

Annual report of the Independent Safeguarding Panel to Diocesan Synod

MAY 2023



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Introduction

Where we are now

The Diocese of Oxford is continually working to make the church safe.

The Safeguarding Panel has been developing how it makes its work more transparent and accountable within the Diocese. The Panel is accountable to Synod and Bishop's Council. It also feels accountable to parishes, particularly to the volunteers who lead safeguarding and those who have been harmed or feel unsafe within the church.

We have examined how we report on our work as part of this commitment. We reviewed the annual reports across statutory agencies, charities and guidance for charity trustees. This format reflects our view of best practices in how agencies report their work.

Challenges ahead

This report summarises our work over the last year. We welcome questions and suggestions.

We want to become better at producing evidence about the impact we are making, including developing this style of annual reporting.

Values and Culture In Oxford Diocese

Where we are now

Our values as a Diocese are to be compassionate, contemplative and courageous

The safeguarding team have developed a value statement which underpins their practice:

We value and respect everyone we work with and we endeavour to be as relational, transparent and proportionate as possible.

Challenges ahead

The Diocese set three strategic priorities for safeguarding work in 2022/3

1. A strong safeguarding team: professional support, a learning culture; supervision
2. Working with survivors and respondents: timely and person-focused support; adopting survivor-led approaches and creating a pool of link people for respondents. We seek to build relational forms of practice.
3. Integrated working across the Diocese: putting the needs of parishes at the forefront; improving integration and working relationships

Safeguarding Structures in the Oxford Diocese

Where we are now

The Diocese has invested so that each episcopal area now has its own caseworker, with the Head of Safeguarding adding a Diocesan strategic perspective. The team is managed within Church House, reporting to Poli Shajko, Director of People.

The safeguarding work of the Diocese is overseen by a Panel. It has seen how the new structure has reduced the amount of outstanding casework.

The Panel recently met with the caseworkers. We were pleased to see the time being given to casework and prevention with good links being built with parishes.

Challenges ahead

The Panel will want to see how the capacity for casework, preventative work and strategic engagement is maintained.

There is a need to complete information sharing agreements particularly with the police.

Survivor Voice(s)

Where we are now

We followed through on our commitment last year and set up a group to work together through co-production to strengthen the voice of survivors in our system.

During 2022/3, we have seen the Survivor group establish itself and set its terms of reference and working methods.

We have been supporting survivors through the funding of counselling services and the use of support persons.

Challenges ahead

Working in co-production with survivors will be a distinct change.

We want to make sure that all survivors who wish to have their voices heard feel able to do so within the Oxford Diocese

We will welcome the ideas and plans of survivors for how they see working with the Diocesan Safeguarding Panel.

The impact of survivor's voice

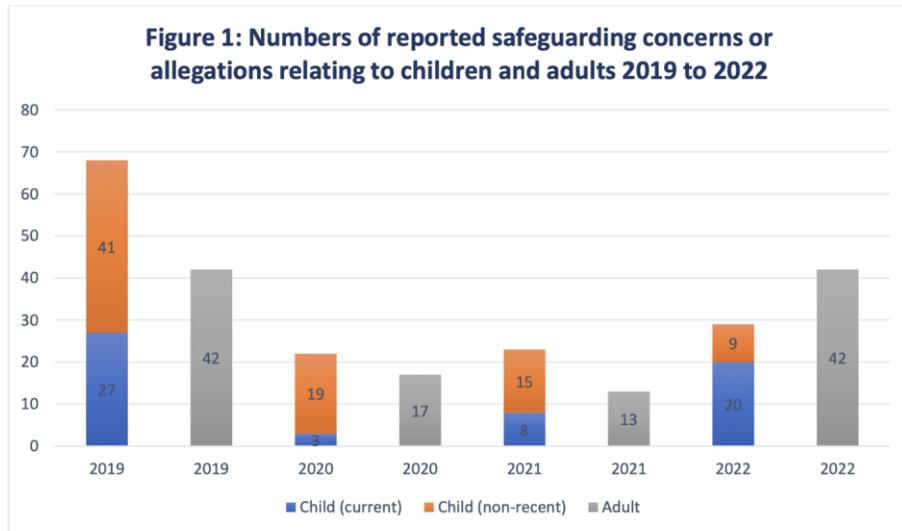
Survivors told us how important it was for the Diocese to set clear expectations of what a survivor could expect from us. Together we designed seven standards.

We have created clear information about how we respond and the support available on [our website](#).

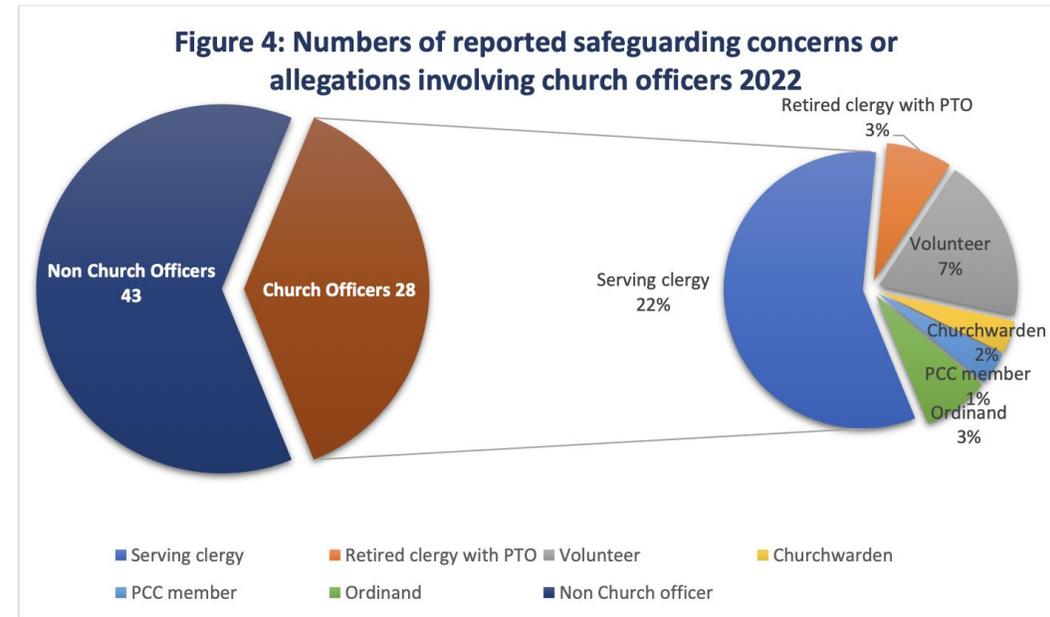
The Survivor Group wanted a consistent approach to the therapeutic support the Diocese provides. The Diocese has agreed that all survivors requesting therapeutic support will have an offer of 12 sessions initially, followed by an offer of an additional 12 in consultation with the therapist.

Safeguarding activity

Where we are now



Challenges ahead



At the end of 2022, the Diocese had 40 active safeguarding agreements in place to respond to people who present a risk.

Support to the safeguarding work of Parishes

Where we are now

The Panel was able to have a review of support to Parishes at its meeting in January 2023

We are supporting Parishes with the Parish Dashboard and finding ways of recruiting Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs)

A PSO working group has been set up to inform how the safeguarding team engages with and supports PSOs

Challenges ahead

Increasing understanding within parishes of the support and ideas we have to address capacity, particularly in small rural settings.

We would like to improve the support to PSOs within the Parish and think about the role of the incumbent, churchwardens and the PCC within this.

Linking with Parish Safeguarding Officers

Where we are now

A key message from our survey last year was the extent to which PSOs as volunteers felt overburdened – particularly by unrealistic expectations.

The Safeguarding advisors have effectively supported establishing drop-in sessions, a PSO working group, a PSO Handbook and actively prioritising the relationships with our PSOs.

Challenges ahead

We want to find ways to change the sense of burden that PSOs have reported.

How to tailor our support to PSOs in differing contexts

Training activity

Where we are now

In 2022, the Diocesan team delivered 101 training modules which trained 7,673 participants,

Supported 14 volunteer safeguarding trainers, who are vital to make this happen

The Panel has a good view of what we need to do to support people in meeting the training requirements. Effective action was taken to significantly reduce the number of roles where training was out of date.

Challenges ahead

The training offered to PCCs can sometimes meet resistance initially – although this shifts after training.

Managing the right blend of online and in-person training that supports everyone. Our face-to-face offer is important, but not as popular.

We are working with the national leaders to try and automate the recording of Domestic Abuse training with clergy records.



Training activity

Safeguarding Learning Pathway Delivery Jan-Dec 2022

Safeguarding Learning Pathway	Sessions Delivered	Participants Trained
Basic Awareness	e-Learning Module 9 - In Person	2953 43
Foundation	e-Learning Module 16 – In-Person	2225 166
Leadership	50 Part 1 & Part 2 Sessions 41 – Zoom 9 – In-Person	560
Parish Safeguarding Officer Induction	5 Zoom Session	34
Permission to Officiate	13 Sessions 9 Zoom & 4 In-Person	95
Domestic Abuse	e-Learning Module 1 zoom & 7 In-Person	1083 63
Safer Recruitment and People Management	e-Learning Module	451
Total	101	7673

Turning training into impact: what people have said after learning from training

“Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility, not just the safeguarding lead.”

“My overriding sense coming away from this training was the need to 'champion' safeguarding - and the important/unique position I have to do this. I have freshly appreciated the positive benefits that good safeguarding culture and processes bring to a church, beyond the necessary safeguards that it ensures.”

“Appreciating the support available to parishes through the Diocesan Safeguarding team, 31:8 and statutory agencies – “You are not on your own” is very reassuring.

“I came away from this safeguarding training greatly encouraged by how safeguarding is now as much about looking at a church’s wider ethos and leadership culture and not focusing simply on processes in relation to recruitment or disclosures etc.”

“The impact of language in liturgy and scripture and its impact on survivors negatively or positively, not only in a gathered worship setting but also pastoral settings.”

Quality and Audit

Where we are now

The Diocese has continued with the approach to Quality and Audit as a subgroup with the majority of the group being independent (not Diocese employees)

The group is given access to fully anonymised material to look at key themes, which have included

- Safeguarding risk assessments
- Current safeguarding agreements
- The experience of survivors

The group has seen good practice in all areas and identified where improvements could be made in practice and policy.

The meeting also creates a space for the lead Bishop and other senior staff to give feedback.

Challenges ahead

The assurance systems revolve around transparency and honesty, which requires working in ways which develop trust.

Last year we said we would start to track impact so that we can show what has changed as a result of this process.

Some of the impact from Quality & Audit

Some areas of good practice identified

With the survivor information, we have seen a move to web-based information with printable resources so that the information can always be up to date.

The Diocese has a new template for risk assessment and a revised format for agreements building on the issues identified through QARG.

When QARG reviewed agreements, it liked the use of “I” statements which drew out the offender's responsibilities to manage risk. This is in the new format.

QARG engages with practice in a new way for the Panel, and the open approach taken by the Diocese and the team is evident. Their honesty in presenting casework is commendable.

Some areas where policy and practice needs to improve

PSOs have little training/resources about supporting people with experience of surviving abuse (away from disclosure/investigation stages)

Work is still underway on developing reporting tools to show work completed in the Safebase system.

Learning Reviews

Where we are now

The website has our previous [learning lessons reviews](#). From 2020, these include a one-page 'seven-minute briefing' aimed at supporting actions, particularly for Parishes.

We have a Learning Review pending on past abuse at Tylers Green.

The Diocese and Archbishops' Council in 2022 co-commissioned a review of matters relating to the former Dean of Christ Church. This review is not now being carried out by the Independent Safeguarding Board and new arrangements for the review are expected to be set in place in 2023.

Challenges ahead

Although we have completed the actions from our learning reviews, we need to work to keep the critical themes about a safe culture to the fore (responding to sexuality, spiritual abuse etc.)

All our reviews have elements which link to wider Parish governance.

Past Case Reviews (PCR 2)

Where we are now

On 5th October 2022, the Church Of England published a report on its national overview of past cases of harm and abuse alongside Diocesan summaries and action plans.

In 2021, Oxford Diocese submitted a report of its review of past cases in line with the requirements of the church. A summary of this [is on our website](#).

We reviewed over 3000 files and had returns from all our 609 parishes to complete our work.

Challenges ahead

PCR2 confirmed that we have further work to do to strengthen working with survivors, which we have taken forward this year.

We have an action plan based on the Diocesan findings and from the national review.

The Diocese and the National context

The independent inquiry into child sexual abuse has concluded its investigations with its final report. There is [ongoing monitoring of the recommendations](#) made to the Church of England.

The Diocese is piloting a new working arrangement between the National safeguarding team and Dioceses. This takes forward recommendations 1 and 8 made by IICSA.

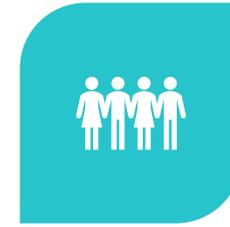
As part of this pilot, the Diocese is hoping to have independent assurance similar to the SCIE audit process, which is now several years ago.

The church's work in many places, especially in the rural areas of our Diocese, is increasingly with older people. As well as learning from the past, we must adapt and keep learning about safeguarding today.

In 2020, the
Diocesan
Safeguarding
Panel set itself
these aims:



LEADERSHIP OF THE
IMPORTANT PLACE OF
SAFEGUARDING IN PRACTICE
AND THROUGH STRATEGIC
DEVELOPMENT



WORKING TO KEEP
SAFEGUARDING WITHIN THE
CULTURE AND MISSION OF
THE THE CHURCH



PROMOTING
ACCOUNTABILITY AND
TRANSPARENCY THROUGH
LEARNING , AUDIT AND
INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY



DEVELOPING AN APPROACH
TO COPRODUCTION WITH
SURVIVORS



IMPROVING COLLABORATION
– WITHIN A COMPLEX
DIOCESE AND WITH THE
STATUTORY SECTOR

Strong progress has been made against all of the aims.