

Safeguarding Review – Diocese of Chester

Commissioned by

The Bishop of Chester, The Dean of Chester and the Diocesan Secretary

Reviewer : Steve Long

Assisted by : Julie O'Hara DSA of the Diocese of York (TBC)

Main purpose of the review

There have been a number of important reports which the Diocese of Chester and Chester Cathedral need to consider to ensure that both create a safe environment for everyone but especially the most vulnerable. These reports include the SCIE reports on the Diocese in 2016, the Cathedral in 2019, the recent IICSA reports and most recently the Pearl Review.

Specifically the review seeks to provide a response to the following questions:

1. Can victims be confident that each and every safeguarding report will be received, recorded and thoroughly investigated and that appropriate action will follow including support to victims.
2. Is the DSA employed and utilised in a way compatible with her skills, experience and qualifications. This will include her role as a decision maker, position within the Diocese management structure and relationship with the Cathedral safeguarding Officer.
3. Are the governance arrangements sufficiently robust to ensure effective scrutiny and challenge of safeguarding decisions and investment in safeguarding by the Diocese
4. Is there a plan in place which will ensure that all Diocese staff and volunteers receive the training as required by the NST and that the training is delivered to a good standard.
5. Are there sufficient resources dedicated to safeguarding which will ensure the Diocese objectives and priorities are achieved. (Does the Diocese have a clear and agreed statement of what its objectives are?)
6. Does the Diocese have a communication strategy to raise awareness of safeguarding issues and improve engagement across the Diocese.
7. Does the Diocese have a quality assurance programme which will allow assessment of the level of implementation of safeguarding policy and practice across the Diocese?
8. Does the Diocese and Cathedral have a common and consistent approach to safeguarding which reflects a shared commitment.

The review will examine safeguarding arrangements, structures and resourcing in the Diocese of Chester and make recommendations for improvements. In doing so it will specifically, but not exclusively, consider the following issues which are subject of comment in the above reviews:

The structures in place in the Diocese.

The operation of the Diocesan Safeguarding panel and membership with particular reference to the level of independent scrutiny and challenge.

The responsibility for decision making for safeguarding matters including referral to statutory agencies, and how this is currently working in practice

The placement of the Diocesan safeguarding function in Diocesan Structures, to include line management and professional supervision of the DSA, the Diocesan safeguarding lead and which if any Diocesan body/ committee/ structure should hold the budget

Formal reporting mechanisms to senior diocesan staff including the Diocesan Bishop

The relationship between Diocesan Bishop, Dean and Chapter and Chester Diocesan Board of Finance. Including the current Memorandum of understanding between the Cathedral and DBF, any future possible relationships, and how best to ensure that no gaps are left between the various bodies.

Arrangements for sharing information with other agencies

Relationship of the DSA with parishes and clergy including provision of advice, accessibility, cover, communication, ensuring adherence to safeguarding policies etc.

The safeguarding function working well with wider Church of England bodies (such as the NST, other Dioceses etc.) including good working relationships and information sharing.

Core Management Groups

Examine the composition and operation of core management groups to oversee serious safeguarding incidents

Resourcing Issues

Consideration of the staffing of the safeguarding functions in the Diocese, including recommendations as to how it could best be strengthened to ensure a timely response is given to any safeguarding report.

How best use can be made of qualifications and experience of safeguarding staff and appropriate support given.

Adequacy of Budgets

Training

Examination of any training plan and arrangements in place to effectively deliver the national training programme. This will include what resources have been identified to deliver the various training modules.

Victims and Survivors

Consider what provision is in place to support victims and survivors and also arrangements for sending letters of apology. Including consideration of matters which give confidence to victims to report such as complaints policies and procedures

Cathedral

Consideration in the light of national practice guidance of the threshold the MoU defines for referral of cases to the DSA.

Consideration of the structure, staffing and capacity in the Cathedral to manage the safeguarding functions and cases that fall below the threshold the MoU defines for referral to the DSA.

Advice about shared working with the diocese at strategic and safeguarding case levels.

Note

In considering the above reference will be made to the recommendations contained in the above reviews and specifically what progress has been made in response to the recommendations contained in the SCIE reports.

The degree to which safeguarding is understood and embraced within the Church will be determined not just by having in place sufficient resources and effective policies and procedures. Critical will be the culture of the organisation and this will be significantly influenced by the words and action of those with leadership responsibilities as well as those with a specific safeguarding role. Levels of awareness and understanding will be affected by how effective the training is delivered and received. While this review will focus on issues which are integral to the culture, to adequately assess the culture and climate within the Diocese and Cathedral through a review conducted in large part remotely and in limited time, will be challenging and is acknowledged in these terms of reference.

Time scale

By 31 January 2021

Information, Data, and confidentiality

Information and data will be shared with the review team by the Bishop of Chester, Diocesan Board of Finance and Chester Cathedral in accordance with the relevant privacy policies of those organizations.

The report produced will be a public document, although confidential redactable appendices might be produced if needed.

In interaction with the Diocese, Cathedral, and DBF the reviewer will be regarded as working directly for the Bishop, Dean, and Diocesan Secretary, and thus can expect full cooperation and be freely included in confidential matters. Dispute in this regard will be dealt with as a matter of highest priority by the commissioners of this review.

Information supplied will be treated by the review team as confidential and only used for the purposes of the review.

If the review team believes confidential information should be disclosed to others, they will discuss this further with the commissioners of the review. This is not intended however to prevent appropriate whistleblowing activity to the National safeguarding team, or Statutory authorities in the event that this proves necessary.

Arrangements agreed

The reviewer has offered to conduct the review on a voluntary basis. We are very grateful to him for this.

Arrangements have been agreed to reimburse the Diocese of York for time spent by the York DSA.

References

Appropriate references have been obtained.

Areas outside the review

We are not looking for an audit as this is covered by SCIE

Casework or Core group decision making - quality control

Review of blue files

Detailed analysis of the terms of agreements and policies in place.

Detailed assessment of safeguarding arrangements in particular parishes (although any concerns noted should be placed in a confidential appendix for subsequent addressing within the Diocese)