



Director appointed to implement Catholic Church safeguarding reforms

The Catholic bishops of England and Wales have appointed Carol Lawrence to oversee the immediate implementation of wide-ranging reforms to safeguarding structures and processes in the Church.

The bishops have accepted all the recommendations made by the Elliott Review (see below), a “root-and-branch” review of safeguarding in the Catholic Church, and wish to adopt them without delay.

They have asked Mrs Lawrence, the Financial Director of the Diocese of Shrewsbury, to take up the six-month post of Project Implementation Director with immediate effect to ensure all of the improvements are fully and swiftly implemented.

Mrs Lawrence sat on the panel of the Elliott Review and was a key member of the team that devised the proposed changes.

Her secondment signifies the firm intentions of the bishops to drive meaningful changes in safeguarding throughout the whole of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

The Most Rev. Malcolm McMahon, the Archbishop of Liverpool and Vice-President of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, said: “This is a significant positive step by the bishops in response to the Elliott Review and forms part of our deep and demonstrable commitment to making robust improvements to safeguarding across the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

“I know that Carol will be a great asset to the project. She brings a wealth of experience and as project director will move the implementation process forward expediently.”

Carol Lawrence said: “I am delighted to be the Director leading the changes in safeguarding structures in the Church. This is an important moment in bringing about improvements in safeguarding and I look forward to working with stakeholders, particularly survivors with the wisdom they bring, to bring about transformation.”

The bishops have granted Mrs Lawrence autonomous powers to make necessary decisions to bring about reforms towards a “One Church” approach which will place safeguarding in a comprehensive model covering religious institutions and other areas of ecclesial life as well as diocesan parishes and schools and other settings.

The reforms will see the abolition of existing structures in favour of the creation of the single Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency with the power to enforce uniformly high standards of protection.

A National Tribunal Service will be established to address the canonical matters connected to clergy discipline and canonical offences locally and without undue delay.

The process of implementing the work of the Elliott Review will involve working closely with survivors, dioceses, Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, safeguarding coordinators, the lay faithful and others to fulfil the recommendations made in the Elliott Review.

Throughout the implementation process, Mrs Lawrence will regularly appraise such stakeholders of developments within the project, including its timescales and progress.

The first task is to set up a short-term task group, under the direction of Mr Elliott and Mrs Lawrence, to develop the delivery plan and this will be completed by the end of the calendar year.