

Ampleforth Abbey – Safeguarding in 2022

We offer a heartfelt apology to anyone who has suffered abuse by monks, staff or volunteers of Ampleforth Abbey.

Every day we learn from our past to ensure that the horrific abuse that took place here is recognised and that the changes we make will prevent these terrible events from happening again.

We set out below some of the improvements we have made over the last three years as assurance of our commitment to real and lasting change.

Governance Reform

Three major reviews in the last three years have transformed our governance structures.

We now have lay trustees sitting alongside monastic trustees on our Board and a new committee structure beneath the Board which includes a Safeguarding Committee and a Safeguarding Panel set up as recommended by the Elliot Review of Safeguarding Structures and Arrangements in the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

Our lead trustee for safeguarding is a lay trustee and has had a long career in safeguarding. Our Safeguarding Panel membership is made up entirely of external professional safeguarding experts including members with experience in Children’s Services, Adult Care Provision, the Police and the Probation Service.

Following a governance separation from Ampleforth College, Ampleforth Abbey now has its own policies, committee structure and leadership structure ensuring that we can act in accordance with the regulatory requirements placed on us by our regulators.

Operational Separation of Abbey and College

Operational separation of the Abbey and College has allowed the two entities to be run as two independent organisations. The separation project, which is nearing completion, has defined independent arrangements for financial management, organisational and staffing structures, building and land access, estate management, IT systems, security and safeguarding.

Working with Regulators and Statutory Partners

The Charity Commission Interim Manager appointed in Spring 2018 was discharged in May 2020 as a result of the Charity Commission being satisfied with improvements made in safeguarding and governance arrangements. We operate a system of weekly monitoring of matters to report to the Charity Commission to ensure that a close and positive relationship is maintained with our primary regulator.

We have benefitted from expertise from the local safeguarding partnership (NYSCP) through their provision of interview panel members for safeguarding roles, contributions to training for safeguarding panel members and input into the development of policies and procedures. There is an open invitation in place for NYSCP to attend Safeguarding Panel meetings as they wish.

Regular meetings with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) have assisted us to review all historical cases and ensure referrals have been made in line with best practice.

We have commissioned a comprehensive file audit of all monks where there had been any recent safeguarding team involvement from the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA). The draft audit report has confirmed that no practice was found to be unsafe.

Embedding a Safeguarding Culture

Our Strategic Plan **“Choosing a Future Together”** sets out six objectives, one of which is to “Demonstrate our Safeguarding Commitment”. Within this the following high-level actions are identified:

- 1 *Embed a safeguarding culture that demonstrates committed leadership, vigilance, curiosity, care and kindness*
- 2 *Ensure that we train and support all who live and work at Ampleforth Abbey to deliver exemplary safeguarding practice*
- 3 *Offer apology, reparation and, as they wish, support to victims and survivors, as we listen to and learn from their experiences*
- 4 *Demonstrate legal compliance and best safeguarding practice*
- 5 *Communicate internally and externally our commitment to safeguarding and be accountable for ensuring we demonstrate this commitment across all our activities*

Our **Safeguarding Commitment** is published on our website, places emphasis on effective leadership and cultural change, and is used as a reference document in new staff induction and refresher training. This Commitment includes assurance that *“When safeguarding concerns are identified we follow robust procedures which include reporting safeguarding concerns to the local authority as if mandatory reporting were in place and removing people (monastic and lay) from the Abbey site as a precautionary measure”*

Safeguarding Policy is reviewed and refreshed every year to check it aligns with statutory requirements and best practice. Continuous improvement in practice is evidenced in the annual safeguarding report and action plan overseen by the Safeguarding Committee.

Robust safer recruitment measures are in place including a requirement that for all staff and monastic community at Ampleforth Abbey, DBS checks are refreshed at least every three years. A role-specific training schedule requires mandatory safeguarding training for new staff upon induction and formal refresher training for all our current staff and members of the monastic community.

Working with Survivors of Abuse

Our published **Safeguarding Commitment** includes these clear commitments to our ongoing important work with survivors of abuse *“We offer a heartfelt and honest apology, reparation and, as they wish, support to survivors and victims who have experienced abuse by monks, staff or volunteers of Ampleforth Abbey”* and *“We offer pastoral support to any survivor or victim of past abuse wherever this occurred”*

We also have a formal **Commitment to Survivors** which is published on our website. The commitment frames the way we will work with survivors and sets out clearly what survivors may expect of us in our engagement with them including the onward reporting of safeguarding allegations. All our staff and members of the monastic community have received training on engagement with survivors.

We have established a Survivors Working Group which includes an external advisory expert to ensure the consistent and appropriate consideration of all contacts made by, or on behalf of, survivors of

abuse. In consultation with the CSSA, we are currently working to set up a reference group of survivors with whom we might consult on future policy and practice in this area.

The most important impact of this work is, without question, on the survivors themselves. We are moved to read letters from survivors of abuse at Ampleforth who have reached out to us, and with whom we have worked to provide support, and learn from this feedback as to how best to respond to support others as they come forward.

Information on how to ***access support***, how to ***report abuse*** and how to ***make a complaint*** can be found on the AAT website along with our safeguarding policies and commitments:

www.ampleforthabbey.org.uk/safeguarding

October 2022