



# Diocese of Leicester Executive Summary Report of Past Cases Review 2

Independent Reviewer

Elaine Rabbitt (Lead)

## Overview

The Church of England has conducted a Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2). In 2007 the House of Bishops decided on the need for a review of past cases of child abuse. This followed several high-profile cases involving clergy and church officers who had been charged with committing sexual offences against children. This became known as Past Cases Review (PCR1). In 2008 every diocese in the Church of England was asked to commission an independent review of all their clergy and church officer files and act on safeguarding concerns. Unfortunately, in some dioceses, these reviews were not all done as thoroughly as they should have been and so the House of Bishops asked every diocese across the country to undertake a further review (PCR2). This time the scope of the review was extended to ensure that any risk from church officers to children, young people, and vulnerable adults had been acted on appropriately.

The Diocese of Leicester had given significant thought and preparation for the PCR2 well ahead of the Independent Review. A PCR2 Reference Group was commissioned by the Diocese to oversee the Past Case Review 2. The Reference Group was made up of independent members from Social Care, Police, the Voluntary Sector as well as Senior Church Members and the Lead Diocese Safeguarding Adviser appointed in 2015.

The Diocese's commitment to safeguarding and the PCR2 process is supported by a video message from the Bishop of Leicester

In 2018 Bishop Martyn wrote to every parish and church setting, to check that all known safeguarding concerns about clergy and church officers had been reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

Since the original Past Cases Review in 2008, the Diocese has undertaken reviews of all deceased files and other clergy and church officer files not included in the original PCR1. The Social Care Institute for Excellence undertook an independent audit of the safeguarding provision in the Diocese and latterly the Cathedral. The Diocese has accepted the recommendations of each review which have either been actioned or are currently a work in progress.

Three Independent Reviewers were formally approved to complete the PCR2 review for both the Diocese and the Cathedral of Leicester; one left during the review. All three reviewers were independent of the Diocese of Leicester and the Church of England coming from different safeguarding backgrounds.

## **Objective**

The objective of the PCR2 was to ensure

- that recorded incidents or allegations of abuse of an adult have been handled properly, demonstrating the principles of adult safeguarding
- that the support needs of known survivors have been considered
- that all safeguarding allegations have been referred to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA)

- those cases meeting the thresholds have been referred to the statutory agencies
- that all safeguarding allegations have been referred to the DSA and are being/have been responded to in line with current safeguarding practice
- Volunteer records that are held by the parish are subject to the safer recruitment process.

## **File Information**

The total number of Diocesan and Cathedral Files Reviewed was 1,870.

The Independent Reviewers quality assured and standardised the methodology of all files reviewed.

17 historic files were referred to the Lead Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser for further action. None of the issues identified posed any immediate safeguarding risk. The overriding theme of these referrals related to past procedures that have changed/been updated since the appointment of the Lead DSA along with improvements in National safeguarding policy and guidelines.

## **Safeguarding**

It is evident from the review that the safeguarding response by the Diocese has developed and been refined over time, and is now very good more so with the recommendations of the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) audits of the Church of England dioceses and Cathedrals (Leicester diocese report published 2017). This reflects both the change to full-time DSA personnel, their professional experience, and the commitment made by the wider Church of England through its range of safeguarding policies.

There is a culture across the Diocese of staff members and clergy seeking the advice of the DSAs regarding matters where they identify a potential risk. This is a positive culture and can be attributed to the robust mandated Safeguarding training and relationships that the DSAs have successfully built with colleagues.

The DSAs have an excellent working knowledge of the policies, legislation, and processes that are key to their role with good links with both statutory and voluntary agencies. Case management is timely, risk assessments are carried out appropriately and proportionately, and case files evidence excellent recording.

The Diocesan website provides clear safeguarding guidance, policy, points of contact internally and externally for reporting concerns of abuse, support information for survivors/victims, and details of the PCR2 process.

The Lead DSA is accountable to the Diocesan Safeguarding Oversight Group, whose scrutiny provides that the safeguarding team's work is delivered in accordance with all processes and policy and with the appropriate rigour and professionalism.

The Independent Reviewers found a consistent process of managing risk and considering pastoral support to victims and respondents.

### **Survivor Strategy**

It was evident to the Independent Reviewers that the Diocese of Leicester was robust in promoting the objectives of the survivor strategy.

As a result of this robustness along with the excellent support of the DSA, nine persons came forward to speak with the Independent Reviewers about their own experiences.

Although the points raised by the nine were mainly historical, they identified that what happens at the time of the abuse, the reporting of the abuse, how the abuse is investigated, and, how they are supported throughout the process affects their journey to recovery. The overriding theme that arose from the interviews was the policies and procedures of the Church of England have failed the victim. The Clergy Disciplinary procedures are long and drawn out, the procedure fails to recognise the trauma to both victims and respondents along with the failure to recognise their vulnerability at the time of the abuse, and the power that a member of the clergy has.

Other themes related to, how the church implies forgiveness. The respondent takes preference with little or no consideration to what the victim loses, for example, their church family.

Lack of understanding of safeguarding, mental health, vulnerability, and recognising the impact of abuse.

The Independent Reviewers were assured that the Diocese of Leicester is committed to supporting survivors/victims and their wider families, the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers keeping in regular contact, pastoral support is given and, the diocese provides provision for external support or counselling.

The Independent Reviewers found good examples of victim support, counselling, good networking, and future safety planning.

The survivor strategy provides clear information as to the aims of the diocese to promote the wellbeing of survivors/victims and to ensure their voices are heard this is supported by a statement from Bishop Martyn

*“As a Church we want to welcome all and listen to all. Survivors are a key part of PCR2 and must be heard. This review, and safeguarding generally, is an integral part of the diocese’s mission.”*

The diocese took care to ensure the voice of victims & survivors in the PCR2 process, through:

- The appointment of a named person to the PCR2 Reference group who can advocate survivor perspectives in the process

- An open invitation to victims or survivors of church-related abuse who want to make representations to the Independent Reviewer about the response they have received from the church to their abuse

The survivor strategy informs of how the diocese promotes the PCR2 process, how to report abuse, and, how anyone wishing to can talk to the Independent Reviewers.

Within the Diocese of Leicester, the Survivor Care Strategy promotes ‘the purpose of speaking to the Independent Reviewers is to generate information about how victims and survivors have been responded to by the church, for survivors to comment on how helpful they found the responses and what could have been done differently to assist them more. These insights will be utilised to assist the diocese and the national Church Safeguarding Team to improve their responses to victims and survivors in the future.

As a result of the engagement that the Independent Reviewers had they were assured that the Diocese of Leicester is championing their Survivor Care Strategy and taking and developing learning opportunities.

The Independent Reviewers and the Diocese of Leicester would like to thank those who took part in this process their input being a key part of the PCR2.

### **Summary and recommendations**

The PCR2 of the Diocese of Leicester has met all objectives as set out in the PCR2 Protocol and Practice Guidance. The Diocese of Leicester has evidenced excellent working practices. There are recommendations at a local and national level that have been discussed with the Lead Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, and the Reference Group. These are detailed in a separate action plan.

Local recommendations related to improving the process, encouraging the voice of the child, standardising file management systems, and improving links with statutory agencies through a single point of contact, to build on the Survivor Strategy.

National recommendations related to the introduction of a national recording system, streamlining process and practice across all Diocese and cathedrals.

The Independent Reviewers found the Safeguarding Team to be dedicated, professional, and committed to producing a high standard of work with the interests of the victims/survivors uppermost, this is supported throughout the diocese from a senior level down.

