

# **REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT CHAIR OF THE SAFEGUARDING ADVISORY GROUP TO CHAPTER**

**I January 2021 – 31 December 2022**

**CHAPTER MEETING: FEBRUARY 2023**

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## **I. Introduction and Outline of Report**

This report has been prepared for Chapter by Peter Spindler, the independent chair of the Safeguarding Advisory Group (SAG) and provides assurance on how well the Cathedral is performing on the issue of safeguarding. It draws upon data provided by Louise Wilcox, the Cathedral's Safeguarding Officer (CSO). The following six sections detail how the Cathedral is working to ensure the wellbeing of vulnerable groups and strive for excellence in ensuring the safety of those who may be identified at risk of harm.

This is my sixth safeguarding annual report for Chapter and is supported by the register of risks and the up to date action plan, both of which are attached as appendices to this report. Whilst much of the information will not be new to Chapter and the data is an amalgam of that already provided quarterly to them by the Cathedral's Safeguarding Lead (CSL), this is a report written for publication in the spirit of openness and transparency adopted by the Cathedral in its approach to safeguarding.

## **2. Safeguarding Governance Structures and Resources**

As the Cathedral returns to near normal operating after the lifting of the restrictions imposed during the pandemic, I am pleased to report that the focus on safeguarding has been maintained with the SAG resuming meeting in person where possible on four occasions in 2022; March, June, September and December.

The Safeguarding Lead Canon has changed with Neil Evans taking oversight for Chapter from Canon James Milne and the Registrar, Emma Davies (the former CSL), who has now left the Cathedral. I would like to thank both of them for their significant contribution to ensuring safeguarding is embedded in the day-to-day life of the Cathedral.

Canon Neil works closely with the CSO and together they exercise general oversight of all safeguarding policy and its implementation across the Cathedral together with the ancillary buildings and grounds, and share oversight of relevant cases with its Choir School. It is pleasing to note that the Cathedral has responded positively to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse's (IICSA) report on the Anglican Church by implementing Recommendation 1 which elevates the already professionally qualified safeguarding advisor to officer level.

The CSL continues to be well supported internally by the Chaplain, the Assistant Chaplain and HR when appropriate, the Virgers also provide an initial response on the Cathedral floor if the Chaplains or a pastoral team member are not immediately available and offer support as necessary. Externally, support is provided by the Diocesan Head of Safeguarding and me as

independent chair of the SAG thereby ensuring an effective team based approach to safeguarding. The CSO receives external supervision from a senior, professionally qualified social worker.

### **3. Policy and Procedures**

The Cathedral's safeguarding processes are set out in the policy document '*Promoting a Safer Cathedral*'. The Cathedral Safeguarding Policy and appendices were reviewed during 2021 and these were further adjusted in 2022 to reflect issues identified in the SCIE audit to enhance the current framework. They were also adjusted to reflect the position and identity of the new Cathedral Safeguarding Lead so are now up to date.

### **4. Summary of Safeguarding Activity in 2022**

The following nine sub-sections detail elements of the safeguarding arrangements currently in place at the Cathedral and issues that have arisen during the year:

*Safer Recruitment* – These practices form part of a network of checks and balances, which will reduce the possibility of appointing inappropriate individuals to work with those at risk of harm. The Cathedral continues to maintain a good grip on what posts require safeguarding measures to be in place. All HR staff have undertaken the Church of England's safer recruitment training, as have relevant managers. Every interview panel has a colleague who is safer recruitment trained in attendance. Additionally, interviews for relevant posts include safeguarding questions and take account of other safer recruitment protocols, for example closely examining gaps in CVs.

*Vetting and Barring Checks* – The Cathedral continues to use *U-check* 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:

- Between 28 January & 26 December 2022, 72 DBS applications were submitted, in addition to 13 DBS checks carried out via the update service. There was also one DBS check carried out by the Diocese for a Minister.
- All of the above checks were satisfactory.
- There were no "blemished" returns.
- There are no returns outstanding for all those submitted / checked.

It should be noted the Cathedral does not accept DBS certificates from other institutions. No safeguarding agreements/plans or risk assessments have been required as part of the safer-recruitment procedures.

*Training* – The Cathedral uses the national Church of England training framework and in addition to the mandatory national training, the Cathedral provides localised safeguarding training to all pastoral volunteers. The aim of this training is to prepare duty priests for the type of safeguarding presentations they are likely to see in a cathedral context and is delivered by the chaplain and CSO.

Whilst keeping all staff and volunteers up to date with their training requires continual focus, I am pleased to report that momentum has been maintained and that most staff and volunteers

attending the Cathedral were up-to-date with their training by the end of 2022. Some staff and volunteers who were unable to access the training remotely and waiting face-to-face training sessions were brought up to date as best as possible but a number are still outstanding for a range of understandable reasons as can be seen from the table below. As the Cathedral emerged from the pandemic, volunteers were required to complete training in the event of choosing to return to their roles at the Cathedral and some are opting to be trained at a higher level. I am assured that training dates for staff and volunteers are now in place for all of 2023 and into 2024 including Saturday sessions to cater for those unavailable to attend on weekdays.

The data recording issues identified in my report last year have been largely addressed by the Head of HR and CSO but more work is required to ensure accurate records on Cathedral floor volunteers are maintained. The following table provides a detailed breakdown of the safeguarding training delivered in 2022 and what remains outstanding:

<b>Training</b>	<b>Total Completed 2022</b>	<b>Total outstanding</b>
<b>Basic Awareness (formerly C0)</b> required for all Church Officers, volunteers and staff	32 staff  9 volunteers	4 new staff  55 volunteers awaiting face to face training
<b>Foundation (formerly C1)</b> required for all staff and volunteers who work with children/vulnerable adults	47 staff  19 volunteers	22 staff (either recently expired, Saturday/casual VE staff, newly joined or on phased return,).
<b>Leadership (formerly C2 and C3)</b> required for all who have PTO, managers and staff who have significant contact with children and vulnerable adults as part of their duties	5	2
<b>Senior Leadership training (formerly C4)</b> required for all senior staff	0	All up to date next due 2024
<b>Safer Recruitment</b> - for recruitment panels for positions working with children and young people	3	0
<b>In house pastoral team training</b> – for all volunteer ministers and appropriate lay staff.	19 pastoral volunteers  3 lay staff	0

*Incident/Concern Reporting* – The regular identification and reporting of possible safeguarding presentations, incidents, concerns or issues is a good indicator of the safeguarding culture of an organisation. The Cathedral actively encourages people to speak out when they don't feel comfortable about a situation or when someone at risk presents in concerning circumstances. Incident/concern reports are submitted by proforma to the CSO for assessment, any further action and entry onto the database. It is important to note that there has been a marked increase in reporting this year from 60 presentations in 2021 to 88 in 2022. This is the highest figure since records began six years ago and is a positive reflection on efforts made to address issues as they arise.

The Cathedral has successfully implemented and is using the SafeBase case management system to enable effective oversight of incidents and track its safeguarding response to those in need. The reports for 2022 can be broken down as follows:

- 67 reports related to adults with the vast majority displaying issues with their mental health.
- 21 concerned children – many on visits and becoming separated from their guardians.
- 27 of these incidents overall were significant and required referral to statutory services, the London Diocese or other Dioceses/Cathedrals.
- No safeguarding management plans were required as a result of these presentations.

The previous Dean had a robust stance on accommodating those who required a safeguarding plan/agreement having decided in 2019 that the Cathedral is not a suitable place for such people to be managed, referring them back instead to their home parish for ongoing support. This issue is now being reviewed by the SAG at the request of the newly appointed Dean and a report will be prepared for Chapter in due course.

One issue of concern which Chapter should be aware of is that some of the safeguarding presentations can be intense in nature, often with significant mental health issues evident. These encounters can, on occasion, be challenging or distressing for the staff involved and discussions are being held between HR and the CSO about providing peer support for any colleagues wishing to share their experience of handling such incidents.

*Past Case Review 2* - The Cathedral has not been made aware of any further concerns arising from its PCR2 submission in 2021 although one serious case management group (SCMG) chaired by the diocese remains open and the CSO has been invited to join another national SCMG on a linked issue for the Cathedral.

*London Regional Adult Safeguarding Forum* – This was initiated by St Paul's in 2019 and involves colleagues from Westminster Abbey, Westminster and Southwark Cathedrals sharing best practice and examining the links between spiritual and pastoral care with safeguarding. It met twice in 2022 and remains a useful forum to learn from others and share experiences.

*Cathedral Safeguarding Practitioners' Network* – St Paul's continues to be an active member of the national Cathedrals Safeguarding Network. The Cathedral and CSO in particular should be congratulated for their efforts in jointly organising and hosting a hybrid, two-day conference/training event in October. Day one addressed deliverance ministry and belief in malign spiritual influence in a mental health and child protection context. The second day focussed on Cathedral audits and modern day slavery. The event received considerable

positive feedback from delegates with ideas for further events being forwarded to the National Safeguarding Team (NST) for consideration.

*Winter Planning* – The SAG discussed the Cathedral’s plans for safeguarding in winter with a particular focus on the cost of living crisis and how that might manifest itself. An action plan has been developed with the support of the chaplains and virgers to ensure appropriate referrals can be made and the usual arrangement of petty cash being available for emergency food and drink was maintained. The Cathedral took part in promoting ‘Safeguarding Sunday’ in November.

*Working with the Diocese* – The Head of Safeguarding for the diocese remains an active member of the SAG, working closely with the CSO. The gap identified by SCIE in their audit about Cathedral’s engagement with the Diocesan Safeguarding Steering Group (DSSG) has been addressed with the CSL now attending. The Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the diocese was reviewed in the autumn however Chapter should note that a debate on the boundaries of responsibility between diocese and Cathedral on safeguarding matters continues and, for the sake of clarity, the SLA may need updating when full agreement is reached.

## **5. Risk Register**

The SAG has continued to oversee a detailed 15 point risk register following the Cathedral’s standard format for the management of risk (see Appx A). Three new risks have been added in 2022, only one risk is shown as high and 11 are listed as medium risk. A risk management sub-group has been established to review the format and ensure it meets the wider corporate structure of risk management. Chapter will want to ensure this is delivered in 2023 to enable all identified risks to be effectively mitigated.

## **6. Safeguarding Action Plan**

The Action Plan (see Appx B) is designed to drive the business of safeguarding at the Cathedral capturing a list of longer-term activities underway and is additional to the routine actions arising from the SAG meetings. Eight substantive actions are being progressed and set for completion in 2023.

## **7. SCIE Audit**

SCIE provided a draft 43 page report to the Dean in December 2021 for a critical read containing 27 “questions to consider” and the full report was made public in early 2022. Chapter considered their response in February and the SAG now oversees the ongoing activity which is published via a template action plan on a quarterly basis on the Cathedral’s website. Currently there are six specific actions awaiting completion, some relating to volunteering at the Cathedral and will be addressed with the implementation of the volunteer database later this year. I am satisfied that the others are all work in progress and there are no major obstacles to conclusion but Chapter will want to monitor progress on this at regular intervals.

## **8. Concluding Remarks**

I am pleased to report that the overall safeguarding response remains effective despite the challenges posed while emerging from the pandemic. The team continue to work hard and demonstrate a clear commitment to working with others to manage risk and enhance the Cathedral's framework thereby ensuring those most at risk of harm are safe to attend and worship at St Paul's.

As ever there is always more that can be done to enhance the existing safeguarding arrangements during the year ahead in particular around compliance by the volunteer cohort. I look forward to testing the understanding and responses to a realistic but fictional incident with the senior leadership team as part of a safeguarding table top exercise in the summer.

Peter Spindler  
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February 2023