

Hurt by Abuse Newsletter

February 2016

“Courage is what protects children and heals victims, just like courage enabled Jesus to throw the money-changers from the temple and stand up to corrupt officials.”

***Barbara Blaine, President of Survivors Abuse by Priests (SNAP)
cited in CCPAS ‘Caring’ October 2013***

“Spotlight”

The above film that dramatizes the investigations into the handling of child sexual exploitation cases in the Boston Diocese, USA has now been released. We draw your attention to it because it is an important film. It does not set out to attack the church. It addresses, as dispassionately as can any commercially driven film, the ease with which the institution of the Church was able to silence victims.

We are all aware of its potential impact, and both CSAS and the Catholic News Network have invited us to highlight any issues it raises. If you want to do so, please contact the CSAS Office, Maggie at Catholic Communications Network at maggie.doherty@cbcew.org.uk or the Safeguarding Office here.

As Safeguarding Coordinator, I consciously chose to watch the film with lay people who know nothing about the Catholic Church and little about sexual abuse. There have also been discussions with some clergy.

All felt that the film demonstrates, without sensationalism, the nature and impact of abuse and the struggles of people to talk about it. It highlights the impact of abuse committed by people of faith and within communities of faith and the additional trauma it engenders. The extent to which prioritising the “greater good” - the needs of the people and the city of Boston, and the reputation of the Church - led to neglect and lack of care for the individuals who experienced abuse is still shocking, though we are thankful that now in England and Wales the collective endeavours of “Towards a Culture of Safeguarding” have prioritised the voices of survivors and victims.

Support and Coaching Organisations

The organisation SNAP, whose early founders are represented in the film, is now the world’s largest support group for men and women abused in religious and institutional settings, with members in 67 countries. More information about SNAP can be found at www.snapnetwork.org.

Although we do not have such a large organisation in England and Wales, there are many advocacy groups campaigning and providing services. Further information is available on the Hurt by Abuse section of the Diocese of Hallam website (found at www.hallam-diocese.com/safeguarding/hurt-by-abuse/).

As we approach the 5th anniversary of the First Service of Sorrow and Reconciliation at Hallam Cathedral, we honour the advocacy and the struggles of Tony O’Farrall and his colleagues in SOCA and their campaigners to bring justice to survivors of abuse in Ireland.

Hurt By Abuse

At present there is no dedicated Hurt by Abuse worker in the Hallam but we are working on this. You can call the existing Hurt by Abuse number anonymously on 0750 235 3226 if you wish to and the safeguarding office will try to direct you to right support.

Goddard Enquiry

The Goddard enquiry into institutional child sexual abuse is now established and has been gathering information from Dioceses and Religious Orders in order to set timetables and priorities.

The Enquiry has also been provided with information about safeguarding challenges within each Diocese and about numbers of Local Safeguarding Representatives and their work. As well as numbers, we will be providing the stories and qualitative data behind the numbers. We would be glad to hear of any experiences – good or not so good – of trying to address issues about abuse.

Bishop Ralph and Monsignor Des Sexton (Vicar General), the Trustees and Safeguarding Commission are fully on board and aware of the requirements of the Goddard Enquiry and hope that the process can ultimately be a learning and healing one.

Information has been provided about how you can have a voice anonymously (if you wish to do so) via the Listening Project, which now has a centre in Liverpool for people who want to talk face to face to a listener representative from the Enquiry. Again check the website for more information.

Please look out for awareness and information events in the Diocese after Easter.

Go well stay safe,

Lisa Markham and the Safeguarding Team

“So pray for victims, by all means. Pray for abusers too. But I beg you to pray that each of you will find the courage to take tangible action – no matter how afraid you may be or how uncertain you may feel – if you have ever seen, suspected or suffered child sex crimes or cover ups, in your own church or institution, or elsewhere.”

Barbara Blaine