

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

I January 2023 – 31 December 2023

CHAPTER MEETING: MAY 2024

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). It provides details of the safeguarding activity at St Paul's Cathedral in 2023 and assurance on how well colleagues are performing against an agreed set of safeguarding metrics. The data has been provided by Louise Wilcox, the Cathedral's Safeguarding Officer (CSO) and the Human Resources Department. The following six sections detail how the Cathedral is working to ensure the wellbeing of vulnerable groups and striving for excellence in ensuring the safety of those who may be at risk of harm.

This is my seventh 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. 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), however this report is written for publication to demonstrate the spirit of openness and transparency adopted by the Cathedral in its approach to safeguarding. Transparency is key to accountability.

2. Safeguarding Governance Structures and Resources

The Cathedral is now operating as normal after the pandemic with footfall increasing significantly. The energy and effort displayed by those involved in safeguarding has been impressive and there is much to report this year. The SAG met primarily in person on four occasions in 2023, with a hybrid attendance option available: March, June, September and December. At times attendance from some senior Cathedral staff has been patchy and I am keen to work with the Chief Operating Officer to ensure colleagues understand the importance of their presence at these meetings. The terms of reference for the SAG have been reviewed and re-formatted to align with the main body of Cathedral meetings.

The Chapter Safeguarding Lead (CSL) is Canon Dr Neil Evans. He maintains oversight for Chapter and has demonstrated throughout 2023 high levels of commitment to the role. 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.

The CSL continues to be well supported internally by the Chaplain, Curate and HR when appropriate. The Virgers also provide an initial response on the Cathedral floor if the Chaplain 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

continues to receive external supervision from a senior, professionally qualified social worker. Safeguarding is now on the agenda of all relevant internal meetings.

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 are subject to regular review and a new Safeguarding Concerns flow chart has been developed to guide staff on what action to take with incidents either inside or outside the Cathedral. The current policy will need to be reviewed in light of the publication of the new national safeguarding standards, developed by the National Safeguarding Team (NST).

One of the most significant developments in 2023 was the agreement of a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Cathedral and the Diocese of London replacing an earlier Service Level Agreement from 2022. This sets out clear expectations for both entities and provides a framework for accountability in the response to safeguarding incidents. In November, understanding of the MOU was tested collaboratively in a tabletop Safeguarding Critical Incident exercise where the Cathedral, Diocese and their statutory partners came together to work through a real-life safeguarding scenario tailored to a faith context.

4. Summary of Safeguarding Activity in 2023

The following 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. In 2023 21 such interviews were held.

Vetting and Barring Checks – The Cathedral contracts *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:

- 89 DBS applications were submitted by the Cathedral
- 3 DBS checks were carried out by the Diocese for clergy
- 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 additional safeguarding agreements/plans or risk assessments have been required as part of the safer-recruitment procedures.

Training – The Cathedral adheres to 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 to prepare duty ministers for the type of safeguarding presentations they are likely to see in a cathedral context 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 compliance has significantly improved and most staff and volunteers attending the Cathedral were up to date with their training by the end of 2023. The data recording issues identified in earlier reports have now been addressed and the volunteer co-ordinator has worked particularly hard to improve training attendance, making good use of a new volunteer database which is discussed in more detail below.

The following table provides a detailed breakdown of the safeguarding training delivered in 2023 and what remains outstanding:

Training	Total Completed 2023	Total outstanding
Basic Awareness required for all Church Officers, volunteers and staff	70 Staff 86 Volunteers	13 (Booked for February)
Foundation required for those who work with children/vulnerable adults	68 staff 4 Volunteers	14 (Booked for February)
Leadership those with PTO, managers and staff who have significant contact with children and vulnerable adults as part of their duties	0	8 to be completed in 2024
Senior Leadership training required for all senior staff	0 (none due 2023)	10 due in 2024
Safer Recruitment for recruitment panels for positions working with children and young people	0	0
In house pastoral team training – for all volunteer ministers and appropriate lay staff.	5 Volunteers	0
Stalking Awareness	14	N/A
Suicide Prevention	6	N/A

Incident/Concern Reporting –The identification and reporting of 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.

There has been a slight decrease in reporting this year from 88 presentations in 2022 to 66 in 2023. To put this into context I have included for the first time a table which demonstrates the trends in reporting year on year since the SAG was created:

Year	Total	Adults	MH Issues	Children
2023	66	41	22	25
2022	88	67	23	21
2021	60	47	28	13
2020	38	29	15	9
2019	58	43	N/K	15
2018	12	N/K	N/K	N/K
2017	3	N/K	N/K	N/K

The Cathedral currently uses the SafeBase case management system to enable effective oversight of incidents and track its safeguarding response to those in need. In 2024, I expect the Cathedral to migrate its cases to the new national MyConcern system which is already in use at the Diocese with positive feedback about its functionality.

The reports for 2023 can be broken down as follows:

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

Safeguarding Agreements - The original robust stance on not accommodating those individuals who may have required a safeguarding plan/agreement has now been reviewed by the SAG at the request of Dean Andrew and a revised, more accommodating position has been adopted. The Cathedral does not currently have any agreements in place.

Serious Case Management Groups (SCMG) – No new SCMGs were required for any of the above reports however a group chaired by the CSL has been reconvened to manage the response to personal injury claims arising from abuse at the Cathedral School during the years of 1979 to 1989. This will continue to meet in 2024 until matters are resolved. One presentation has however necessitated a multi-church and diocesan case conference, initiated by the CSO.

In the spring of 2023, I carried out an Incident Management Review, commissioned by the Dean, to examine the senior leadership response to a particular internal case initially raised with the CSO. Six recommendations were made and some were incorporated into the November critical incident exercise as part of the organisational learning for the Cathedral.

Volunteers and Safeguarding – The Cathedral has introduced new volunteer management software called Assemble. This is a GDPR compliant, cloud-based system creating one central electronic record for volunteers and enables others to have appropriate access to their information, including the volunteers themselves. Within this system, staff can track the completion of training, set expiry dates and completion timeframes. Volunteers can see this

information and will be sent reminders and information about renewing their training. The volunteer coordinator can also schedule training sessions through the system, which will automatically update their records and issue certificates. In 2024, it is anticipated that rosters will be created through Assemble, creating a record of who is in attendance on any given day in the Cathedral. A short Q&A video involving the Volunteer Manager and CSO has been produced discussing the internal safeguarding procedures and is hosted on the website. Assemble has provided a useful platform, available to all volunteers whenever they log in.

Working with the Cathedral School – The Designated Safeguarding Lead for the school is an active member of the SAG and participated in the critical incident exercise. The school's relationship with the CSO is strong and chorister chaperones have now been employed by the Cathedral to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the choristers whilst in their charge. This is a positive development which appears to be working well. An independent listener has also been appointed for the school.

Cathedral Safeguarding Practitioners' Network – St Paul's continues to be an active member of the national Cathedrals Safeguarding Network and hosted the national conference in November which was well attended and focussed primarily on domestic abuse which is a key safeguarding issue for the Church of England. The CSO worked extremely hard to prepare for this event and has made a significant national contribution in doing so.

Working with the Diocese – The Head of Safeguarding for the diocese remains an active member of the SAG, working closely with the CSO. The relationship between the two entities continues to improve and the CSL attends the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel. As mentioned above, the new MOU has provided increased clarity on responsibilities, and joint training and peer support is evident at all levels of engagement. A close working relationship between the two will be vital as preparations are made for the national audit by the INEQE Group scheduled for 2025 and my contract has been extended to support the Cathedral through this period.

5. Risk Register

The SAG has continued to oversee a detailed 14-point risk register following the Cathedral's standard format for the management of risk (see Appx A). No new risks were added in 2023, 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 although we still await their recommendations.

The new head of security has completed a very comprehensive environmental risk assessment after touring the entire estate with the CSO to look at the geographical and structural safeguarding risks posed by the estate. This is a really important piece of work and one of the future requirements included in the new national safeguarding standards.

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. Three of the actions have been completed in 2023 and six are being progressed and set for completion in 2024.

7. 2024 Forward Look

There are a number of issues I would urge Chapter to monitor progress against during the coming year. Some have been alluded to above and some may have cost implications for the Cathedral. In summary these are listed as follows:

- Migration of case management from SafeBase to MyConcern
- Development of a survivor engagement strategy in partnership with the diocese
- Preparation for the 2025 INEQE national audit of dioceses and their cathedrals
- An audit of all training needs
- Implementation of the new national safeguarding standards
- Selection and appointment of a new Chapter Safeguarding Lead, ensuring an effective handover of safeguarding responsibilities.
- Embedding of a new Code of Conduct and publication of a revised whistleblowing policy
- Developing a more manageable safeguarding risk register.

8. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, I am pleased to report that the Cathedral's safeguarding response is growing from strength to strength under Canon Neil's leadership, his retirement in 2024 will be a great loss to the Cathedral.

Overall, the team continue to work well with the CSO who remains focussed and energised. Additionally, I have been particularly impressed by the drive and attitude of the volunteer coordinator. I see a clear commitment to working with others to manage risk and enhance the Cathedral's safeguarding framework thereby ensuring those most at risk of harm are safe to attend and worship at St Paul's.

Safeguarding is however an evolving discipline and there is always more that can be done to enhance the existing safeguarding arrangements. I am confident that the Cathedral has the requisite levels of commitment and understanding to maintain a high standard in this regard.

Peter Spindler
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Safeguarding Advisory Group
February 2024