**Diocese of Brentwood**

**Safeguarding Communications Plan**

**AUDIENCE**:

* **Internal:** Priests/clergy, curia, catechists, education, parish volunteers and safeguarding reps, congregations, CBCEW.
* **External:** parish and wider communities, other churches, media, victim/ survivors, action groups, partner agencies (Police, social services, LAs),

**PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES**:

**What do we want people to do as a result of this plan?**

* Recognise we are taking this issue seriously and it is a top priority for us.
* Apologise to victim-survivors, acknowledge and accept mistakes/failures where appropriate.
* Know what to do/who to talk to if issue arises: pastoral, reporting it and media response.
* Understand that safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility, prevent issues arising in future and know what to do if they do.

**KEY MESSAGES**

* The safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults is **at the heart of the Church’s mission.**
* The Catholic Diocese of Brentwood is **fully committed to safeguarding in the Church** in order to ensure that we maintain peaceful, loving and safe Christian communities in which everybody, particularly young and vulnerable members, can confidently participate.
* Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility and is a priority in every parish. Our Churches are safe places for all, including children, young people and adults.
* We have **adopted and implemented the policies and procedures** of the Catholic Church of England and Wales, which is committed to safeguarding as an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church. We are a member of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA)
* We will **liaise closely with statutory agencies** to ensure that we: promptly and properly respond to any allegations of abuse, pass on allegations to the Police; appropriately support any victims; and hold perpetrators to account.
* **Victims come first.** This has not always been the case. The Church deeply regrets all instances of sexual abuse and the abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, and accepts that grave mistakes were made in the past. **Acknowledge and accept responsibility where appropriate.**
* We recognise the personal dignity and rights of all vulnerable people, to whom we have a special responsibility.  The Diocese, parishes and individuals in it will: take all appropriate steps to **maintain a safe environment for all**; practice fully and positively Christ’s ministry towards children, young people and vulnerable adults; and will respond sensitively and compassionately to their needs in order to help keep them safe from harm.

**Who owns the communications plan and its messages?**

* The Trustees’ Safeguarding Sub-committee. This is a body of Trustees and Lay Persons, each with a rich background in safeguarding who, assisted by the Communications Officer (Fr John Harvey), carry out this function on behalf of the Bishop and his trustees.
* The Safeguarding Advisory Panel (which has an independent chair and comprises of statutory and non-statutory agencies).

**HOW WE WILL COMMUNICATE**

**Our safeguarding messages should:**

* Be included in management and leadership meetings within the Church body.
* Demonstrate that the church leadership owns them
* Be present throughout our print, digital and word-of-mouth communications
* We should actively engage with volunteers, parents, and guardians, when deciding how to communicate the safeguarding messages most effectively
* Contain links with local organisations, voluntary and statutory, that are present within the community

**METHODS OF COMMUNICATION:**

**Print:**

* Diocesan newspaper, Ad Clerum, parish newsletter and e-bulletins, other publications such as annual report. Posters and notices containing key safeguarding information/contacts in all diocesan locations.

**Digital:**

* Diocesan website (home page links for high profile) and social media channels (needs care with regards to feedback if included and how to response), safeguarding video. Parish websites and social media (think carefully), use of email for internal messaging, weekly e-news

**External Media**

* Be proactive about comms, open, honest, transparent, be on the front foot
* Comms team and spokespeople need to bear safeguarding in mind in all relevant comms with external media.
* Reflect our comms principals:
  + Integrity, honesty
  + Openness, transparency
  + Inspiring, meaningful, engaging
  + Timeliness
  + Clarity and accuracy

**Word of mouth / community engagement**

* Training sessions – such as Catholic Voices. Address safeguarding in meetings, don’t avoid it.
* Make safeguarding comms plan and main comms plan readily available (internally and shorter summary externally – on diocesan website)
* Close working relationships between comms and safeguarding teams is absolutely vital

**EVALUATION:**

Regular evaluation of the plan (by the Safeguarding Sub-Committee) and obtaining feedback on it from clergy, safeguarding reps and parishioners using means such as surveys and focus groups.

Regular monitoring of our own and external media coverage in relation to safeguarding messages should be undertaken – and any lessons learnt.

**REVIEW**

Safeguarding communications plan is to be reviewed every two years, or after a major incident.

**Date:** November 2023 **Review date:** November 2025