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# **Diocese of Hereford independent safeguarding audit (May 2017)**



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 CONTEXT

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) has been commissioned to undertake an audit of the safeguarding arrangements of each diocese of the Church of England. The aim of these audits is to work together to understand the safeguarding journey of the diocese to date and to support the continuing improvements being made. Following pilot audits of four dioceses in 2015, an agreed audit model is being applied nationally during 2016 and 2017.

The audit of the Diocese of Hereford was carried out by Lucy Erber (the lead auditor for this diocese) and Leethen Bartholomew on 2, 3 and 4 May 2017.

The audit process incorporated an examination of files and documents, along with meetings with key individuals and a focus group of parish representatives. Details of the process are provided in the appendix. There were no significant limitations to the audit, other than the auditors would have liked to have reviewed more case files. This was not possible due to one case raising quite a high level of concerns that required in depth analysis and conversations with key players.

This report was written by Lucy Erber with support from Leethen Bartholomew and quality assurance provided by Edi Carmi, the lead auditor.

## 1.2 THE DIOCESE

The Diocese of Hereford is geographically large, but thinly populated and overwhelmingly rural with a population of 320,000. This makes it one of the smallest dioceses in terms of size of population. Counties that lie within the Diocese are Herefordshire, part of Shropshire, part of Worcestershire, part of Powys and part of Monmouthshire. This means that some areas of Wales (that has its own Church), are, in fact, covered by the Diocese. Hereford and Telford are the only areas that could be described as urban in the Diocese, and there is lower church attendance here per percentage of population than in the more rural areas. There are 420 churches in 356 parishes divided between 13 deaneries. Twenty-three per cent of the overall population of the county of Herefordshire is over 65, compared to 16 per cent nationally. In 2013, it was estimated that 43 per cent of the church-attending population was over 70 years of age. Most employment is in the farming and tourism sectors, with some light industry in Telford, and, to a lesser extent, Hereford.

The current Bishop of Hereford (who was appointed in October 2014) is assisted by the Suffragan Bishop of Ludlow, who is also the Archdeacon of Ludlow – the only person to hold both roles within the Church of England – and the Archdeacon of Hereford.

The Safeguarding Team consists of a Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA) working 34 hours per week, supported by an administrator for five hours per week. In 2015, the annual return to the National Safeguarding Team shows that two new referrals were received, one regarding a child and one regarding a vulnerable adult.

## 1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is structured as follows:

- Section 1: Introduction
- Section 2: The Findings of the auditors: the auditors have made links with the S. 11 (Children Act 2004) audit form completed by the diocese in preparation for the audit. Considerations for the diocese are listed, where relevant, under each finding in this section
- Section 3: Conclusions providing an overview of what is working well and what needs to work better
- Appendix, providing detail of the methodology along with any limitations of the audit

Please note that the term 'considerations' instead of recommendations is used in the SCIE Learning Together methodology. The reason for this is that it is important that each diocese decides exactly how to implement the improvements indicated; this is likely to be different from place to place. Some considerations will be around taking specific types of action, whilst others will be alerting the diocese to develop their safeguarding planning in the future.

## 2 FINDINGS

### 2.1 SAFEGUARDING MANAGEMENT

The Bishop of Hereford sees his role as taking ultimate responsibility for safeguarding in the Diocese, and ensuring that it remains at the core of all that they do. He has great respect for the DSA, both as an individual and in respect of the role itself. He acknowledges her professional knowledge and says that he would be guided by her advice due to her expertise. This includes respecting her decisions around making referrals to statutory organisations. He was very clear that he regards the DSA as the person who knows about safeguarding, hence he would not seek to overrule her decision-making. The Bishop told the auditors that the DSA has access to him whenever she needs to do so. This was also confirmed by the DSA. They also meet on a monthly basis (as stipulated in the Diocese's Strategic Safeguarding Plan), and the DSA goes through each 'live' case with him. This is not for any operational advice but in order that the Bishop can keep himself informed about safeguarding activity.

The Bishop of Hereford and many others who were interviewed felt that the Diocese still had areas to improve on and were very keen to learn all they could during the duration of the audit, and from the audit report once it is published.

The auditors also noted that just prior to the retirement of the previous DSA, in 2015, the Bishop commissioned a report by an independent social worker, to consider how well established safeguarding was within the Diocese, and what required improvement. Most of the recommendations from this report have been followed through (i.e. increase in hours for the DSA, formation of a strategic safeguarding board etc.). The Bishop should be commended for taking the initiative to commission such a report at that time.

The Bishop's delegated lead for safeguarding is the Bishop's Chaplain, who provides line management for the DSA. The auditors were told that the choice of this role as the delegated lead was made specifically because of the responsibilities a Bishop's Chaplain has in supporting the Bishop's ministry and mission. The DSA herself was also of the view that this management arrangement ensured that she had a key link into the organisation.

Safeguarding is a standing item on the Bishop's senior staff meeting agenda and is presented by the Bishop's Chaplain. In the last two years the staff team has also dedicated two days to safeguarding training, presented by the DSA.

There is a Safeguarding Strategic Plan in place, and this was presented to the Hereford Diocesan Synod for its consideration and agreement.

The Strategic Plan was formulated by the Diocesan Safeguarding Working Group and presented for oversight and approval to the Diocesan Safeguarding Scrutiny Panel. There is an Action Plan which dictates all Safeguarding Activity, the progress of which is monitored by the Diocesan Safeguarding Working Group. Both groups are chaired by the same Independent Chair. These arrangements will be covered in more detail under 2.3.

Whilst the archdeacons undertake annual Visitations, they do not undertake Articles of Enquiry. There are no specific questions asked during annual Visitations about safeguarding. This will be covered in greater detail under 2.11.

The auditors were told that in general terms there were good links between the Cathedral and the Diocese and a very good working relationship between the Dean of the Cathedral and the Diocesan Bishop. However, in terms of safeguarding there is need for the arrangements to be strengthened and formalised. There is no working agreement and any advice/training is provided by the DSA on a purely ad hoc basis. The auditors understand that the previous DSA employed by the Diocese has recently been appointed as an honorary Canon by the Cathedral, and she now represents the Cathedral on the Diocesan Safeguarding Working Group.

Whilst not a specific issue regarding safeguarding, the auditors noted that the Diocese runs a counselling service for its staff (both clergy and lay) and their partners and children. The auditors feel that this shows a strong commitment to the mental and emotional health of staff and their families and should be acknowledged as the positive initiative that it is.

Fresh Expressions is not well developed in the Diocese and as a consequence there has not been much thinking given to any safeguarding challenges that it may present. Messy Church is much more widely developed, with due consideration given to safeguarding issues that arise from this form of worship. The Bishop expects any such initiatives to adhere to safeguarding processes in line with any other church activity.

The auditors were told by a wide range of people that they spoke with during the audit that the Diocese faced considerable financial constraints (although work is being done to address this) and therefore could not afford to increase any resources – including for safeguarding. They were concerned to hear this, particularly due to the issues raised in 2.2.6. This matter was discussed with the Diocesan Secretary, who, whilst confirming the financial constraints on the Diocese, was clear that safeguarding was a top priority, and felt if a need could be demonstrated, finances could be identified and that this would be supported by the Board of Finance. This has already been demonstrated by their agreement to increase the hours of the DSA.

*(Reference: part 1 of S.11 audit: Provide a structure to manage safeguarding in the Diocese. Also to part 2: The Bishop appoints a member of his senior staff to be the lead person for safeguarding.)*

#### **Considerations for the Diocese**

*Strengthen links with the Cathedral by formulating a formal agreement concerning the provision of safeguarding advice and training by the DSA.*

*Consider a strategy to communicate the message that safeguarding will be invested in by the Diocese, if and when required.*

## 2.2 DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING ADVISER

There is one DSA employed by the Diocese who works 34 hours per week. She has been in post for about 18 months and was originally employed for 25 hours per week, but this was increased soon after to the current 34 hours per week. The previous post-holder was employed for 18 hours per week. The DSA has dedicated administrative support for five hours per week.

The DSA is based at home for three days a week and in the office for two days a week. There is a job description and person specification in place for the DSA role.

The DSA is well qualified for her role, having served in the West Midlands Police Force for 30 years. On retirement, she had reached the rank of Detective Inspector and had led teams focusing on child protection, community safety, managing sex offenders etc. In her role, she also worked with a local authority to develop their Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), troubled families service and adult safeguarding team. She does not hold any other role or have any other responsibilities within the Church of England

The DSA undertakes all casework responsibilities, risk assessments and safeguarding training (with some assistance from a Diocesan lay officer in the latter). She also answers the telephone to enquiries during evenings and weekends. She uses her own mobile phone. Cover for when she is on holiday is provided by the former DSA. This may present a conflict of interest, as guidance states that the DSA role should not be provided by someone with a formal church role within the Diocese.

There is no formal agreement about the provision of a safeguarding service to the Cathedral, but the DSA has provided some ad hoc advice and training. A Consideration has been made under 2.1 regarding this.

The auditors understand that the DSA is owed a considerable amount of time off in lieu and felt that this was due to under-resourcing. Whilst casework numbers may not be expected to be high in a thinly populated diocese such as Hereford, training commitments have increased considerably since the introduction of the new training framework, and the DSA is undertaking both, on her own, with only a minimum of administrative support. Indeed, even some members of the focus group expressed some concerns about the number of extra hours being worked by the DSA. There was some acknowledgement from senior clergy spoken with as part of this audit about their concern that further safeguarding capacity was needed by the Diocese.

The DSA is line managed by the Bishop's Chaplain and she receives professional supervision from the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Strategy Panel and Safeguarding Working Group, who is a qualified and very experienced social worker with significant management experience. Supervision notes are taken and shared with the DSA. This role is not captured in any contract or agreement, and there is no formal feedback mechanism from the supervisor to the line manager (i.e. the Bishop's Chaplain) regarding the overall performance of the DSA. The auditors felt that there is a conflict of interest for the Independent Chair to be undertaking this role, and were of the view that another independent supervisor, with the same/similar qualifications needs to undertake this role. They also felt that a formal agreement

needs to be in place in order that there is a clear understanding about what is required, from both parties, and to specify how the performance of the DSA is to be fed back to her line manager by the supervisor.

*(References: part 1 of S11 audit: Appoint a suitably qualified DSA, and provide financial, organisational and management support. The adviser must have full access to clergy files and other confidential material. Part 6: The DSA's role is clear in the job description and person specification. And The DSA has sufficient time, funding, supervision and support to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities, including local policy development, casework, advice, liaison with statutory authorities, training, personal and professional development and professional registration. Part 8: The DSA should be given access to professional supervision to ensure their practice is reviewed and improves over time.)*

### **Considerations for the Diocese**

*Review the current resources for safeguarding within the Diocese, with a view to increasing them – this includes providing the DSA with a mobile phone.*

*Discuss with the National Safeguarding Team if it is a conflict of interest having the DSA role covered during her holidays by an honorary Canon from the Cathedral.*

*Review the supervision arrangements for the DSA in order that there is no conflict of interest for the supervisor.*

*Consider formulating a supervision agreement in order to define expectations for the supervisor and the DSA, and how the supervisor will relate to the DSA's line manager.*

## **2.3 DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING GROUP**

There are two safeguarding groups within the Diocese. The first is the Safeguarding Scrutiny Panel (SSPanel), the second is the Safeguarding Working Group (SWG). Both are chaired by the same chair, who has a considerable background in safeguarding through working as a qualified social worker in local authority social work teams. He went on to undertake management positions within local authorities, and then proceeded to set up a company that ran several residential schools. He is undertaking purely consultancy roles at present and previously undertook a similar role with the Catholic Church in Herefordshire. He undertakes his role with the Diocese on a voluntary basis, only claiming expenses for the work done. He was a specialist safeguarding adviser from 2002, before becoming the Independent Chair in 2008. He is not a member of the Church of England.

As discussed under 2.2.7, the Chair also provides professional supervision for the DSA, which the auditors felt was a conflict of interest for his independence. Considerations for this are suggested at the end of 2.2.

The SSPanel meets on an annual basis and reviews the targets set by the Safeguarding Strategic Plan (SSP). When a new Plan is required it has input into formulating it.

The SWG meets bi-monthly. Its membership consists of Diocesan clergy and lay officers, a representative from the Cathedral and from the parishes. There is no

membership from outside the Church. There is a Terms of Reference (TOR) for the SSG and they monitor the progress of the SSP.

The SSG has struggled to recruit outside agencies to sit on it, with the exception of the police. The Local Adult's and Children's Safeguarding Board was approached to join, but they declined. They did, however, review the Safeguarding Strategy and gave feedback on it to the group. Also senior managers in Adult and Children's Services were approached and also declined due to capacity issues. The auditors felt that invitations should be made again in the near future, in case the situation changes. Consideration could also be given to approaching large third sector children's organisations, to explore if their senior managers could commit to joining the Panel.

The auditors felt that, overall, the existence of two groups led to some confusion of the roles of both groups. This was accepted by several of those that we had conversations with. The auditors felt that it may be timely to review the purpose of both groups and integrate it into one.

Although both the Bishop and the Chair talked of a good relationship and mutual support it did not seem as if there were regular meetings during which the Chair could feedback to the Bishop the activities of the group. The auditors felt that this should be considered.

Under 2.5.6 note is made that the SSP does not mention the holding of core groups. This needs to be addressed and included within the SSP.

The auditors noted that quality assurance is only mentioned in the SSP in relation to this audit. It may be timely to consider a quality assurance sub-group that could formulate a quality assurance programme as a way of ensuring safeguarding practice is of an acceptable standard

*Reference: part 1 of S.11 audit: Provide a structure to manage safeguarding in the Diocese. Also to part 2: The Bishop appoints a member of his senior staff to be the lead person for safeguarding.)*

### **Considerations for the Diocese**

*Continue to approach other agencies and invite them to sit on the Safeguarding Group: for local authority representation consider approaching a wider range of staff based in this agency.*

*Consider reviewing the functions of the SSPanel and the SWG with a view to bringing them together into one group.*

*The Diocese to consider formalising communication between the Bishop and the Chair to include meeting on a regular basis to feedback activity within the group.*

*Consider the need to include the convening of core groups in the SSP.*

*Consider developing a quality assurance programme, perhaps via the setting up of a sub-group.*

## 2.4 GUIDANCE, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Diocese adheres to all guidance, policies and procedures that are published by the National Safeguarding Team and has not adapted them in any way for local use. There are links to all the relevant documents on the diocesan website, on the Safeguarding pages

*(Reference: part 1 of the S. 11 audit: Ensure the Diocesan Synod adopts the House of Bishops' safeguarding policies, together with any additional diocesan procedures and good practice guidelines.)*

## 2.5 CASEWORK

The auditors reviewed 11 case files. All of them related to children's safeguarding, and one of them also related to adults' safeguarding alongside the concerns raised regarding children. In order to maintain confidentiality the individual circumstances are not discussed.

Records are kept in paper files, although the Diocese is keen to adopt an electronic system, and this is being explored. Files are kept locked away in filing cabinets (not fire proofed as stipulated in guidance) to ensure their security.

Case files are kept in good order. It was easy to identify the issues from the files, and each one had a very useful case summary at the beginning, containing basic information about the person being referred, the referrer, what the concern was regarding etc. However, case notes are not routinely taken so at times it could be difficult to identify the chronological order of events.

The case files showed that referrals were responded to promptly, the DSA liaised very closely with all relevant statutory agencies and attended all relevant meetings convened by such agencies. Appropriate information was shared, and referrals made to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) as appropriate. This perception was also supported by the focus group held during the audit: members of this spoke very highly of the DSA's responsiveness in both taking referrals from them, as well as passing them on to relevant agencies, when required. The auditors also heard from senior members of the clergy about how the DSA responded very well to general safeguarding queries, providing good advice, relevant information and reassurance.

Pre-audit feedback was received from the LADO for Herefordshire who stated that the contact between him and the DSA had been very positive.

The auditors viewed several Type B Risk Assessments that had been commissioned to assess the level of risk presented by members of the clergy. These risk assessments were generally of a good standard and had been appropriately commissioned. No Type A Risk Assessments were seen as they had not been undertaken on the cases audited; they were though made available to the auditors, but lack of time meant they were not examined.

The DSA explained that whilst there have been reviews of all agreements, not every file contains a separate standalone risk assessment. She is working to achieving this

to inform the updating of the safeguarding agreement. All reviews of agreements include updates from key statutory agencies and a face-to-face meeting with the subject. The auditors considered that one or two reviews could have benefitted through involvement of a wider number of stakeholders. As discussed under 2.2.6, the auditors feel that if there was more capacity added to the safeguarding service this process could be accelerated.

Core groups were not being held when they needed to be (i.e. to oversee the follow-up to a referral in regard to a member of the clergy). This area is also not covered in the Diocesan Safeguarding Strategy, and does need to be included.

The auditors were concerned about one particular complex case, which took considerable time to audit, hence slightly fewer case files were reviewed than usual. This was discussed with the DSA and several other relevant individuals who all expressed great concern at the challenges that had been presented by this case. They were all keen to learn what they could from the process that had taken place. The concerns covered a wide range of issues covering several key areas such as Safer Recruitment, risk assessment and ability of the individual to comply with safeguarding procedures. A particular issue here was that an appointment was made prior to the outcome of a risk assessment, albeit the individual was not licensed to carry out any ministry. In practice though, this meant that he met key parishioners and moved into the vicarage, but did not carry out the duties of a priest.

This audit was discussed with the DSA, her supervisor and line manager, and the audit form (containing recommendations for further action) shared and additionally shared with the National Safeguarding Team, as the practice concerns covered more than one diocese.

The auditors noted that in a diocese with an older population there were no adult safeguarding cases. Whilst there had been some conversations with Parish Safeguarding Officers about issues that had come up in this area, none had resulted in the need for the DSA to be involved. Members of the focus group had expressed their concerns about an overall lack of awareness about Adult Safeguarding in the parishes. As a result, the auditors feel that this needs further exploration to try and understand why this is the case, and what needs to be done to raise awareness.

### **Considerations for the Diocese**

*Consider how to be able to undertake standalone risk assessments as part of making and reviewing safeguarding agreements.*

*Final offers of employment, to members of the clergy, should only be made following the conclusion (and consideration) of any risk assessment that is required arising from any concerns.*

*Convene core groups when this is required.*

*Follow up actions noted in the case mentioned in 2.5.7.*

*Consider what needs to be done so as to understand the lack of Adult Safeguarding referrals to the DSA, and put in place an *action plan that addresses this and raises general awareness in the parishes about Adult Safeguarding.**

## 2.6 TRAINING

Safeguarding training is delivered by the DSA, and is in line with the National Safeguarding Team's guidance on training. A training strategy does not exist but training is covered in the Strategic Safeguarding Plan.

With the introduction of the recent training guidance, training takes up a considerable part of the DSA's time.

There was very positive feedback about the quality of the training delivered both from members of the focus group and from those spoken to by the auditors. Feedback forms were also viewed that made many very positive comments. Members of the focus group wondered if e-learning could be considered, due to the high demand of training

Whilst all those applying for Permission to Officiate (PTO) must have up to date safeguarding training, the same is not the case for those coming into the Diocese as newly appointed members of the clergy

The Annual Return for 2015 shows that the level of safeguarding training is very good for members of the clergy and those with PTO, with only a very small number with training outstanding. However, it is not currently known how many staff or volunteers in the parishes require training. The DSA has explained that the Diocese is currently updating management information regarding parishes, with a view to being able to identify every key role, their DBS and training status, so as to be able to target training accordingly.

*(Reference: part 1 of S.11 audit: Select and train those who are to hold the Bishop's Licence in safeguarding matters. Provide training on safeguarding matters to parishes, the Cathedral, other clergy, diocesan organisations, including religious communities and those who hold the Bishop's Licence.*

*And to part 8: Those working closely with children, young people and adults experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect ...have safeguarding in their induction and are trained and have their training refreshed every three years.)*

### **Considerations for the Diocese**

*The Diocese to consider how to introduce a policy of 'no safeguarding training, no appointment', for members of the clergy being considered for appointment in the Diocese.*

*Consider the introduction of e-learning.*

## 2.7 SAFE RECRUITMENT OF CLERGY, LAY OFFICERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Seven Blue Clergy Files were audited and five for lay officers working for the Diocese

The Blue Files were in good order, with all relevant documentation in place, assisted by the review undertaken by the DSA. Where there were safeguarding concerns this was clearly linked to the safeguarding file.

Whilst the recruitment files for lay officers were in good order, they all had some missing documentation – mainly identification, copies of qualifications and references. The auditors felt that this is an area that requires some attention.

*(Reference to part 7 of S.11 audit: The Diocesan Secretary has implemented arrangements in line with the House of Bishops' policy on Safer Recruitment 2015. And to part 1: Keep a record of clergy and church officers that will enable a prompt response to bona fide enquiries...where there have been safeguarding concerns, these should be clearly indicated on file.)*

### **Considerations for the Diocese**

*Consider an action plan so that all correct documentation is checked, and copies taken then placed on file for lay officers who have contact with children and/or vulnerable adults.*

## 2.8 DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE (DBS)

DBS checks are undertaken by a volunteer from the Cathedral. There is a system in place to ensure that DBS renewals are undertaken when they need to be.

The auditors were told that the service is undertaken in an efficient way but takes longer, and is more cumbersome, than the online process increasingly being adopted by employers (including dioceses) who require staff/volunteers to have such a check.

To modernise the process, the auditors were of the view that the Diocese needs to consider using an online system in the future.

In 2015, a total of 502 DBS checks were undertaken. Three of these came back with a concern and a basic risk assessment was undertaken on these by the DSA.

### **Considerations for the Diocese**

Consider implementing an online DBS process, taking advice from the NST about experience elsewhere and the preferred provider.

## 2.9 COMPLAINTS AND WHISTLEBLOWING

There is a complaints process for safeguarding that also describes, in outline, what can be considered within the Clergy Disciplinary Measure (CDM). This is accessible on the diocesan website

A whistleblowing process is still being developed and will be available shortly.

*Reference: part 1 of S. 11 audit: Provide a complaints procedure which can be used by those who wish to complain about the handling of safeguarding issues. Also part 4: There is an easily accessible complaints procedure including reference to the Clergy Disciplinary Measures and whistleblowing procedures.*

### **Considerations for the Diocese**

*Publicise the new whistleblowing policy when it is completed and ready for publication.*

## 2.10 QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES

The work of the DSA is quality assured through the supervision that she receives.

The DSA quality assures each Clergy Blue file on its arrival in the Diocese. She completes a form that identifies what is in place and if there is anything outstanding – this includes if the individual has up-to-date safeguarding training. She also identifies if there have been any previous safeguarding concerns that have not already been identified.

There are no other quality assurance processes, and the SSP only refers to quality assurance in terms of this audit carried out by the SCIE auditors. 2.3.7 above suggests consideration is given to setting up a sub-group to address this.

Below, under 2.11, the lack of Articles of Enquiry is noted, and considerations made.

## 2.11 HOW THE DIOCESE PROVIDES SUPPORT AND MONITORING OF SAFEGUARDING IN PARISHES

Articles of Enquiry are not undertaken in the Diocese of Hereford Visitations are undertaken, but safeguarding is not a formal part of this.

The auditors felt that both these processes are very useful ways of gathering information about safeguarding within the parishes, and that the Diocese may want to consider:

- How this can be introduced into Visitations
- If undertaking Articles of Enquiry, including questions about safeguarding would further their understanding of this.

The diocesan website carries several pages for safeguarding that supports activity in the parishes. This includes a checklist page for parishes, with links to standard templates, roles, the DBS process etc.

There is no newsletter (or similar) distributed to the parishes by the DSA. The DSA explained that she is planning an event for Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs) this autumn.

Members of the focus group did wonder about the possibility of further focus groups being held in order that the Diocese could better understand what was going on in the parishes regarding safeguarding.

#### **Considerations for the Diocese**

*Consider introducing Safeguarding into the Visitation process.*

*Consider if it is timely to re-introduce Articles of Enquiry, that includes questions in regard to safeguarding.*

*Consider the introduction of further activities/events for PSOs in order to further engage with them and support them.*

## **2.12 RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS**

There is no Authorised Listener Service for those who disclose abuse. However, the Bishop's Chaplain assured us that if anyone was in need they would refer to the in-house counselling service run by the Diocese.

Members of the focus group were not aware of any resources for survivors, and several people spoken to by the auditors raised their concerns about a lack of resource to cover this.

Consideration is being given to setting up a Survivor's Working Group to explore how the Diocese could develop services as nothing is currently in place.

#### **Considerations for the Diocese**

*Consider setting up an Authorised Listener service for those who have experienced abuse within a church setting.*

## **2.13 INFORMATION SHARING**

Case files demonstrated that there is good information sharing between the Diocese and external safeguarding agencies.

Internal information sharing is undertaken appropriately and on a need-to-know basis.

## **2.14 LINKS WITH NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING TEAM**

The DSA is a member of the regional DSA group, and obtains peer support from two colleagues in adjoining dioceses. The Chair of the SSPanel and SWG attends the national meeting for chairs.

All those spoken too were fully aware of the direction being taken by the National Team and were supportive of it.

## **2.15 NATIONAL SYSTEMIC SAFEGUARDING ISSUES**

Issues that have arisen in this audit which would benefit from being clarified in national guidance are:

- whether final offers of employment, to members of the clergy, should only be made following the conclusion (and consideration) of any risk assessment that is required arising from any concerns
- that supervision of DSAs needs to include how this should link into informing the management function

Members of the focus group said that they found the volume of guidance coming from the NST overwhelming at times.

## 3 CONCLUSION

This section provides the headline findings from the audit, drawing out positives and the areas for improvement. The detail behind these appraisals are in the Findings in section 3.

### 3.1 WHAT IS WORKING WELL

- The Bishop recognises his role of leadership for safeguarding within the Diocese, supported by his senior team, whilst enabling the skills, knowledge and experience of the DSA to form decision-making regarding referrals and safeguarding concerns.
- There is now a strategic plan for safeguarding identifying areas for development and improvement.
- The Hereford Diocesan Synod reviews the strategic safeguarding plan and approves its aims and objectives.
- The Bishop commissioned an independent review of the safeguarding service provided by the Diocese in 2015, when the previous DSA retired.
- The DSA is highly respected and there is confidence in her advice from both the Diocese and from clergy and volunteers in the parishes.
- The DSA links in with relevant agencies when required in her casework.
- There have been significant efforts to engage external challenge in trying to recruit statutory agencies onto the Safeguarding Working Group.
- The Safe to Receive letter and Blue Files are reviewed on receipt by the DSA.
- There is a very good front sheet inside the Blue File identifying documents required for Safer Recruitment, when they were received and when they are due to be updated. This also includes if the individual has had safeguarding training.
- The case files are well ordered and organised, with appropriate information sharing. It is easy to identify relevant information.
- Training is highly valued and well received
- Members of the focus group felt that whilst safeguarding was on a journey in the Diocese, things had identifiably improved with a shift in attitudes, good training and increased hours/accessibility of the DSA.

Areas for further development:

- Resources: One person, working 34 hours per week is currently undertaking all casework and all training responsibilities, this needs to be reviewed with a view to increasing capacity.
- DBS: Explore the introduction of an electronic system (which would be more quick, efficient and less cumbersome than the current paper system).
- Review the function and membership of the Safeguarding Scrutiny Panel, and its relationship with the Safeguarding Working Group. Continue to attempt to recruit statutory external agencies to sit on the Working Group.
- Consider using the Articles of Enquiry to gather information on the safeguarding capacity and culture within the parishes/benefices.
- Risk assessments and core groups are not always being undertaken when they should be.

- The current model of supervision for the DSA (delivered by the Chair of the SSPanel and the SWG) creates a conflict of interest, and needs to be reviewed.
- In a Diocese that has an older population, reflected in its church attendance, there are few cases that reflect the vulnerable adults that will be present in churches and their activities. This needs further exploration.
- Whilst there are some links between the Diocese and the Cathedral, they require strengthening.
- Some Safer Recruitment documents were missing on the recruitment files of lay officers.
- There is no specific service to support the emotional care of survivors.

## **APPENDIX: REVIEW PROCESS**

### **DATA COLLECTION**

#### **Information provided to auditors**

- Last two years' annual return
- Last three years' annual reports
- Training Delivery Summary
- Guides on Safer Recruitment, safeguarding roles and responsibilities
- Diocesan Safeguarding Strategic Plan 2016–2018 + two most recent updates
- Last three sets of minutes for the SSG and SWG
- Risk assessment templates
- Complaints procedures
- Job descriptions for the DSA and Chair of SSG and SWG
- Diocesan profile

#### **Participation of members of the Diocese**

The auditors had conversations with:

- the Bishop
- the Bishop's Chaplain
- the Suffragan Bishop of Ludlow
- the Archdeacon of Hereford
- the Diocesan Secretary
- The Chair of the SSG and the SWG
- The DSA

#### **The audit: what records / files were examined?**

- 11 case files, seven Blue Clergy Files and five recruitment files for lay officers were audited

### **LIMITATIONS OF AUDIT**

There were no limitations to the audit, aside from a slightly smaller number of case files audited than usual, due to examination of a particularly complex case taking up time.