

REVIEW OF SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS, POLICIES & PROCESSES - EALING ABBEY

Summary report following joint interview with Abbot Martin on 18 November 2009 by Philip Wright (Safeguarding Officer – Diocese of Arundel & Brighton) and John Nixson (Independent Social Work Consultant)

Purpose of Review:

This review was instigated at the request of Abbot Martin as a result of a member of the community, Fr. David Pearce committing an offence whilst subject to a covenant of care drawn up by the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, Mr Peter Turner and the Abbey Superiors. The purpose of the review is to:

- Examine what steps were taken to manage the risk identified in this case.
- Evaluate to see whether procedurally compliant.
- Identify what went wrong which enabled further abuse.
- Make proposals as to how to better manage such situations in future.
- Audit current safeguarding arrangements within the Abbey.
- Check for procedural compliance including any recommendations of Cumberlege not currently reflected in procedures.
- Make proposals as to any identified improvements.

Community:

The Ealing Abbey Benedictine community has 17 members and serves an active Parish with 2000 attendees at Mass each Sunday. The community also supports St Benedict's day school (age 3-18) which has 900 pupils.

Safeguarding:

The Abbey is aligned to the Safeguarding Commission of the Archdiocese of Westminster. The community safeguarding representative is Fr Timothy. Safeguarding within the school is managed in accordance with DCSF and Ofsted regulations and guidance, including having a designated member of the school's senior management team with responsibility for safeguarding issues. The School Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (September 2009) was considered.

The community does not currently have a copy of the Parish Safeguarding Resource Pack. Copies of the Abbey and Parish Child Protection Policy documents were examined.

History of concerns:

In 2001 a former pupil of the school disclosed inappropriate activity by Fr David who had been the Headteacher of the Junior school until 1993. The matter was reported to the Westminster Diocese and the Metropolitan Police Service. No further action was taken because the individual victim did not wish to press charges and Fr David was no longer teaching. It was accepted that some inappropriate behaviour had taken place.

This incident came to light following an approach to Abbot Martin by a member of the school staff who had met the alleged victim socially and heard something of concern. Fr Martin had subsequently contacted the young man who was then in his 20's who reported two incidents of concern. One involved Fr David opening the boy's trousers and looking at his genitals after the boy had fainted. Fr David had previously been a dentist and was seen to have some "medical" knowledge. The second involved Fr David showing "unusual interest" in boys showering during a school trip to visit castles in Wales.

Eighteen months later another former pupil came forward alleging more serious behaviour by Fr David. These allegations related to offences in the late 1980s to 1990s. This was reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and the Metropolitan Police. Again, no further action was taken within the criminal justice system. However, the Diocese established a clear covenant of care with Fr David, including limitations to his continuing ministry, following a Risk Assessment by David Tregaskis in April 2005. This included:

- No exercise of public ministry
- No contact with children
- No access to the school
- Not to wear clergy dress if visiting family or friends

This case was subject of a Civil action which found against Fr David and the Abbey, ordering payment of damages by both parties. There was no extension of the restrictions that had been placed on Fr David by the diocese.

In January 2008 a sixth-form student at the school disclosed via the school safeguarding arrangements inappropriate behaviour by Fr David during 2006 and 2007. The young man had been 16 years old when this