



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNICATIONS

## **Jesuit appointed to new safeguarding role**

Fr David Smolira SJ has been appointed as the Religious Lead for overseeing the implementation of the new safeguarding structures on behalf of the Religious in England and Wales.

The role has been established to ensure the needs of religious congregations are met as the new “standards-based” safeguarding structure is established. It follows a major review of safeguarding in the Church by Ian Elliott.

Carol Lawrence, Project Implementation Director, said: “Fr David’s appointment completes the Project Implementation Team and I am delighted to welcome him.

“As a team, we are fortunate to have Fr David as he brings with him a breadth of experience and skills that will support the work over the coming months.”

Fr Paul Smyth CMF, the President of the Conference of Religious, said: “The Conference of Religious is delighted Fr David has agreed to take on this important role.

“We are wholeheartedly committed to making every effort to assist religious congregations to embed a safeguarding culture at all levels of religious life.”

Fr Smolira has worked in safeguarding for over 35 years, with a professional background in social work and psychotherapy.

He will take on this role for a period of six months and will be undertaking this work alongside his duties of directing the spirituality work of the Jesuits in Britain.

Fr Smolira said: “I look forward to this challenging but vitally important work of ensuring that religious congregations play their full part in safeguarding within the Catholic Church.

“We have work to do as we move forward with renewed commitment to higher standards in safeguarding, as well as improving our responses to and our support of victims/survivors.

“I know there is a great desire within religious congregations to do every aspect of safeguarding well and so it is very important to ensure that we have the knowledge and the right resources available to fulfil this objective.”

The bishops are adopting a “One Church” strategy 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.