

The Diocesan Group for Protection of Vulnerable Persons

Report 2013

The DGPVP has met four times this year. The group membership has undergone some changes due to movements within the Diocese. The group has been chaired twice by Archdeacon John Holdsworth and the other two occasions by Jean West, the new Executive Vice Chair.

Until now the DGPVP has had an exclusively Cyprus membership. As a policy was being produced and frequent meetings were necessary it was felt that it would be more efficient to have Cyprus do this piece of work on behalf of the diocese. However now we have come to the implementation stage it is clear that we need to have a Gulf representative. Diane Heaney from Dubai has been appointed to the group as the first Gulf member, and will work with the Group to understand how the policy can be implemented within the Gulf.

She has reported that, based on the experience of the Dubai Chaplaincy most churches do not display the policy or know what it contains and do not have procedures or application forms for the 'vetting' of teachers/leaders/helpers. There are no CPO's or IO's and no training in these areas. Different, but equally valid problems arise, from both large congregations and small ones. Currently children's work in all of the churches is led by helpers who are longstanding members of the congregations, often also parents, and are approved by the Priest in charge. Current provision for vulnerable adults has been, thus far, for the large part handled in a similar manner and deemed adequate, and if not, unable to be changed.

She has identified some people who might help form an informal advisory group within the Emirates, and the hope is that such a group might include representation from each of the churches and reflect the cultural diversity of congregations. It is intended that Diane will be able to join the Group twice per year.

In Cyprus there has been much activity, implementing the policy in detail throughout Cyprus parishes. Training sessions have been held with a number of Councils and other church groups. There have been no issues of note relating to the policy.

Risk assessments

Most parishes in Cyprus have now completed risk assessments relating to children and vulnerable persons. This has proved to be a difficult task given the many different churches and buildings involved, some of which are not owned by the Diocese. The risk assessments have now been completed and issues are being addressed. It is intended that these will be reviewed formally on an annual basis by the CPO or H&S officer where relevant.

References

The process of referencing is ongoing with most of those who work with youth, children and vulnerable persons across the parishes already checked using the Diocesan agreed process. Reference forms are now in use in each parish, and are available for download from the diocesan website.

Training

DVDs have now been purchased for the training of children and youth workers with regards to child protection. These are being used across Cyprus to train the relevant persons and this should be completed by the end of summer 2014. A dvd for use in training with regard to other vulnerable persons has proved more difficult to obtain given the very different circumstances under which we operate, so a more traditional form of training is ongoing with regard to this. There will be review if and when a suitable medium becomes available later. The possibility of our creating a suitable dvd ourselves is being actively pursued. There may well be a wider market for such a product. The training is being cascaded to all council members on understanding and recognising vulnerable persons.

The three Investigating Officers have developed a training document for all IOs using their experience and other available documentation. This is currently being reviewed by the Group. All Group-generated documents will eventually be available on the diocesan website.

Job Descriptions

Job Descriptions for both Protection Officers (PO) and Investigating Officers (IO) have now been developed and agreed and these too are available on the diocesan website.

Christine Goldsmith

January 2014