Promoting a healthy and safe culture

Safeguarding Standard 1 relates to culture, leadership and capacity.

The Church of England published *Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse* in 2021. This includes the following mandatory requirements:

1.1 *Church Bodies must promote a healthy, compassionate and safe culture which facilitates disclosures.*

1.2 *Church Bodies must regularly review their culture using the section 'Characteristics of a healthy and safe church cultures', to consider how their culture can be made healthier and safer, and make any changes identified.*

Section 1: Responding well to all victims and survivors

Therefore, the PCC must consider how they can better promote a healthy and safe church culture.

In preparation for the PCC meeting

Where appropriate, the incumbent and Parish Safeguarding Officer should seek the views of known victims and survivors of abuse.[1]

This worksheet (including the '*Characteristics of a healthy and safe church culture*') should be distributed to PCC members prior to the meeting.

Ask PCC members to consider these questions:

- What are some of the strengths of our church culture?
- What are the main weaknesses of our church culture?

During the PCC meeting

1. Ask PCC members to share their answers to the above two questions.
2. Ask the PCC to identify some specific actions that will better promote a safe, compassionate and healthy culture within the church.

Ensure the actions are recorded in the minutes of the meeting – What? …Who? …When?

Repeating this discussion

The National Safeguarding Team recommends a three-year cycle for implementing and reviewing the *Safeguarding Standards*.[2]

This worksheet should be used at least once during this three-year cycle.

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[1] Please don't ask a victim or survivor if it's unlikely that they would want to be involved, or if you have concerns about it triggering past abuse.

[2] *National Safeguarding Standards and QA Framework* - page 4

Characteristics of healthy and safe church culture

Communication patterns

- The mode of communication adopted by people is "genuine dialogue", a respectful, person-centred exchange in which all people are open to being influenced, rather than "monologue disguised as dialogue."
- There is encouragement and welcoming of different perspectives and views.
- People do not feel they are "taking a risk" by expressing different views to other members of the community.
- People do not have anxiety or fear about raising concerns.

Behaviour patterns

- There is absence of coercive and/or controlling behaviour by ordained and non-ordained people and a "command and control" style of leadership.
- "Poor behaviour" (e.g. bullying) is challenged and resolved when it occurs.
- There is no evasion of responsibility to address difficult situations – for example, senior clergy or staff are not reallocated different roles when safeguarding concerns are raised about them, and the matter is addressed.
- Those involved in the Church Body support each other through difficult times.

Relationships

- Power is shared and distributed instead of being vested in a few people.
- Leadership styles are inclusive and consultative rather than controlling.
- There are no powerful elites or cliques dominating the life and affairs of the Church Body.
- Safe boundaries between people are understood and observed.
- No one is isolated or left out of the Church Body's life and activities.

Self-reflexivity

- Collectively and individually, the Church community devotes time to reflect on their behaviours and relationships.
- The tendency towards, and dangers of, clerical deference are acknowledged and actively guarded against.
- People are aware of the impact they can have on others.
- Feedback from others (for example, about communication style and behaviour) is welcomed.
- Leaders in the Church Body learn from failures and reviews and take appropriate actions to seek to prevent any recurrence.

Privacy and data protection

- The importance of protecting peoples' personal data and privacy is understood.
- People feel safe in sharing personal information because they know their privacy is taken seriously.
- People know how information about them will be used and they can trust people to use it appropriately to follow up their safeguarding concerns.