

**OXFORD DIOCESAN SYNOD****Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) Report****Summary & Purpose**

1. This report is intended as a background paper to help inform discussions about how all parts of the Church can work better together to ensure the Diocese is modelling best practice. It updates the Synod on safeguarding trends and developments in 2018 / 19. It also outlines the work of the Independent Safeguarding Panel, Chaired by Peter Hay, and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team in progressing actions arising from the findings of the independent Safeguarding Audit (SCIE – June 2017) and agreed priorities for 2018 / 2019.

**Safeguarding**

2. Safeguarding is a dynamic feature of the church's overall ministry, which requires 'mainstreaming' in order to be effective. 2018 continued to pose challenges, both nationally and locally, in terms of the number of safeguarding concerns raised and allegations reported. Since 2017 the Diocese has committed itself to an ambitious programme of self-challenge in order to make a step-change in improving safeguarding practices. Parishes, Clergy and Church Officers are integral to making the Church a 'safer place' and possess a repository of knowledge, experience and skills in this area. The Diocesan Safeguarding Team hope to engage with and nurture such talents in a joint endeavour to create a more consistent, reflective and responsive safeguarding culture, of which all stakeholders can be justifiably proud.

**External environment and impact on safeguarding work in the Diocese**

3. The Diocese submitted an annual safeguarding self-assessment to the National Safeguarding Team in August 2018. This provided an initial benchmark for safeguarding arrangements, against which local safeguarding demands and responses can be measured in future years. Recent additions to National Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance, that require amendments to existing local practice guidance to ensure full compliance, have included *'Responding to Safeguarding Concerns that relate to Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Practice Guidance'* (2018) and the publication of a new *'Parish Safeguarding Handbook'* (2018). A House of Bishop's Instruction (January 2019) and associated practice guidance regarding *Serious Incident Reporting to the Charities Commission* has introduced a new 'delegated responsibility' for the Diocese in relation to assisting PCC's to meet their reporting responsibilities. The implementation of this process is to be reviewed and a letter clarifying arrangements will be sent out to PCC's in the next month.

4. The *Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse* (IICSA) has set aside two weeks for public hearings in respect of the National Church, commencing 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019. It will consider past and present practice, policies and arrangements for preventing children and young people from being sexually abused.

5. Members of Oxford's Independent Safeguarding Panel have signalled their ongoing commitment to assisting the Diocese to embed a positive safeguarding culture in order to mitigate the risk of abuse generally and to improve responses to survivors. As part of its programme for 2019 it has scheduled a themed workshop, 'what can we learn from survivors?', to which Bishop's staff have been invited. It is maintaining a 'watching brief' in relation to proposals at a national level for a 'survivor's charter' and an ecumenical 'central

hub and community spoke model' of support for survivors ('Safe Spaces'), in which the latter's voices will have primacy.

6. A report showing current progress against the 23 'considerations' included in the SCIE Independent Safeguarding Audit (June 2017) was tabled for the Bishop's Council meeting on 9th May 2018 and updated for the Independent Safeguarding Panel Meeting on 5th October 2018. A summary of the latter has now been uploaded to the Oxford Diocese Website. Key achievements have included:

- Adoption of a revised set of Terms of Reference for the Independent Safeguarding Panel (endorsed at the Human Resources Panel in March 2018);
- Regularised meetings between the lead Bishop for Safeguarding and Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser;
- Incorporation of revised safeguarding questions into 'Articles of Inquiry' and review of other self-audit tools which capture safeguarding data;
- Inclusion of safeguarding as a standing item on Area Team Meetings with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser & relevant stakeholder's in attendance (as required);
- Meetings between members of the Safeguarding and Communications Teams to review website Safeguarding content – a link to the *Parish Safeguarding Handbook (2018)* is now available and hard copies are expected to arrive in March 2019 for distribution to Benefices / Parishes, together with a Safeguarding Poster for display;
- Ongoing investment in the 'Safebase' electronic case management system, which will offer improved reporting tools for monitoring and quality assuring responses to safeguarding referrals going forward – an updated 'Data Dashboard' is being developed for the Independent Safeguarding Panel and Bishop's Council Meetings;
- Review and updating of information from parishes / benefices concerning existing safeguarding agreements to ensure comprehensive risk assessments and risk management plans are completed and reviewed regularly;
- A programme of dates (between April – September 2019) for the Safeguarding Team to meet with Parish Safeguarding Officers and Authorised Listeners on an Area basis to clarify expectations and improve responses to 'working together' to safeguard others.

### **Safeguarding Training**

7. A 5-year Diocesan Training & Development Strategy was adopted by the Independent Safeguarding Panel in February 2018. Information was requested from parishes to understand the demand for C1 and C2 safeguarding training across the Diocese. 171 parishes responded. During 2018 attention was given to ensuring all core training modules were delivered within the Diocese; significantly increasing the provision of training sessions; and supporting Church Officers to understand training requirements for their roles. Additional Volunteer Safeguarding Trainers were recruited to the team in 2018. They have principally focused on the delivery of the C1 training module across parishes; however, some will also start to deliver C2 training modules in 2019. As of December 2018, there were 18 active Volunteer Safeguarding Trainers.

8. During 2018 face-to-face training was delivered to 3131 participants. In addition, 4652 participants completed eLearning safeguarding training. Work continues on the safeguarding training of Diocesan staff, including completion of the C0 eLearning module. A strategy is being developed around the safeguarding training of Diocesan Panel, Committee and Board members. The National Safeguarding Team delivered C4 safeguarding training to senior staff in March 2018 and the majority of those who were unable to attend that session have now completed alternative C4 courses (with the exception of 3 new staff).

9. A programme for training delivery between January - December 2019 is in place and currently being rolled-out. However, an independent review of the *Safeguarding Training and Development Practice Guidance* in 2018 has proposed changes to some of the core training modules, including the removal of the C5 refresher module and a requirement for Church Officers to repeat their highest level of required training every three years. The current C3 module is likely to be replaced by a new '*Pastoral Relationships, Confidentiality and Confession*' module for all Clergy. Subject to consultation, such changes will require revisions to the Diocesan Training and Development Strategy and may have additional resource implications. The lead Bishop for Safeguarding will meet with the Safeguarding Team to ensure a co-ordinated response to the consultation, which ends in April 2019.

### **Casework**

10. During 2018 the Safeguarding Team fielded an estimated 2,080 enquiries concerning Training; Disclosure and Barring Services and requests for general advice / information about safeguarding. Casework demands have continued to rise locally, akin to the experiences of other Dioceses, denominations and faith-based communities. In 2018 369 new cases were referred, compared with 113 during 2017, an increase of over 200%. Referrals in the first two months of 2019 have so far totalled 50. Where overlaps between issues of concern and the needs of Clergy, Church Officer's and their families have existed, opportunities have arisen for the Safeguarding Team to work closely with HR colleagues and Senior Clergy to identify and provide support and pastoral care. It is acknowledged that further work in this area is required to build capacity and improve timely access to authorised listeners, pastoral support workers and link-workers for survivors, complainants and respondents.

### **Disclosure & Barring Service Checks**

11. Completion of DBS Disclosure checks are fundamental to effective Safer Recruitment processes. The majority of parishes / benefices have adopted APCS as their preferred checker, whilst a small number have opted to use other organisations. During 2018 a combined total of 2,331 DBS checks were completed as compared to an estimated 1700 in 2017. The Safeguarding Team are currently updating the local DBS advice that is available on the Diocesan Website to ensure full compliance with the national *Practice Guidance: Safer Recruitment* (2016).

### **Cathedral, Religious Communities and Theological Colleges**

12. The Bishop of Oxford has formally written to the leaders of the above institutions inviting them to enter into a closer dialogue with the Diocese Safeguarding Team to explore how 'already-existing' safeguarding communications, protocols and joint-working arrangements might be improved. To date, this has resulted in several requests from TEI's and Religious Communities for policy focused consultation and be-spoke training. A joint meeting between the Archdeacon of Oxford, a representative of Oxford University and the DSA took place in February 2019 to discuss the possibility of an information-sharing protocol. Christ Church Cathedral has also recently undertaken an independent review of its safeguarding policies and procedures, which has recommended reciprocal non-executive membership of the Diocesan and Cathedral Safeguarding Panels. Such developments are due to be discussed at the next Diocesan Independent Safeguarding Panel in April 2019. The resource implications of this additional demand on the Safeguarding Team may have to be addressed via service-level agreements where these can be negotiated.

### **Multi-agency partnership working**

13. Multi-agency working is central to safeguarding work and members of the safeguarding team have continued to work closely with statutory partners, parishes and benefices in relation to welcoming, assessing and managing individuals who have offended but wish to pursue their faith. The Chair of the Independent Safeguarding Panel is in the process of attempting to improve the engagement of statutory partners in the monitoring and quality assurance of safeguarding practices in the Diocese through his liaison with partners in Thames Valley Police, the National Probation Service (NOMS) and Local Authorities across the three counties. The DSA and Safeguarding Caseworker continue to prioritise attendance at local Multi Agency Public Protection Panel Arrangements (MAPPA) and Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO) meetings when required. Police Public Protection Units and National Probation Service colleagues have also approached the Safeguarding Team on several occasions in 2018 and 2019 for assistance in establishing contact with safeguarding leads for other denominations and faith communities.

## **Resources**

14. The Diocese has been investing in safeguarding to support the importance that must be given to this work. The new Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA), Stuart Nimmo, was appointed in September 2018. Capacity in the Safeguarding Team was expanded by the recruitment of Sophie Harney to an additional 1FTE Safeguarding Caseworker post in October 2018. This augments the 1FTE Adviser; 1 FTE Trainer and 0.5 FTE administrative support worker who, as in previous years, continue to deliver services alongside freelance trainers and volunteers. Throughout 2018 it was necessary to engage a sessional safeguarding adviser to ensure continuity of response during the period of DSA interregnum; engage safeguarding consultancy for distinct, one off, pieces of work e.g. case reviews, independent risk assessments and professional supervision. The Diocese will continue to review workload demands given the potential impact of increased statutory and national church expectations in relation to safeguarding.

15. Further steps have been taken during 2018 to establish a culture of independent challenge and professional supervision within the Safeguarding Team at Church House Oxford. However, there remains a need to clarify how best to offer support and challenge to all engaged in delivering a safeguarding response across the Diocese.

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