

# **Bishop Alan Hopes message on Safeguarding**

I am Bishop Alan Hopes, the bishop of the Diocese of East Anglia. I would like to talk to you about the importance we place on safeguarding in our Diocese.

Pope Francis has provided us all with strong leadership and clear messages for the Church when it comes to the hugely important issue of safeguarding.

He says, "It means protecting people and showing loving concern for each and every person - especially children, the elderly and those in need, who are sometimes the last ones we think about."

These words drive the Safeguarding Strategy in our Diocese. They apply to all Church personnel – to me and to all our clergy, religious, employees, contractors and volunteers across our parishes, ministries, agencies and services. In other words, it is a message for everyone working in a position of trust in the Diocese of East Anglia.

The Diocese firmly believes that we are all a gift from God with an intrinsic right to dignity of life, respect and protection from harm.

We will not tolerate abuse by any Church personnel or others involved in our ministries and services. We are committed to protecting all who are involved in ministries and services, and promoting the well-being and best interests of children and vulnerable adults.

## **We can and will achieve this:**

First, by making sure that all Church personnel are safely selected, recruited and trained in safeguarding and that they accept their safeguarding obligations and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities.

Second, by ensuring that we have effective safeguarding policies and procedures in place for all diocesan activities, ministries and services in order to prevent abuse or harm.

Third by making sure that we create safe environments wherever our diocesan activities, ministries and services are conducted to minimise the risks of abuse or harm.

And fourth, by ensuring that we respond effectively where disclosure, suspicion or allegations of abuse arise, working closely with the statutory authorities in appropriate cases.

I would urge anyone who has been abused to contact our diocesan Safeguarding Team. We will listen to you with respect, and we will try our utmost to help you.

The Diocese of East Anglia has a well-established Safeguarding Office, which is run by our Director of Safeguarding – Michael Thurley. He does so in conjunction with our Trustees' Safeguarding Sub-Committee, which deals with the strategic elements of safeguarding, and the Diocesan Safeguarding Commission. The Diocesan safeguarding Commission is a body of safeguarding professionals, including members of the statutory authorities, who provide expert advice to me as the diocesan bishop. They also provide independent scrutiny of all of the safeguarding case work carried out within the diocese.

The Diocese works in conjunction with the Catholic Church's newly formed Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency. This is a new regulatory body that was set up following the Royal Commission into institutional responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

It sets the standards for how Catholic Dioceses and Religious Orders approach and deliver Safeguarding. The eight standards are outlined in full on our diocesan website.

Our Safeguarding Strategy has an over-arching principle – **Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility** - for me as the diocesan bishop, for our clergy and religious, and for all our volunteers who are doing such wonderful work in our communities.

This principle serves as the foundation for all safeguarding within the Diocese. It requires all who work in the Diocese, regardless of their position, to embrace and promote safeguarding and fulfil their duty to care for others and to protect them from abuse or harm, especially children and vulnerable adults.

With your help, we can achieve this. Thank you for listening.