



## HEAD OF SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT TO DIOCESAN BISHOPS' COUNCIL

1 January 2024 – 31 December 2024

DBC MEETING: 30<sup>TH</sup> January 2025

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### 1. Introduction and Outline of Report

This report will provide details of some of the safeguarding activities across the diocese, including the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST).

What has been particularly apparent this year is that leaders, parishes, and the DST have worked together to respond well to safeguarding concerns of abuse & neglect. Equally, DST has supported our parishes who have been working hard to ensure their safeguarding arrangements are the best they can be. This has not been without its challenges during a time when over the last year the Church has been under intense scrutiny over the quality of its past safeguarding responses; it is not a time for complacency whilst further improvements are required as the diocese prepares for a September national independent audit by INEQE.

Over the last year there have been significant projects and changes that have informed our practice improvement and response. The [National Church Safeguarding Standards](#), published on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2023, has replaced the six Strategic Objectives. These can be [downloaded](#) as a .pdf. The Standards are broad statements of what the Church of England wants to achieve in the most important areas of its safeguarding work. Presented this year in a new format to include the National Safeguarding Standards headings, this report will illustrate another transformational year of practice improvement to support the 2030 Vision of a Safer Church.

### STANDARD ONE: Culture, Leadership & Capacity

Church bodies have safe and healthy cultures, effective leadership, resourcing and scrutiny arrangements to deliver high quality safeguarding practices and outcomes.

- **IICSA Recommendations 1 and 8** - In 2023 General Synod passed the amended Canon 42 is being implemented. This Canon addresses recommendation 1 of the [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse \(IICSA\)](#) to appoint a Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO), who will have responsibility independent of the bishops for professional leadership & management of matters relating to the safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults. Appointments of National Safeguarding Team (NST) Regional leads (IICSA recommendation 8) will support those DSO's. Given the size of London, the Casework Manager will be appointed as the deputy DSO to deputize when the Head of Safeguarding is absent.
- **Working collaboratively & Capacity** - There has been a continued improvement of networks and positive supportive relationships between the LDF, Area Offices and parishes.

With the appointment of Head of Safeguarding in August 2021, there has been a significant investment in the DST resource enabling innovation, proactivity and a structure of episcopal area Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors (DSA) under the leadership of the Safer Churches Programme Manager (practice improvement / National Safeguarding Standards) and a Casework Manager (responding well). A former prison chaplain has also been recruited as a volunteer. Such a

capacity has enabled the DST to also have oversight and work collaboratively with other worshipping communities within the jurisdiction of London. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Service Level Agreements (SLA) that are either in place or planned to be drawn up include Westminster Abbey, St Paul's Cathedral, Religious Communities, Chapels Royal (who have bought into the service), Holy Trinity Brompton, select larger churches who have a paid Parish safeguarding Officer (PSO), CCX and Theological Educational Institutions (TEI). In addition, a review to support the Anglican Communion Office (ACO) was completed this year with recommendations to support their safeguarding service practice improvement. I also attend both the St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey Safeguarding Advisory Group (SAG).

Area Offices have also contributed to both an improved culture and preventative measures with the outcome of increasing the active users of the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard (PSD) from 83% to 92%, exceeding the year end key performance indicator of 90%. The Safer Churches Programme Manager is a member of the National Church focus group which has:

- ❖ Revised the Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSO) role description
- ❖ Created a suite of videos on the benefits of the Parish Safeguarding Dashboards
- ❖ Compiled a comprehensive PSO Welcome and Information pack
- ❖ Worked on PSO Induction and Extended learning modules
- ❖ Worked on a library of 27 targeted leaflets, also available in smaller "bitesize" formats

These resources are imperative to influence change and share good practice as well as supporting and valuing our PSO's.

269 of our 500 plus PSOs have completed the National Training Programme that has been delivered by the area DSAs.

Monthly PSO drop-ins have been well received with an average attendance of 34.

Each episcopal area DSA reports to and when necessary, attends the Area Council meetings. Further positive outcomes include many parishes participating in Safeguarding Sunday and safeguarding being more consistently an agenda item at PCC meetings.

Improved working relationships have flourished including the Directors of Ministry and Ambition & Priority leads. Compassionate Communities have produced guidance for parishes running poverty initiatives such as warm hubs and foodbanks to spot the signs of abuse, particularly focusing on keeping people safe from human trafficking & modern slavery.

Children & Youth requested an audit to consider any improvements in their service delivery and are currently embedding the recommendations from this process.

➤ ***Inspection, Governance & the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP)*** – The DSAP Chair has transformed the DSAP into an active panel of supportive oversight and challenge. The panel has met quarterly to advise on key strategic objectives, policies & procedures and included wider diocesan teams such as Children & Youth, Compassionate Communities and the Ministries team. The addition of new independent members of the panel has further strengthened its effectiveness. Several independent reviews have been conducted to provide oversight, recommendations and quality assurance. A development day was also held this year.

## **STANDARD TWO: Prevention**

Church bodies have in place a planned range of measures which together are effective in preventing abuse in their context.

➤ ***The Diocesan Safeguarding Policy, & Information Sharing Agreements*** – The policy was subject to an annual review. The safeguarding communications 'plan on a page' has been renewed to help bring to life the five national safeguarding standards. Several information sharing agreements have been developed to streamline the sharing of intelligence compliant with a legal framework. This includes the Westminster diocese (Catholic), the Royal School of Music, the Chapels Royal, the National Police Chiefs Council and the policing Hydrant Programme.

- **Safer Recruitment & People Management** – These practices form part of a network of checks and balances, which will reduce the possibility of appointing those individuals who pose a risk of harm to children, young people or adults at risk of harm. Area Officers, Human Resources (HR) and DST work collaboratively. All HR staff have undertaken the Church of England's safer recruitment training, as have relevant managers. The diocese has been uncompromising in this standard. HR has also refreshed several People Management policies including lone working. Suzy Lamplugh training has been arranged.
- **Vetting and Barring Checks** – The diocese contracts 31:8 for its Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks to verify the suitability of those applying to roles which involve working with people at risk of harm. The following data has been provided for the past year:
  - ❖ 3808 DBS applications were submitted by the diocese (2023:3695).
  - ❖ £60,000 is budgeted from the Safeguarding budget.
  - ❖ 30 were returned as “blemished” returns (subject to a police notice) that were risk assessed and resolved by the DST (2023:24).
  - ❖ 265 Clergy Current Status Letter (CCSL) requests were completed by the DST (2023:144).

### STANDARD THREE: Recognising, Assessing & Managing Risk

Risk assessments, safety plans and associated processes are of a high quality and result in positive outcomes. The assessment and management of risk is underpinned by effective partnership working.

- **Risk Register** – Safeguarding continues to feature on the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) and overseen by the DSAP. The Director of People attends and reports to the ARC.
- **Partnership Working** – The DST and diocese has continued to build strong working relationships both internally and externally with statutory agencies and local authorities. The challenge here is the number of local authority boroughs across London and Spelthorne borough of Surrey but single points of contacts have been established in the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) network and policing. There is joint working with Faith Liaison Officers across faith groups.
- **Operational & Safeguarding Safety Plans (formerly Agreements)** – Following consistent implementation and training from the National Safeguarding Team (Learning & Development) the Casework Manager (CWM) has reviewed and improved upon the practices in supporting the parishes. An average of 36 live safeguarding agreements were in place each month, managed & reviewed by the DST supporting the parishes in a timely manner depending on risk. The Lucy Faithful Foundation completed training to DST and producing a video to roll out to PSOs and those supporters of sex offenders who worship in our communities, to ensure they themselves are not adversely influenced and able to keep our children safe. The Foundation are available for follow-up consultation with supporters when required.

The Safeguarding Case Management (Core) Groups with oversight and management of cases ensure that consideration is given to the risk associated with a respondent and a trained Link Person is offered. National training has taken place this year, but more trained link persons are required to replace our interim and resilience position of trained accompaniers.

An out of hours service is contracted to 31:8 to ensure that advice is provided 24/7 in support of the diocese.

- **The Safer Churches Programme of Work (SCPW - Practice improvement)** is coordinated and managed by the Safer Churches Programme Manager (SCPM) designed to drive the business of safeguarding across the diocese and capturing a list of longer-term activities under the five national safeguarding standards. Good progress has been made this year and aligned to the National Safeguarding Standards.
- **National Reviews** – Several significant reviews into past abuse within the Church were published in 2024 including Soul Survivor and the Makin Report. The recommendations and learning from these

reviews have been transposed into the SCPW to benchmark against the diocese safeguarding arrangements. The Bishop of London has commissioned a response group to be Chaired by the Deputy Registrar.

- ***Diocesan and local good practice & lessons learned (LLR) Reviews*** – Several LLR reviews have been completed by independent reviewers and overseen by the DSAP. The Head of Safeguarding and an Archdeacon are members of a Steering Group resulting from an independent review of Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) safeguarding arrangements.

## STANDARD FOUR: Victims & Survivors

Victims and survivors experience the timeliness and quality of Church bodies' responses to disclosures, and their subsequent support, as positively meeting their needs, including their search for justice and helping their healing process.

- ***The National Safeguarding Case Management System (NSCMS)*** – Known as MyConcern, implemented in November 2023 is now embedded into the DST practices to manage casework effectively and support victims and survivors. A challenging KPI was set last year to ensure that every case is updated every 14 days to ensure safeguarding risk is regularly considered and to ensure that victims & survivors continue to be offered support.
- ***Survivor Reference Group*** - The [survivor engagement national survey](#) was published in October 2023. The National Church Partnerships & Engagement Lead presented to the November 2023 DSAP and has been a critical friend to support our ongoing response to survivor voice and engagement. We have used this good practice to co-produce a Survivor Reference Group as a pilot with Southwark diocese. This Group is work in progress but has already reported to both DSAPs.

The response and support that victims and survivors can expect from the diocese is outlined in the House of Bishop's Guidance <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual/responding-well-victims-and-survivors-abuse>. I recommend all trustees to take the time to view this material. There is good compliance with this guidance as we learn to respond better as a Church. This guidance is at the heart of an average of ninety-nine safeguarding referrals per month that are triaged by the Casework Manager enabling the DST and diocese to respond well. A duty DSA system ensures that there is 100% compliance in this key performance indicator (KPI) in assessing a new referral within 24 hours or the next working day. An average of nine Safeguarding Case Management Groups chaired by the Head of Safeguarding also ensures the victim and survivors needs are put first as nothing is more important than the safeguarding of our children, young people and adults at risk (vulnerable adults).

All bishops within the diocese are open and have made apologies when victims & survivors have required it, irrespective of whether the abuse has been recent or non-recent.

From the latter end of 2021 a specific budget has been set aside to ensure that victims & survivors of church-based abuse have been offered and provided with therapeutic support or supported with an application to the national Interim Support Scheme (ISS). A leaflet has been produced and reviewed for all victims & survivors to signpost them to professional and specialist wellbeing support.

## STANDARD FIVE: Learning, Supervision & Support

All those engaged in safeguarding related activity in Church bodies receive the type and level of learning, professional development, support and supervision necessary to respond to safeguarding situations, victims and survivors, and respondents effectively.

- ***Continuous Professional Development (CPD)*** – CPD across the diocese has been a priority for several years. Consistent with previous years DST has had a CPD plan to be the best they can be in responding well and supporting parishes and in knowing their business raising their reputation and trust & confidence in the safeguarding service. The team has a set bespoke specialist learning programme, that has included spiritual abuse and trauma informed training, and have monthly one to one supervision and annual (minimum) mandatory clinical supervision and resilience check-in. The Willesden area

vacancy was filled in February and with an induction programme she has flourished since. The team attended the National Safeguarding Teams conference.

Every diocesan Leadership training session was supported by a DSA for additional local context and to answer questions relating to case studies or specialist queries. 50 leadership courses (1000 capacity) were delivered in 2024 with 789 attendees but 22% did not attend, a reduction from 28% in 2023. In anticipation of this overbookings were made, but this had a financial impact as a further 211 individuals could have been trained. Excellent feedback was received as an alternative provider (Jill Webb & Associates) with significant cost savings from 2023, so the 2025 contract has been renewed at a minimal increase in cost. Training for those with Permission to Officiate has been completed and several masterclasses including Awareness of Domestic Abuse have been delivered.

A training network day was hosted to include the DSAP & SAG chairs and included the London Network (& Southwark) of St Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, Lambeth and HTB.

The DST will, as highlighted on the training plan on a page, continue to promote & facilitate the National Learning and Development framework to include basic, foundation, leadership, senior leadership training, online Safer Recruitment and mandatory online Domestic Abuse training. New members of clergy meet the episcopal area DSA and have an introduction to safeguarding from the Head of Safeguarding. This year has seen two cohorts of senior leaders completing Senior Leadership Training.

## 2. Other notable activity and outcomes in support of the National Standards

Good stewardship of 2024 costs have resulted an overall underspend of the safeguarding budget by £60,000.

To inform practice improvements and understand the resource required to manage demands for the third year running a Diocese and DST Performance Management Scorecard has been produced. (Appendix 1). As part of the performance framework and delivery of the National Safeguarding Standards a comprehensive Operational Plan was created and delivered that comprised of Key Performance Indicators and several 'plans on a page' including Training, Communications and Added Value to Parishes.

## 3. Conclusion

I am both proud and delighted to report on the enormity of last year's safeguarding activity, achievements and practice improvement that has both supported those in need and kept people safe from harm. I thank the bishop's council for their support as well as the General Secretary. The diocese is privileged to have a lead bishop, the Bishop of London, and a safeguarding lead bishop, the Bishop of Stepney, whose commitment to safeguarding is second to none.

With this reflection I look to 2025 with optimism and pride in what has been achieved irrespective of challenges ahead. I urge all to continue to look ahead with the required focus and commitment to ensure our culture continues to change for the better, our churches continue to get safer and feel safer, our failings of the past remain in the past as we seek to grow our worshipping communities.



**Martin Goodwin**  
Head of Safeguarding  
20<sup>th</sup> January 2025