**Commitment to Survivors**

**Introduction:**

Our commitment to survivors of abuse, begins with the adoption and promotion of a healthy and safe culture within the Diocese, which enables survivors to feel safe to come forward and know that they will be heard. We acknowledge the difficulties and barriers to coming forward to speak about abuse, particularly when approaching the Institution with accountability for the person who perpetrated the abuse.

In order to foster this safe and healthy environment, firstly we must acknowledge the failings of the past and we will strive to continually develop our practice and provide easier access to safeguarding support, with the recruitment and training of Parish Safeguarding Representatives, as well as all our clergy and senior leaders.

**How we will do this:**

Literature will be displayed in Churches explaining clearly, the pathways to reporting concerns and allegations, detailing how the safeguarding team can support those harmed through their contact with the church, as well as supporting those harmed by none church related perpetrators.

All parish volunteers will be provided with safeguarding training relevant to their specific role. This will include bespoke training in listening and responding appropriately to the experience of survivors who report abuse. We acknowledge the fear that may exist for many reasons around reporting the abuse that happened.

We have learned from survivors what some of these fears are, such as fear of not being believed, fear of conflict due to reporting, fear of being expected to forgive, are amongst some of the barriers that we have learned about from survivors. We endeavour to remove these barriers through our commitment to survivors. You will be believed; you will be treated in a supportive way and there will never be expectations placed on survivors, we respect your views and right to heal in the way that is right for you.

The Catholic Diocese of Hallam acknowledges that safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility and has a zero tolerance approach to abuse, therefore we will also provide access to basic safeguarding training to all Parishioners who wish to undertake this, regardless of whether they have a lay role within the church or not.

Survivors will also be given the opportunity to support the Diocese with initiatives that serve to support survivors of abuse. We hold an annual Service of Prayers of Support for Survivors of Abuse. This service is not a mass and is inclusive for all to attend. We invite all parishioners throughout the Diocese to attend in order to demonstrate their love and support for survivors of abuse.

Survivors are given opportunities to share their experiences as part of the service, this can be an anonymous account read out by a representative or survivors are also welcome to share their own story themselves.

It is our aim to promote and grow this service year upon year and for our parishes to arrange their own demonstrations of support for Survivors of abuse. We also aim to work with service providers to arrange activities of support for survivors.

Through these initiatives, we aim to provide healing opportunities for survivors and for survivors to feel encouraged that the Church is listening and does care.

**Reporting a concern or allegation of abuse**

Whilst we will of course support all survivors of any type of abuse in any way that we are able, we have a specific duty to support those harmed by abuse which was perpetrated from a person connected to the church. *Please see appendix A Flowchart - responding to allegations of abuse or concerns about children and adults at risk*

Every complaint made to us will be thoroughly examined, recorded and investigated.

People who are found to have committed acts of abuse will be dealt with robustly and held to account.

Deciding how and why to speak out is a personal matter and we want all survivors to know that the Diocese of Hallam is committed to:

* Helping and supporting you as a survivor through the process of reporting your experience.
* You will be offered a conversation at a time, place / medium to suit you in order that you can feel as comfortable as possible during discussions.
* The Diocese will listen, we want to listen, we are here to listen, and to understand the impact that abuse has had on you.

• The Diocese will reflect back what we have heard and seek clarity that understanding is correct and to discern from the information you have shared.

• You will be asked what support need’s you have. You will be provided with access to support throughout the investigation and beyond the conclusion of the investigation. Counselling will be made available to you. Bespoke support needs will also be discussed with you in order that we can better understand and support you.

* The Diocese will be transparent on what actions can/must be taken in response to what we have been told. In some cases, where information cannot be shared so as not to compromise statutory investigations, this will be explained to you.
* A Survivors Guide leaflet will be provided to you explaining what you can expect of the Safeguarding team and you will be advised that all allegations of abuse have to be reported to the statutory authorities which include the police, social services and the local authority, depending on the nature of the complaint, although some can be reported anonymously.
* The Safeguarding Coordinator will discuss with you the information we need to share and with who, during the safeguarding process. You need to be aware that the Diocese has obligations under data protection legislation to other individuals involved in the safeguarding process. It also has a responsibility to share information with statutory agencies, with diocesan insurers and legal advisers, and with the Charity Commission. These obligations and responsibilities will be fully explained to you.
* We will include safety planning in our work with you in order that we can prioritise your safety and wellbeing.
* If you are raising a concern about a Religious Order, you will be informed as to the nature of the relationship between the Religious Order and the Diocese in order for roles and responsibilities to be clear.
* Your wishes about ongoing contact with the Diocese at the conclusion of an investigation and assessment will be agreed with you prior to the closing of the case.
* Any issues raised by you about concerns in relation to national policies will be raised with The Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) so they can examine their practices.

• You will be informed of the complaints procedure should you be dissatisfied with any element of the service you receive.

**Learning from the Experience of Survivors**

The Diocese of Hallam recognises how valuable the lessons are that can be learned from the experience of survivors. We wish to invite all survivors of abuse who contact the safeguarding team, to contribute to the lessons that we need to learn as a Church.

For many Survivors, an important part of the healing process can come from providing insight towards shaping the safeguarding practices of the Church and in guiding us on how we can better support Survivors who reach out to us. For others, the knowledge that the church has listened and appropriate action has been taken against the person who abused them, can be enough to begin the healing process.

Any kind of feedback is valued, no matter what the format or type of feedback that is. We acknowledge that your views and insight will be meaningful and of the highest importance to our practice.

There are a number of ways in which the Diocese strives to learn from survivors and these include:

* You will be invited to comment (in any format) on the support you have received from the safeguarding service once the investigation has concluded. This information will be used to help us to improve.
* Your story will be discerned in order to identify any gaps in safeguarding policy, whether the abuse is current or historic, in order to assess the effectiveness of current Policy. We will review and amend where gaps are identified.
* Survivors will have the opportunity to contribute their views and feedback on the creation and development of policy/practice documentation and literature.
* Direct access to conversations with senior leadership of the safeguarding team and the Bishop, will be provided to survivors who wish for these conversations to take place.

**Quality Assurance of our work with Survivors**

The most important quality assurance comes directly from the feedback of survivors. It enables us to build on what we do well and to understand where we need to develop and improve our practice.

The Risk Assessment Management group of our Safeguarding Committee, receives anonymised reports about casework, which includes information about how we are supporting survivors of abuse. The Risk Assessment Management Group is made up of external members from statutory authorities. This ensures that there is independent oversight of our work.

The Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) is our regulatory body. The Agency sets safeguarding standards that we are audited against, by the Quality Assurance Department of the CSSA. As part of the audit process, recommendations will be made about how we can improve and develop our practice, with support for survivors being a key standard of expectation.

As a Diocese, we will also learn from published audits from our peer Diocese and Religious Orders as well as external institutions, in order that we have a wider scope of voices that we are listening to.

**We must learn from the failures of the past and take action to prevent reoccurrence.**

APPENDIX A Flowchart - responding to allegations of abuse or concerns about children and adults at risk

All concerns must be brought to the diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator or Religious Safeguarding Lead. Never delay taking action. If you are unable to contactthe Safeguarding Coordinator or Religious Safeguarding Lead you can contact the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) if you require advice.

**Quick Contacts**

***Safeguarding Representative***

Name

Phone

Email

***Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator***

Marie O’Donnelly

07909117964

modonnelly@hallam-diocese.com

***Local Authority’s
Designated Officer for Allegations***

Name

Phone

Email

***CSSA***

020 7901 1920

admin@catholicsafeguarding.org.uk

Each setting should complete this and post this sheet in accessible locations