

Safeguarding Blog No. 3

It's been confirmed that the two Masterchef Christmas Specials will not now be broadcast. Gregg Wallace, one of the co-presenters, is now under investigation following claims of his alleged inappropriate behaviour over several years. Again, the media spotlight falls on a celebrity, and how the BBC responds to reported abusive behaviour allegedly perpetrated by one of its 'stars'. Setting aside the complexity of independent production companies employing Wallace, it's still the BBC that comes in for criticism. When did they know, what did they do and what happened next? As I write more people are coming forward with their own stories. This looks like something that is going to run and run.

So, November has been a busy month for safeguarding headline writers, following the publication of the Makin report into the John Smyth case and the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. I also note that the new Bishop of Lincoln is himself under pressure as he may have known something of what had transpired in one aspect of this case. The previous Bishop of Lincoln was also suspended over a safeguarding concern as well. So again, another large, influential public body is reeling from the consequences of someone seeming to have not responded well. When did they know, what did they do and what happened next?

An earlier blog referenced Mohammed Al-Fayed, and one report I read recently suggested his reported offending 'may make him one of Britain's most notorious sex offenders' (The Guardian, 28th November 2024). But again, the questions will be posed: who knew and what did they do or not do?

Our Church safeguarding training stresses the importance of responding well – hearing what we are being told, listening with great care, writing down what we have gathered and then acting on what we have learnt. It may not fall to a single individual on their own to respond, but our safeguarding policy and the structure of how we operate at church, circuit and district levels should ensure that proper and prompt consideration is given to every report of a concern, however small or significant it may at first appear. How we respond to learning about a concern can ensure prompt action to address it, and an early chance to promote emotional wellbeing. We may not always get everything right, but writing down what we have seen or heard, and consulting with our DSO as soon as we can, may well mean that we avoid becoming part of the headline story for the wrong reasons – the people who didn't notice, or worse, did notice and did nothing.

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