**Construction and make up of Safeguarding Core Groups; Lichfield Diocese.**

1. **Introduction.**

Core groups will consist of key personnel in order to bring a consistent, balanced and situationally specific range of expertise and functions together to deal with a safeguarding incident. They will be formed in compliance with Church of England guidelines and will when formed seek to be named within 24 working hours and meet within 48 working hours. Core groups will be formed after a DSA has screened incoming referral and it is clear that an enquiry will be required.

There will be some variation on core group members. For example where a case involves Deliverance ministry it may be that it is appropriate for the deliverance minister to have a place on this. However it should be noted that certain staff will be required to have a standing commitment to sitting on a core group should one be formed. Key staff who would be likely to be required for a core group would be as listed below;

***A designated chair person*** *To be taken from a rota of archdeacons, rural deans and suitable diocese officers. The person selected should not have relational or geographical conflicts of interests in relation to the specifics of any incident.*

***Bishops representation*** – Usually the Bishops Chaplain. ***( tel 01543 306002)***

***Diocese Safeguarding Advisor*** –Specific DSA taking and leading on safeguarding disclosure.

***(tel; 01543 306030)***

***Communications Director (tel 01543 306292)***

***‘Legal advice’ from Diocese registrar (tel 01952 211320) (the Registrar is not a member of the group as such. In emergency Niall Blackie’s home telephone number is 01952 541857 and his mobile is 07836 561681; Andrew Wynne’s direct number is 01902 578066, in emergency his home number is 01902 750191 and his mobile number is 07971 460153)***

***Archdeacon as appropriate and when appropriate.***

***Where individuals are not available due to sickness or leave an appropriate alternative proxy should be provided by the relevant department or team.***

***The D****DSA and chair will need to bear in mind:*

*Conflicts of interest and persons with direct knowledge of the case (eg pastoral supporters or witnesses) should be avoided*

*The Diocesan Bishop should not be a member*

*The Diocesan Secretary should not be a member if a diocesan employee is the subject of the work*

*In a case involving a particular body (eg Cathedral) a safeguarding officer from that body should be involved*

1. **Methodology of Core Group meeting.**

Where possible, core group meetings should be undertaken as a physical meeting. As a majority of attendees will likely be based in the “Close” it is suggested that this should be in an available meeting room at either Bishops house or St Mary’s house. Such meetings should be minuted in order to demonstrate how decisions are made.

Where logistical restrictions exist that make a face to face meeting impractical a teleconference or email discussion may act as and constitute a core group meeting. Under such circumstances teleconferences should have minutes taken and email discussions should be fully retained for file. The registrars are able to provide for teleconference facilities on request.

Core groups meetings to discuss cases involving multiple complainants or involving ordained minister/church officer should always be face to face.

1. **Process and time scales for Calling Core Group.**

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| **Initial disclosure received into Diocese Safeguarding team**  ***Day one*** |

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| **DSA discusses disclosure and takes detailed referral.**  On review of referral decision to proceed with enquiry taken. If enquiry needs to involve Police and Social Care these referrals will be made by DSA immediately – ahead of core group meeting. If situation requires immediate steps to safeguard children or adults these will be taken in consultation with Bishops office and Diocese registrar immediately (ie if unsafe to wait to core group to meet these decisions should be taken ahead of first meeting in consultation)  ***Out of hours CCPAS should provide for above functions and can be contacted on***  ***0845 120 4550***  ***Day One*** |

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| **Core group members named/invited/informed. Method of Core group decided, Chair of Core group and date of core group set (within two working days of originating referral).**  ***Day one or day two*** |

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| **Core Group Meeting one.**   * Outline and discuss case, issues and risks * Agree Actions, Time scales and future meeting dates. * Agree methods of communication between meetings.   ***Day two or three (within 48 hours of referral)*** |

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| **Further Core Group meetings as required**  ***As and when agreed.*** |

1. **Multi Agency Investigations.**

Where a statutory led investigation is initiated by Social Care or the Police, a named Core group member should where possible attend strategy meetings and report back to the Diocese core group. This should include the DSA, however may dependent upon circumstance include other core group members.

1. **Suggested Agenda for Core group.**

The following document is based on a statutory safeguarding strategy meeting format; it should be considered as a template agenda for meetings – with appropriate items added of deleted as agreed with chair at meeting.

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| **Core Group Meeting Agenda.**  **In attendance; \_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**  **Chair; \_\_\_\_\_\_**  **Minute Taker; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_**   1. **Mins from last meeting where appropriate.**   ***If not first meeting check what actions are completed and what remains to be done.***   1. **Introductions and apologies.** 2. **DSA to provide outline of referral or case progress.**   ***(Include summary of any initial actions taken prior to meeting)***  ***Report on involvement of statutory agencies***  ***Status of internal investigation***  **Departmental views; Coms, Legal, Bishops office, DSA**  ***How can we respond (if appropriate) to or support the complainant and respondent and or their families etc? Similarly as to officers involved and the parish etc***  ***Is ongoing risk still high or has this been minimised? (record members responses)***  ***Consider what additional risk assessment and management is required to make this situation safe?***  ***Consider policy and practice guidance compliance***  ***Do we need draft coms responses?***  ***Do we need to involve statutory services or NST if not involved?***  ***Are there any gaps on core group – do we need further expertise?***  ***Is it appropriate to involve other church bodies or officers***  **Departmental views; Coms, Legal, Bishops office, DSA**   1. **Who will do what and by when?**   ***(This should be achievable and realistic)***  ***What information or advice should be passed to Bishop or to the Diocesan Secretary or others as to decisions taken (information sharing boundaries)***  ***Comms implications***   1. **ANY AGREED ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS!** 2. **Do we need to meet again? If so when?** 3. **Summary by Chair and close.** |

1. **Data security compliance.**

We would encourage that the following statement is read onto the minutes, written onto any emails depending on the core group methodology (see above).

***“Members of this group should note that what is discussed in this meeting remains confidential between members of this group and should only be discussed outside this meeting on a need to know bases in completion of actions or safeguarding (and via a secure form of communication).***

***It should be noted that any information that may relate to an immediate risk to persons identified or unknown would necessitate the sharing of information with either the Police or other statutory agency. If felt that this is the case approval of the group and chair should be noted and recorded on the minutes. This relates to issues discussed in this meeting and does not remove a duty to act should a member of this group discover new information that may result in harm outside of or between these meetings.”***

**Appropriate consent to share information should be sought from those not present at the meeting.**

1. **Choosing Chair.**

Chairs will be chosen from amongst listing of appropriate archdeacons, rural deans and diocese officers. Active interests should be paid to any conflict of interest relating to case, relationships or area of normative service.

1. **Major Safeguarding incident/Contingency response**.

The national church deems a major incident to be a complex and high profile situation with the capacity to create reputational damage to the church at both a local and national level. An example of a major safeguarding incident requiring a contingency response would be a situation such as that which occurred in Chichester. Core group processes and procedures should continue to be applied with the supplementary information provided in this and the following section.

Should such a situation arise the person initially identifying the incident would ensure that the following persons are immediately informed;

1. The Diocese Safeguarding Advisor
2. The Bishops Chaplain (who will liaise with the Diocesan Bishop)
3. The Communications director
4. The CEO/Diocese secretary.

This should happen within one hour of a major situation becoming apparent. Discussions by phone between the person reporting and those persons above (and any others relevant persons), should then occur as required ahead of any core group meeting. It may be in these circumstances that a pre core group meeting involving the above is required.

The National Safeguarding team should be approached in the event of a major incident and offered the role of chairing core group meetings. The National Safeguarding team provides the following stipulations for taking on chair of core groups and these should help in identifying and defining what a major incident looks like;

1. An incident where a bishop or archdeacon/CEO is reported to involved in abuse. This applies to those currently in post and their predecessors.
2. A situation where there are multiple complainants of abuse as a consequence of the alleged actions of ordained clergy or church officer.
3. A situation where there is local and national press interest creating an associated risk to the national and local reputation of the church.
4. A situation where 3 above is highly probable.
5. Other situations of unusual circumstance where the National Safeguarding team is consulted.

The National church team will determine if it is appropriate and able to take on chairing of core group under such circumstances. The National Safeguarding team may also determine that it wishes to take a investigatory lead role during such a process.

1. **Initial Core Group during Major Incident.**

Should an incident be determined to be a major Incident (see above), the initial Core group meeting should include (in addition to usual core group members - see section 1), a direct invitation to the CEO/Diocese secretary. This is in order that the CEO/Secretary can assure themselves that the they have a comprehensive working brief of issues relating to the situation identified. Invitations should be withheld where there is a conflict of interest..

It should be agreed at that core group if the CEO/Diocese secretary will continue to be present at further core group meetings. If it is determined that the CEO/Diocese secretary and will not be present at future meetings an agreed process for reporting regular updates should be agreed in the initial core group meeting.