

Past Cases Review 2 Executive Summary



Introduction from the Bishop of Coventry

The second Past Care Review (PCR2) began in November 2019 when I instructed all 208 parishes in our Diocese to check their church records. In particular, I asked each parish to confirm that all known instances of concern about church officers had been reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

The review of records that fell within the scope of PCR2 resulted in the Diocesan Safeguarding Team identifying eight cases that were not known to the team.

- None of these cases required a referral to the Diocesan Safeguarding Scrutiny Group or a referral to the police.
- All eight cases were added to the Known Case List and the Independent Reviewers were satisfied with the actions completed.
- None of these cases related to Clergy (past or present).

Next, two Independent Reviewers began the task of reviewing safeguarding case files, and personnel files for clergy, readers and diocesan staff. In total, they reviewed 971 diocesan files over a period of about twelve months.

While undertaking their review, the Independent Reviewers gave consideration to the finding of the original Past Cases Review (PCR1) in the Diocese of Coventry, conducted by the Social Care Institute for Excellence.

Further information about the scope of PCR2 can be found on our [diocesan website](#).

I thank the Independent Reviewers for their diligent work. Their recommendations are included in this executive summary, and we are committed to implementing them in full.

I am also grateful to everyone who took part in PCR2. I particularly want to thank victims and survivors for their invaluable contributions, and I apologise to any victims or survivors of abuse by church officers.

Our churches must be safe and welcoming places for all. That is an imperative of the Christian gospel. Although the Independent Reviewers found that significant progress has been made in recent years, we must always work to improve the safeguarding culture and practices within our Diocese.

The Right Reverend Dr Christopher Cocksworth
Bishop of Coventry

The Conclusion of the Independent Reviewers

Having completed their work in the Diocese of Coventry, the Independent Reviewers reached the following conclusion:

“The Diocese has a strong commitment to safeguarding at all levels, led by the Bishop of Coventry. There is clear evidence of a commitment to support parishes in effectively managing safeguarding matters. The Diocesan Safeguarding Team provide support and guidance, including the proactive engagement with statutory agencies. The ongoing work with faith groups and other ministries in developing their practice is also extremely positive.

There has been significant progress within the Diocese in the areas identified in PCR1 and previous reviews ...the development made in a more robust training strategy and a greater understanding of all safeguarding matters. There is however still a need to develop further the survivor strategy – but both Independent Reviewers are confident that this will be achieved.”

Recommendations for the Diocese of Coventry

The Independent Reviewers made seven recommendations for the Diocese of Coventry. They said:

“We have made a number of recommendations following the extensive review of safeguarding practice, processes, and decision-making. This also relates to lessons learned from PCR1 and in exploring the practice within the Diocese. It must be noted that these recommendations are to build upon what is an already robust practice-based approach taken by Diocese staff to safeguarding.”

The Diocese of Coventry is committed to the full implementation of all seven recommendations, and progress is shown in our [Safeguarding Action Plan](#).

Recommendation 1

“It is recommended that there is a clear and consistent approach to all clergy, reader and DBF/Cathedral files.

Within the review both independent reviewing officers were very impressed with the file structure, content, and clarity of evidence/checks made within “Blue Clergy Files”. However, this could not be said for all Reader/DBF/Cathedral files where it appears they are administered separately and are not of the same standard.

Reader/DBF/Cathedral files were not as structured or robust in content as the “Blue Clergy Files” and as such both Independent Reviewers feel this should be reviewed for consistency in approach. It is important to stress that all relevant safeguarding checks had been done but clearly, there does need to be some further review of this by the diocese.”

Our Response

A consistent approach to all personnel files would be a positive step forward. We will set up a task group to consider how a consistent approach can best be achieved for all types of personnel files.

Recommendations from the task group will be implemented during 2023.

Recommendation 2

“It is recommended that agreed standards of safeguarding information be established for those individuals who are given a Bishop’s licence/permission to officiate within the Diocese from other denominations. At present limited information is held as to the safeguarding checks & training undertaken or the reporting protocols they use if they are concerned about an incident.”

Our Response

The responsibility for ensuring that a church minister complies with the relevant safeguarding requirements primarily lies with the denomination or church to which the minister belongs.

Nevertheless, we accept that it is appropriate that the Diocese of Coventry should see evidence of such compliance for any minister from another denomination who holds the Bishop’s licence or permission to officiate.

The procedure for recruiting ministers from other denominations and churches will provide greater clarity about the evidence that must be seen by the Diocese of Coventry, and also the safeguarding protocols that must be followed.

Recommendation 3

“The Independent Reviewers have been made aware that the NST are currently commissioning a National Safeguarding Case Management System (NSCMS), a decision we fully support but currently timescales for implementation are unclear. The current safeguarding CMS is clunky and time consuming to use so consideration of some interim improvements may wish to be considered whilst awaiting the new NSCMS.”

Our Response

The Diocese of Coventry developed its own Case Management System in 2016. This was only intended to be a temporary solution while awaiting a national system to be developed. Prior to 2016, all safeguarding records were kept in paper files.

The Diocese of Coventry was successful in its application to be amongst the first dioceses to use the NSCMS. The Diocesan Safeguarding Team are now using the NSCMS for all current safeguarding cases, and case records have been migrated from our legacy system.

Recommendation 4

“It is recommended that further emphasis is placed on developing support for Survivors and the Diocese needs to be able to more fully demonstrate its ongoing commitment to this process. Current practice is limited in term of support so it is difficult to assess any specific areas of development but more general raising of awareness given such low numbers within the Diocese.”

Our Response

In response to this recommendation, the Diocese of Coventry is committed to supporting and engaging with victims and survivors as outlined on page 5.

Recommendation 5

“It is recommended that a national information sharing protocol is agreed and adopted as soon as possible. It is of concern to both Independent Reviewers that there is not an agreed Information Sharing protocol at a National level in place. This needs to be urgently agreed and implemented within the Diocese to ensure clear processes and understanding around safeguarding risk and data, so that staff can act appropriately within the Diocese and with partner agencies. It is noted that locally information sharing protocols have been adopted.”

Our Response

The Diocese of Coventry – together with all other dioceses – had been waiting for two information sharing agreements to be issued by the national Church of England.

The first relates to the sharing of information between partner organisations **within** the Church of England. This was issued earlier this year, and the Diocese of Coventry has signed it.

The second relates to the sharing of information with partner organisations **outside** the Church of England. This has not yet been issued, but the Diocese of Coventry will sign it when it becomes available.

Recommendation 6

“It is recommended that case work recording is more tightly monitored and timescales set for completion to ensure that there is not “drift”. As indicated in the report the impact of pandemic is a consideration but this still needs further attention.”

Our Response

Since the commencement of PCR2 there has been an increase in staffing resource within the safeguarding team to support with the increased workload. This will continue to be reviewed in the DBF annual budget.

The new NSCMS provides data reporting on the length of time cases have been open, a process is being created to review timescales within the diocesan safeguarding structures.

Changes have been made to the Safeguarding Core Groups to clearly record timescales for both actions and review meetings. These will be reviewed within both case supervision and review meetings to prevent drift in case work.

Recommendation 7

“It is recommended that Coventry Diocese continues to implement the uploading of all historic case file records to the electronic safeguarding case management system.”

Our Response

The new NSCMS – see Recommendation 3 above – allows documents to be uploaded and attached to a person or case. This includes scanned paper records.

The scanning and uploading of historic paper files is not a high priority, since the paper copies are readily available to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. Nevertheless, we accept that it would be good to store all case records in a single secure system.

As a first step, the Diocesan Safeguarding Team will carry out a feasibility study to calculate how much work this will involve. The work will then be completed during 2023.

Survivor Strategy

The Diocese of Coventry is committed to building on the provision of support offered to survivors/victims. We recognise it takes great courage to disclose abuse and that there is a 'no one size fits all' approach when offering support, and that this can change throughout an individual's own journey. The diocesan safeguarding team will continue to work alongside an individual, identifying options of support both internally and through other support agencies.

At a strategic level, actions we have and are taking include;

- An agreement has been set up with the Diocesan Counsellor to offer counselling to those involved with the safeguarding team including victims and survivors of church context abuse where appropriate.
- A survivor representative – who was a member of the PCR2 Reference Group – joined the Diocesan Safeguarding Scrutiny Group in June 2022.
- We have made changes to the local delivery of the learning and development pathway to include survivor voices.
- We will continue to strengthen partnerships with support agencies who support survivors/victims in different contexts.
- We are recruiting a group of 'support persons' for survivors/victims who are engaging with a safeguarding process.

Section 4 of the [Safeguarding Action Plan](#) shows the progress that has already been made.

Diocesan Safeguarding Scrutiny Group

The Diocesan Safeguarding Scrutiny Group (DSSG) is chaired by Joan Beck, an independent chair.

The DSSG has previously had representatives from Coventry City Council, NSPCC and Diocesan Synod. The DSSG is currently looking to recruit new members to build on local partnerships. Current membership includes a Warwickshire Police and a survivor representative, both of whom were also part of the PCR2 Reference group.

Accountable to Bishop's Council, the DSSG scrutinises the development and implementation of diocesan safeguarding policy.