

Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors

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The Church of England has today released safeguarding statistics relating to the period 2015 to 2017.

The published figures are compiled largely from Parish and Diocese's own self-assessments and this should be a consideration when trying to interpret them. Any person or institution who is asked to assess their own performance is likely to give a more favorable analysis than any independent and external assessor might.

The report shows that in 2017 there were 3,287 safeguarding concerns or allegations recorded by Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers (DSAs), 12% of these related to clergy.

Significant increases were recorded and one hopes that this is due to increased reporting rather than increased abuse so MACSAS regards this as a positive development, however, the total recorded cases only relates to those reports which reached the DSA and it is impossible to tell whether concerns or allegations made at a local level made it up the chain in what is essentially a discretionary reporting policy.

Another area of concern is that two thirds of those reports which did reach DSAs were not reported to the Statutory Authorities and were dealt with internally or dismissed. This is largely due to the very high threshold that the House of Bishops guidance sets for reporting a case to the authorities:

“suspicion or knowledge of actual or likely significant harm SHOULD (not must!) be referred to the LADO and the appropriate Statutory agency who have a duty to investigate...”

This significant harm test is the same as Local Authorities use to launch a formal investigation (Section 47) and the courts use to decide on a compulsory intervention in a child protection case.

MACSAS believes that the Church should refer all safeguarding cases relating to children or vulnerable adults to the statutory authorities rather than wait until 'significant harm' has, or likely to occur. It has been shown time and time again that the Church's tendency to 'deal with things in house' has led to numerous serious safeguarding failures in the past.

It is also noteworthy that only 39 cases led to disciplinary action against clergy and only 33 cases led to disciplinary action against lay people - 2.2% and it is unclear and unpublished what the outcome of these procedures were.

Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors Chair's Report 2017 - 2018



MACSAS believes that until mandatory reporting laws are introduced compelling institutions to report all safeguarding concerns to the statutory authorities that children and the vulnerable will remain at risk.

Institutions will continue to 'deal with things internally', often protecting their reputation, image and financial interests rather than protecting children and the vulnerable.

END

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