

**Sharing information with statutory agencies during a complex child protection investigation**

Recent guidance has been issued by the Home Office<sup>1</sup> about how information and records should be shared. It recommends that an information sharing protocol should be agreed between agencies and individuals taking part in such an investigation and supplying relevant information. If Church authorities are asked to assist such an investigation, the following specimen form of protocol may be of assistance.

**CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION-SHARING PROTOCOL**

Between \_\_\_\_\_ (bishop, incumbent, Bishop’s Child Protection Adviser)  
 and \_\_\_\_\_ (joint investigating team: police, social services, NSPCC)

**Reasons for establishment of protocol**

a. A joint investigation under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 is being undertaken by  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

in accordance with the government guidance publications *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (1999) and/or *Complex Child Abuse Investigations: inter-agency issues* (2002).

b. The allegations relate to (please give brief details of the offence being investigated)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

c. The Church of England’s House of Bishops’ Policy on Child Protection, *Protecting All God’s Children* (2004) includes a commitment to collaborate fully with agencies with a statutory duty to investigate child abuse.

**Protocol**

- 1 The Bishop and Bishop’s Child Protection Adviser will support the investigating team in establishing the whereabouts of information relevant to the investigation and will advise and encourage those persons who are responsible for any relevant records (including photographic, electronic and computer records) to provide the investigating team with the relevant information/full access to such records.
- 2 The Investigating team will advise the Bishop and Bishop’s Child Protection Adviser in advance on each occasion that records are to be inspected. The Bishop’s Child Protection Adviser or a person nominated by the Bishop shall be entitled to be present at any such inspection.
- 3 The Investigating team agrees to keep all information strictly confidential, subject to the following proviso. The investigating team may share relevant information, only with those entitled to see it, in the course of the investigation and in any subsequent legal proceedings. In sharing information the investigating team will observe all legal requirements and relevant guidance.
4. If relevant for future disciplinary procedures or other decision making, the investigating team agrees to furnish the Bishop with a report of the investigation including any statements taken during the process which have

<sup>1</sup> *Complex Child Abuse: Inter-Agency Issues* 2002, available on [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

been agreed to be used in this way. Any report should be agreed by the investigating team's legal advisers and include an assessment of any deemed continuing risk to children.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_