



## Head of Safeguarding Annual Report 2023

### 1. Introduction.

- 1.1 I am delighted to provide a report that illustrates 2023 as another transformational year of practice improvement to support a safer church. The enormity of progress has been delivered within budget.
- 1.2 Leaders, parishes, and the diocesan safeguarding team (DST) have worked together to respond well to safeguarding concerns of abuse & neglect. The DST has supported our parishes to have a consistent approach to ensure their safeguarding arrangements are the best they can be.
- 1.3 There are, however, still significant improvements to make as the diocese prepares for a national independent audit by INEQE, in September 2025. There is therefore no time for complacency in 2024.

### 2. 2023 National issues and impact.

- 2.1 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. These can be [downloaded](#) as a .pdf.
- 2.2 The amended Canon 42 was passed by General Synod in February 2023 and will be implemented this year. 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.
- 2.3 The [survivor engagement national survey](#) was published in October 2023. Ioannis Athanasiou, Partnerships & Engagement Lead for the National Church presented to the November DSAP to support our ongoing response to survivor voice and engagement.
- 2.4 Consultation was completed for a new Code of Practice to replace the “Responding to, assessing, & managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers” scheduled for this year.
- 2.5 Our diocesan Safer Churches Programme Manager has been attending a National Church focus group to revise the Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSO) role description. This is imperative to influence change and share our good practice as we support our own PSOs in keeping people safe.
- 2.6 The National Safeguarding Case Management System (NSCMS) known as MyConcern replaced Safebase on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023. This resource-intensive project was successfully delivered to improve recording practices.
- 2.7 The DST attended both National Safeguarding Teams conferences at the Oval in 2023.

### 3. Inspection, Governance & the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP).

- 3.1 Sarah McKimm as our Chair has transformed DSAP delivery. Following a governance review, our governance in 2023 has been structured around the six strategic objectives of the national safeguarding policy, ‘Promoting a Safer Church’, which are reflected in our diocesan policy with the panel receiving a report on each one over the course of the year. With additional new members the panel has supported and advised on key strategic objectives, policies & procedures and included wider diocesan teams such as Children & Youth and the Ministries team.
- 3.2 Updated safeguarding risks have been reported to the Audit & Risk Committee, chaired by Richard Perry. Richard has also advised on the DSAP Terms of Reference which are presented today.

- 3.3 The *Future of Safeguarding* project team visited six dioceses, including our own in October, and met with our DSAP and CSAP Chairs. This appointment is 'to develop proposals for a fully independent structure for safeguarding scrutiny'. Their report is due this year.
- 3.4 Inter-departmental working arrangements between Ambition & Priority areas have improved. This has been encouraged and driven by the new General Secretary. This is in addition to working well with episcopal area leaders to deliver safeguarding good practice.
- 3.5 DSAP oversight for 2024 will be re-structured around the new Safeguarding Standards.

#### **4. Notable activity**

- 4.1 2023 was a time of significant change to the leadership and oversight of safeguarding in the diocese as we said goodbye to both our General Secretary and Director of HR & Safeguarding, following the departure also of the DSAP Chair in 2022. We are grateful for their contribution over the years.
- 4.2 The Cases Review (PCR2) operational work has been completed. The learning and recommendations have been implemented within our Safer Churches practice improvement program.
- 4.3 The Robson Lessons Learned Review task & finish group has concluded, with recommendations implemented already and/or taken forward as ongoing practice improvement.
- 4.4 An information sharing agreement with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster is out for legal consultation.
- 4.5 We have worked with the regional and national UNITE union representatives both to receive feedback to inform practice improvement and support their members wellbeing (clergy & lay).
- 4.6 A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed with St Paul's Cathedral, a Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been renewed with Westminster Abbey. I remain a member of their Advisory Groups.
- 4.7 We have led on signing an Information Sharing Agreement (ISA) with the Royal School of Church Music.
- 4.8 An ISA has been signed between the Church of England and the National Chiefs Police Council.
- 4.9 Following a period of engagement and oversight recommendations made to the Anglican Communion to support their safeguarding arrangements.
- 4.10 Several Lessons Learned Reviews (LLR) have taken place, when necessary.
- 4.11 The Safeguarding Operational Plan has been delivered, complimented key performance indicators and several 'plans on a page' including 'Added Value to Parishes', 'Communications' and 'Training'.
- 4.12 A period of vacancy and a lack of a full-time DSA has inhibited consistency and support in the Willesden area. Following a new recruitment, this has been rectified for 2024.
- 4.13 The DST has relocated to the more fit for purpose ground floor office in Causton Street.
- 4.14 An out of hours service was maintained by 31:8 with a total of 29 calls (7: 2022).
- 4.15 To increase support for the parish safeguarding officers (PSO) monthly, informal online drop-in sessions have been led by the Safe Churches Programme Manager with a DSA attending on rotation. With an average of 32 attendees the feedback has been excellent and has improved engagement and informed their practices on a local level.
- 4.16 The website is kept updated and we continue to send newsletters to the parishes.

## 5. Diocese and DST Performance Management (see Appendix 1).

- 5.1 The appointment of a Safer Churches Programme Manager has been instrumental in delivering the required practice improvements. An amended programme of work has been drafted for 2024 to deliver the five National Safeguarding Standards (Quality Assurance Framework), with DSAP oversight.
- 5.2 Both Key Performance Indicators and a strong Performance Management framework have been maintained. Performance was analysed monthly to inform resource to demand and practice improvement.
  - Active users of the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard (PSD) increased to 83% from 61% (2022).
  - An average of 73 referrals/month were made in 2023 (55:2022).
  - The team's casework ranged from 79 to 111 at any given time (average 93 cases).
  - 331 Clergy Current Status Letter (CCSL) checks were completed.
  - 3628 Disclosure & Barring Scheme (DBS) checks were completed (3523 :2022).
  - An average of 36 live safeguarding agreements were in place each month, managed & reviewed in a timely manner depending on risk.
  - 89 Safeguarding Case Management Groups (SCMG) were held.
  - 29 blemished DBS were identified and assessed appropriately.

## 6. Safeguarding Training

- 6.1 Training is imperative to enable the diocese to be competent and confident in responding well and spotting the signs of abuse.
- 6.2 31:8 delivered 40 leadership courses (800 capacity). 763 attended but 213 (28%) did not attend (DNA) compared to 20% in 2022. In anticipation of a DNA rate overbookings were made, so this had a financial impact as a further 37 individuals could have been trained.
- 6.3 Every Leadership training session was supported by a DSA for additional local context and to answer questions relating to case studies or specialist queries.
- 6.4 To meet the 2024 annual demand, 50 courses (800 capacity) will be delivered in 2024 and to ensure good stewardship of resources I have sourced a highly recommended alternative provider with a significant cost saving.
- 6.5 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 online Domestic Abuse training.
- 6.6 The National PSO Induction Training was launched at the beginning of 2023 with DSAs delivering training in their Episcopal Areas. To date 84 have attended.

## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1 I am both proud and delighted to report on the enormity of safeguarding activity and achievements that have been supported by many including the DBC.
- 7.2 However, a few matters to keep an eye on for 2024 include our financial challenge, resource-to-demand, and pockets of a lack of understanding and resistance to good safeguarding arrangements. This has an impact upon the energy of our people, both DST and parish based, particularly as we prepare for an external audit and the uncertainty and potential impact of the 'Future of Safeguarding' activity. I urge all to continue with the required focus and commitment to ensure our culture continues to change, 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