

# **Project Support Worker (Safeguarding team) - Background paper**

## **Introduction**

The diocese of Chester has recently undertaken an independent review of the safeguarding provision in the diocese in response to the IICSA and Past Cases Review. Additional resources have been invested in the safeguarding department. Help is now sought in relation to Past Cases Review files.

## **The Diocese of Chester**

The diocese spans from Wirral and the Welsh border in the west to the limestone hills of the Derbyshire Peak District in the east. The north of the diocese reaches up to the rivers Mersey and Tame and the conurbations of south and east Manchester, and south to the towns of Crewe, Sandbach and Nantwich on the outskirts of Stoke-on-Trent and Shropshire.

It has a population of around £1.6m and is served by around 265 parishes, 345 Churches and 215 benefices. Electoral rolls are around 31,000 and average weekly attendance of around 23,000.

In every diocese of the Church of England, the Diocesan Bishop is ultimately accountable for safeguarding, although in the diocese of Chester, the Diocesan Bishop has delegated the day-to-day responsibility for safeguarding to the Bishop of Birkenhead. Each diocese will be required to have a Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO). The purpose of the statutory DSO role is to support the Diocesan Bishop and the diocese in developing policy and good practice, providing training, and ensuring appropriate management and support in relation to allegations of abuse and offenders returning to the community, working with statutory authorities as appropriate. This role is currently filled by a Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA). There are 2.6 Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers (ADSAs) to support the DSA in this work.

Like other dioceses in the Church of England, the Diocese of Chester has been, and continues to be, on a journey of improvement in the area of safeguarding. The safeguarding provision has been increased to assist the diocese to support and embed cultural change.

There is a Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) which meets four times a year. The Panel is made up of representatives of external bodies (the police, probation, social care, education, NHS and the voluntary sector), a survivor representative, parish representatives, and relevant diocesan and cathedral staff. An independent chair of DSAP oversees this area of work.

In 2022 we also set up a Safeguarding Executive Group (SEG) to assist the safeguarding team. It is an operational group and focusses on:

- The implementation of the Diocesan Safeguarding Business Plan
- Drafting policy and guidance where required
- Supporting safeguarding communication within the diocese and with external stakeholders
- Producing or commissioning resources
- Creating a space for 'joined up thinking' and partnership working re safeguarding in Diocese and Cathedral
- Driving cultural change

The Safeguarding Team in the Diocese comprises the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA), a Deputy Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DDSA), a full-time and a part-time Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, and a part-time safeguarding administrator. Additionally, the diocese retains some contractors who assist with the safeguarding work.

Each parish within the Diocese has its own Parish Safeguarding Officer who is responsible for implementing safeguarding policy at parish level. It is a strongly held belief that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility, and the diocese seeks to ensure that culture changes take root and the churches are truly a place where people are safe and can flourish.

## **Context**

The Church of England has national policies and procedures for safeguarding to apply UK legislation and best practice. These national policies are promoted by the House of Bishops through the General Synod, the current key policies are:

## **Policy Statements**

- Promoting a Safer Church; House of Bishops policy statement (2017)
- Protecting All God's Children (safeguarding policy for children and young people, 4th edition, 2010)

- Promoting a Safe Church (safeguarding policy for adults, 2006)
- Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults (approved by the House of Bishops in December 2021).

### **Practice Guidance**

- Glossary reference document (2017)
- Key roles and responsibilities of church office holders and bodies practice guidance (2017)
- Responding to, assessing and managing concerns or allegations against church officers practice guidance (2017)
- Responding well to domestic abuse practice guidance (2017)
- Training and development practice guidance (2017) and 2020 Learning and Development Framework
- Safer recruitment practice guidance (2016)
- Responding well to those who have been sexually abused practice guidance (2022)
- Safeguarding in religious communities practice guidance (2015)
- Safer Recruitment and People Management (January 2022).
- Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse (April 2022)

Informal conversations are welcomed with the DSA, Sean Augustin on 01928 718834 or email: [sean.augustin@chester.anglican.org](mailto:sean.augustin@chester.anglican.org)

March 2025