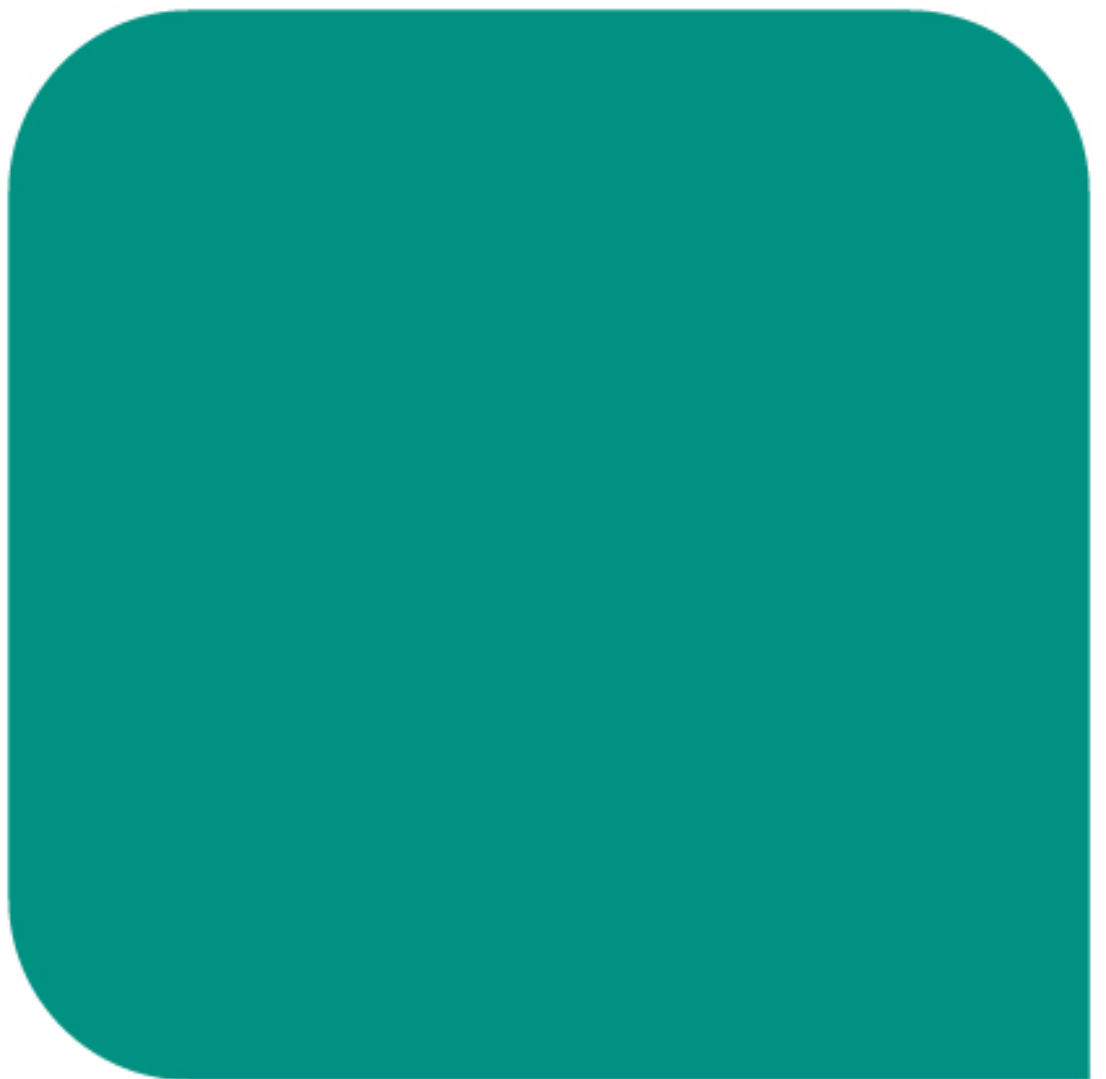




social care
institute for excellence

Diocese of Exeter independent safeguarding audit (November 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 how safeguarding is working in each diocese, and to support the continuing improvements being made. Following pilot audits of four dioceses in 2015, an agreed audit model has been applied nationally since January 2016.

The audit of the Diocese of Exeter was carried out by Hugh Constant (the lead auditor for this diocese) and Sally Trench from 21 to 23 November 2017. The audit process involved an examination of case files and other documents, along with conversations with key individuals and a Focus Group of parish representatives in the Diocese. Details of the process are provided in the appendix.

This report was written by Hugh Constant with support from Sally Trench. Quality assurance was provided by Edi Carmi, the senior auditing lead.

1.2 THE DIOCESE

The Diocese of Exeter was created in the mid-11th century, covering Devon and Cornwall. The formation of the Diocese of Truro in 1876 means that since then it has represented the Church of England in Devon, with which it is almost exactly coterminous. It thus covers a very large area – over 2,500 square miles – and while there are some sizable urban centres, such as Plymouth, Torbay and Exeter itself, many of the 1,143,000 population live in small towns and rural villages. The size and nature of the county of Devon means that, in summer tourist seasons in particular, it can take more than two hours to travel across the Diocese, and this has an impact on how any church function, safeguarding included, gets delivered.

The diocesan Bishop of Exeter is supported by two suffragan bishops, of Plymouth and of Crediton. The 501 parishes of the Diocese are divided into four archdeaconries: Barnstaple, Exeter, Plymouth and Totnes. All four archdeacon posts were filled at the time of the audit. The Diocese has over 240 clergy, and around 450 retired clergy with Permission to Officiate (PtO). There are c.23,000 regular worshippers, including 2,000 children. The Diocese is divided up into 120 Mission Communities – groupings of parishes working together to improve flexibility and responsiveness.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report is divided into:

- Introduction
- The findings of the audit [links have been made with the s.11 (Children Act 2004) Church of England national audit form]
- Considerations for the Diocese are listed, where relevant, at the end of each finding

- Conclusions of the auditors' findings: what is working well and areas for further development
- An appendix sets out the audit process and any limitations to this 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 suggest a need to take specific types of action, whilst others will be alerting the diocese to areas for development in its safeguarding planning in the future.

2 FINDINGS

2.1 SAFEGUARDING MANAGEMENT

2.1.1 Leadership

The Bishop of Exeter leads safeguarding in the Diocese, and has done so since his arrival in 2014. He was explicit that, while the Bishop of Crediton has a more operational role within safeguarding, he does not delegate the safeguarding function to anybody. Its importance means that he as bishop must be clearly identified as presiding over it.

The Bishop described his safeguarding role as one of seeing the big picture, and ensuring the right structures and people are in place. To that end, he talked of coming down to the Diocese before officially starting as Bishop to take part in the recruitment of a previous Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA), because he recognised the importance of making the right appointment. Early in his tenure, he moved the Safeguarding Team from the diocesan office building to the Bishop's office, to reinforce the message that safeguarding is 'central to my brief', and to facilitate good working relationships with the team, and between the team and the Bishop's Chaplain.

By having safeguarding on the agenda of every Bishop's Staff meeting, the Bishop is kept well informed. The Bishop gives prominent support to safeguarding on the Diocese's website, and writes introductory theological statements for the Diocese's safeguarding policies. This supports his stated aim of moving away from a tick-box mentality about safeguarding, and towards a recognition of it as vital to the welfare of worshippers and of the Church.

The Bishop transmits a clear message about the importance of safeguarding in his refusal to grant a licence or Permission to Officiate (PtO) without the requisite training and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks: a previous list of people given dispensation from training is being worked through by the DSA to inform people that such dispensation no longer applies. The auditors were told of a supported housing scheme for frail elderly clergy within the Diocese that has played host to safeguarding training, so that no-one need or can miss the necessary sessions. The Bishop has sent formal *ad clerum* letters to everyone holding his licence that they must comply with safeguarding requirements. PtO has been time-limited since 2012, with people's fitness to continue to hold a licence regularly reviewed.

Working alongside the Bishop since 2015 is the Suffragan Bishop of Crediton, who holds the safeguarding portfolio for the Diocese. Before being ordained, she was a nurse, and served for five years as the Government's Chief Nursing Officer. This period incorporated overseeing safeguarding changes in nursing as a result of the Beverley Allitt, Harold Shipman and Victoria Climbié affairs, so she brought an unusual degree of safeguarding experience to her ministry. She sat on the Safeguarding Management Group in the Diocese of Southwark, and was safeguarding lead in Salisbury Cathedral. As Bishop, she sits on the National Safeguarding Strategy Group

of the Church of England, and led the Church's response to the Elliott Report¹, which critically examined how the Church of England had handled one particular case of abuse. She remains in supportive contact with a number of survivors of clerical abuse.

The Bishop of Crediton is a trusted adviser to the diocesan Bishop on safeguarding matters, and is in regular contact with the DSA and his team. The auditors saw only a small number of cases in which there were allegations against clergy, but those that were audited demonstrated an appropriate level of episcopal involvement, with bishops being kept informed but respecting the expertise of their safeguarding professionals.

The Bishop of Crediton provides one of the links – along with the Diocesan Secretary and the lead safeguarding archdeacon, the Archdeacon of Plymouth – between Bishop's Staff and the Diocesan Safeguarding Management Group (DSMG). The Bishop of Crediton described a cohesive senior staff team who worked well together to promote the safeguarding agenda. She feels that the blurring between strategic and operational leadership around safeguarding at various levels is clearing, and people are now much more certain of their respective roles.

2.1.2 Structure

Bishops' Staff meet monthly, and always discuss safeguarding, as mentioned above. The DSA normally attends as required, but is currently attending more regularly, as the Head of Human Resources post is vacant, and that role would normally feedback on safeguarding to the group.

The Bishop's Council meets quarterly, and receives an annual report on safeguarding from the DSMG. Diocesan Synod also receives an annual report. The auditors concluded that at a strategic level, safeguarding is discussed regularly and appropriately, and senior staff are kept informed. For more details on the role of the DSMG in this, see 2.3.

The Diocesan Secretary provides the leadership for the Diocesan Office. The current post-holder, only three months into the job, was raised in a church family, and has had a successful finance career. He had long aimed to become the Diocesan Secretary for Exeter, and has made some important steps forward in his brief tenure, such as finalising and publishing a complaints policy that had long been stalled. Currently, he line manages the DSA in the absence of the Head of HR, but this is under review (see 2.2).

2.1.3 Links with Cathedral

Following a Bishop's Visitation due to concerns about the running of Exeter Cathedral, including in relation to safeguarding, links with the Cathedral are now strengthening. There is a service-level agreement under which the DSA provides safeguarding support to the Cathedral, and training links have also been developed, with the

¹ <https://cms.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/Elliott%20Review%20Findings.pdf>

Cathedral embedded within the diocesan safeguarding training strategy (see 2.6).

The Cathedral safeguarding lead now sits on the DSMG.

2.1.4 Culture

The leadership culture around safeguarding appeared positive to the auditors. The strategic networks work well, and there is a sense of shared purpose and of a clear understanding of roles. Most senior staff members provided the auditors with a statement of their personal safeguarding roles, which reflected this.

The location of the DSA and his team in the Bishop's office, rather than the diocesan office (which is only a very short walk away) seemed to work well, and not cause any noticeable isolation of the safeguarding service from other diocesan functions.

(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.)

2.2 DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING ADVISER/S

The current Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) has been in post since February 2017, so was still fairly new at the time of the audit. He is a paid, full-time employee, and prior to joining the Diocese, had served for 30 years as a police officer, mainly in child protection and Public Protection Unit (PPU) work, and much of it at senior level. His last post prior to becoming DSA was as a PPU Chief Inspector with responsibility for Plymouth and Torbay, and with responsibility for police risk management for the whole Devon and Cornwall Constabulary. He used to sit on the Torbay Safeguarding Children's Board and Safeguarding Adults boards, and chaired various sub groups including serious case review. The DSA came to the post, therefore, with a wealth of relevant experience.

His initial sense of the Diocese is of an organisation that wants to change, and wants to do safeguarding as well as possible, but achieving the desired change in all its components, can take time.

There is a general sense that he has brought stability to a role that has proved turbulent in recent years. Following the departure of a reasonably long-serving DSA in 2014, three people were appointed to the post, staying for between 15 months and six weeks. A consistent figure during this period was an Assistant DSA (ADSA), but upon her departure in August 2016, the Diocese brought in a safeguarding consultant based in Derbyshire (who was quickly supplemented by a colleague) to provide urgent cover while a new DSA was recruited. This cover remained in place until April 2017, allowing for a handover with the new DSA. The auditors saw no evidence that this period of turnover reflected systemic problems within the Diocese. From the information provided to the auditors it seemed that some misjudged appointments were made, and some personal dynamics meant that things did not run as smoothly as anticipated.

One task the consultants took on was to produce a paper setting out what safeguarding support the Diocese would need in the future, which included the need for an ADSA, and for DBS checks to be brought within the safeguarding service, rather than being administered from the Synod Office. At the end of the consultancy contract,

one of the consultants was recruited on a two-year contract by the Diocese, which runs until April 2019, but with a review point in April 2018.

He is now employed on a paid basis as the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) for four days a week. He remains Derby-based, but despite some working from home, he was clearly well-known to parishioners to whom the auditors spoke, and does training and casework across the Diocese, so is not a remote figure. The DSO has over 35 years' experience in health settings, mainly the NHS. He is a qualified nurse psychotherapist, with considerable experience in adults' and children's safeguarding, which would provide a good match for survivor support work, but perhaps less so for allegations management. However, there is no evidence in the casework of this being a problem (see 2.5).

Working alongside the DSA and DSO is a new ADSA; like the others paid, and directly employed by the Diocese. He has worked for the Diocese since 2015, but as ADSA only since May 2017, having previously been an Executive Officer in the Synod Office, where he did have a role in Safer Recruitment as Diocesan DBS Coordinator. He is now half-time as ADSA, and half-time as DBS coordinator for the Diocese. He devotes some of his time to IT projects for the organisation, reflecting his skills and interests in that area. Having briefly served in the police, the ADSA spent eight years in further and higher education, where part of his role covered doing inclusion assessments, which set out how students with special educational needs, learning disabilities, mental health problems and other areas of need could successfully be integrated into colleges. This has proved relevant experience in his new role.

There is a service-level agreement with the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) to provide out-of-hours cover, but the team members tend to take calls in the evening and weekends anyway. As a result they are considering formalising this into an out-of-hours rota, and end the CCPAS arrangement.

The team is a strong mix of police, health and education professionals. This does mean that social work expertise is not part of the team, as is recommended in the House of Bishops policy and guidance, and the auditors sought to explore the implications of this. Team members felt that they had the skills to cover a range of issues, including complex work at the borders of safeguarding, and to handle them appropriately. Others, such as the Bishop of Crediton, were explicit that the team was flexible and skilled enough to work in ways that demonstrated core skills associated with social work, such as relationship-building, risk assessment and joint working. The auditors felt that the casework they saw (see 2.5) justified this confidence.

Nonetheless, given the challenges of getting consistent attendance from local authority social work staff at the DSMG (see 2.3), the insight and perspective that an experienced social worker could bring to a safeguarding discussion is lacking, and the service would potentially be enhanced were it present. Opportunities to bring in social work expertise should therefore be sought. The DSO's time-limited contract means that there may be a chance to bring social work input direct to the team, but in the meantime, the lack of professional supervision for the DSA (see below) needs to be addressed, and this presents an immediate opportunity to introduce another discipline to the already strong professional mix.

All three team members are male. The team, and those around them, are conscious

that this may be a barrier to some people making a disclosure, or feeling comfortable approaching the service. Clearly they cannot know whether there have already been people who have not made contact with them because of this. Efforts are being made to find some mitigation, and links are being made with local voluntary services to offer support to any victims of abuse who may wish to speak to a woman. There is an issue about how that offer can be communicated, but the safeguarding website does now include contact details for a number of relevant local organisations.

Ablly supporting all the Safeguarding Team is an administrator who works half-time for the HR team, and half-time for the Safeguarding Team.

A measure of stability has been brought to the service, but the team is still grappling with the effects of three years of discontinuity. Systems had become patchy and disjointed, and the departure of various safeguarding leads has left the team with a lack of organisational memory.

2.2.1 Roles and responsibilities

Much progress has been made on rectifying these issues in the months since the current team has come together. They appeared to the auditors to work cohesively together, and to understand their different roles. The DSA is clearly the lead professional. He line manages the DSO and ADSA, although the DSO also provides mentoring support to the ADSA. The DSA leads on casework involving clergy. Other cases are divided by geography to some extent, with the DSA covering the west and south of the Diocese, and the DSO the north and east. The ADSA oversees safeguarding agreements, and takes on other case work that is identified as useful to his professional development. All of these arrangements are shaped to some extent by practicalities such as who is in the office when a referral comes in.

The DSO has some explicit strategic functions, such as drawing up and implementing a training strategy (see 2.6).

The team has weekly catch-up meetings where it discusses cases, and this helps make sure everyone is aware of all current casework. There is also a more formal fortnightly Case Management Review meeting in which case issues are looked at in more depth. The team is interested in bringing local authority advice and expertise into these meetings, to enhance the multi-disciplinary perspective.

The overall Safeguarding Team, including administrative support, currently adds up to 3.3 whole-time equivalents. This feels adequate in terms of amount, and the team has, in the form of a review of the DSO's role in April 2018, a mechanism to revisit whether the right functions are in place. A meeting with parish representatives led the auditors to think that some consideration should be given in this to how Parish Safeguarding Coordinators (PSCs) are supported (see 2.11 for further discussion).

2.2.2 Management arrangements

The line management of the DSA rested with the Head of HR, but she has now left. Currently, the DSA is therefore line managed by the new Diocesan Secretary, and both reported satisfaction with that arrangement. The DSA appreciates that he has direct access to the Diocesan Secretary, rather than it being mediated through another

layer of management. The Bishop also feels the current arrangement makes sense. Nonetheless, the job description that has gone out to recruit a new Head of HR does include line management of the DSA within it, and the stated plan was to wait and see if the new recruit will have the skills necessary to take on the role. Rather than make decisions based on any given individual, and any given work relationship, it may engender longer-term stability if the Diocese makes a clear decision as to who should manage the DSA.

The DSA, as mentioned, manages the DSO and ADSA. He manages the safeguarding administrator for the work she does for the Safeguarding Team.

2.2.3 Supervision arrangements

The DSA did not, at the time of the audit, have any professional supervision. One of the consultants who had stepped in to cover the safeguarding role prior to the DSA's appointment was available to provide it, but being based in Derby made it impractical. The DSA has been encouraged to find a professional supervisor, but the Diocese is his employer and should work with the DSA to facilitate that. This was recognised by the new Diocesan Secretary, and his interim predecessor, the Director of Finance.

The DSA accepted he had not viewed the search for a supervisor as a first-line priority, and acknowledged not feeling the lack of one. He was well aware also that this perhaps makes the need for a supervisor clear, as s/he could challenge the DSA's assumptions. The DSA struck the auditors as confident enough in his role, and sufficiently keen on cooperative working and his own professional development, to be able to make good use of the challenge of another professional. Given this, and the clear requirement of church legislation that DSAs be properly professionally supervised, the diocese should prioritise the recruitment of a supervisor. The auditors note that this represents a clear opportunity to bring the perspective of social work practice into the mix of the safeguarding service.

2.2.4 Any potential conflicts of interests to DSA's independence

There are no apparent conflicts of interest to the independence of the DSA or other team members. The DSA was for many years a colleague, and at times the manager, of, the chair of the DSMG (in their previous employment. Having explored this, the auditors did not feel this is inherently problematic, as all concerned were conscious of the situation, and there was no indication that the past association compromised the proper working relationship between the two.

(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

Consider opportunities to bring social work expertise into the multi-disciplinary Safeguarding Team.

Consider the gender balance of the team in any future appointments.

In the meantime, consider how to develop the best available offer to people wishing to speak to a woman about abuse concerns.

Consideration to be given, in any discussion about team functions, to support Parish Safeguarding Coordinators.

Clarity to be reached about the DSA's line management arrangements.

The Diocese to prioritise the recruitment of a professional supervisor for the DSA, and to consider the need for a social work practitioner in this role, in line with House of Bishops' recommendation.

2.3 DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING MANAGEMENT GROUP

Strategic direction for safeguarding in the Diocese sits with the Diocesan Safeguarding Management Group (DSMG). The DSMG has been in operation for some years, but has been significantly developed since the arrival of a new Chair in April 2016.

The Chair is a police officer, recently retired after 30 years' service. This included five years in a PPU, managing sex offenders, and he also has experience in domestic violence and adult safeguarding policing. As mentioned above, his police career involved a good deal of co-working with the DSA, but he is independent of the Diocese. He meets with the Bishop of Exeter after each DSMG meeting, to keep him abreast of developments. Both reported a good working relationship, and the Bishop expressed strong confidence in the Chair.

The role of DSMG Chair was advertised, and recruited to competitively, although it is not paid. The Chair described his motivation for applying as a mixture of wishing to use his skills in a different strategic context, and of wishing to contribute to society. On taking up the role, the Chair felt that the group served too much as a 'comfort blanket' to the operational team, and was too involved in casework. He wanted to set clear strategic goals, and has identified three priorities: ensuring training operates well; that quality assurance is led effectively by the DSMG, and embedded across the Diocese; and that communications around safeguarding are good. He views these as the building blocks to a lasting change of culture.

The Chair has established three workstreams – one for each of the strategic goals – led by the Safeguarding Team, and which are monitored at a monthly Safeguarding Operations Group. This group, chaired by the Head of HR (with the Diocesan Secretary covering during that post's vacancy), reports to the quarterly DSMG. The training workstream has produced a comprehensive training strategy, looked at in more detail in section 2.6. The communications work has focused on an improved website,

and parish representatives recognised that it is now significantly better. Communication and support to the parishes remain an ongoing challenge, which is explored further in 2.11. The quality assurance strand has thus far mainly focused on preparation for the SCIE audit, so other measures are ‘embryonic’, but will include steps such as dip-sampling referrals, testing consistency and compliance in casework, and working on any action plan the SCIE audit leads to.

The Bishop of Crediton shares the Chair’s view that the DSMG has become more strategic, with cases coming before the group only to reflect on lessons learned from them, not in order to make case decisions. The minutes of the meetings reflect this. She reported that she has a great deal more confidence in the group than would have been the case two years ago.

The Chair believes there is five to 10 years’ worth of work to fully imbed a culture change around safeguarding locally, but is confident the Diocese can achieve it.

2.3.1 Composition of group

Key diocesan figures sit on DSMG – namely the DSA and his team; the Bishop of Crediton; the Archdeacon of Plymouth; the Diocesan Secretary; the Bishop’s Chaplain (representing the Bishop of Exeter); the Diocesan Registrar; and the Director of Communications. The Cathedral safeguarding lead is also there, and the Head of HR role has a seat on the group.

It is proving harder to secure the regular engagement of the wider safeguarding sector. Probation and local authority staff do sit on the group, but from the evidence of recent minutes, more often give apologies than attend, reflecting the often over-stretched nature of statutory sector work. The Diocese is responding creatively to this challenge, with the DSA leading an effort to develop partnerships with local safeguarding boards for both adults and children, in an effort to develop the links necessary to bring more safeguarding professionals onto the DSMG. The Chair recognised that to persuade people to join, and to do so effectively, the group has to be confident that statutory professionals will find it to their benefit to attend.

The Chair is planning an awayday for key DSMG members in February 2018 to re-examine whether the right people are on the group, and its focus is correct for the Diocese’s ongoing needs.

2.3.2 Clarity of purpose and function

The DSMG does appear to be developing a clear function. The auditors noted, however, that meetings have very sizeable agendas. Linked to that, the group has oversight of a truly comprehensive Safeguarding Action Plan. While the existence of the Action Plan is positive, and reflects the enthusiasm with which the DSA, his colleagues, the Chair, and others are setting about their task, it may be difficult to focus on key priorities when so many tasks are set out.

(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

Consider more focused meeting agenda, and an action plan with a clearer set of key priorities.

Develop current efforts to recruit non-church relevant statutory and voluntary members to the DSMG.

2.4 GUIDANCE, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Diocese of Exeter has accepted all House of Bishops' safeguarding policies, and these are easily accessible via their website.

Additionally, the Diocese has a local safeguarding policy statement for children, young people and vulnerable adults. This is introduced and given theological context by the Bishop of Exeter. Sitting alongside the policy statement are two practice guidance documents, one for children and one for adults. It is noted at the beginning of these that they need to be updated in line with new national policy documents. When they are, the adults' document needs to reflect current legislation in the form of the Care Act 2014. The current adults' practice guidance shows signs of being copied, sometimes unhelpfully, from the children's version.

The website also contains a good deal of materials – policies, templates etc. – aiming to support parish safeguarding. Parish representatives reported to the auditors that they found these very useful.

(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.)

Considerations for the Diocese

Update practice guidance documents in light of recent legislative and church policy changes.

2.5 CASEWORK

2.5.1 Quality of response to allegations

The quality of casework by the current Safeguarding Team is good. Case files demonstrate that responses on the whole are prompt (the Bishop's Chaplain said the DSA 'acts swiftly, but not precipitately'), and the parishioners to whom the auditors spoke commented on the team's accessibility and timely actions. It was notable from some files that the time taken to respond has, as would be expected, improved as the team has expanded.

In a small number of files, there was evidence that responses were delayed, although it was sometimes explicit that this was a conscious prioritising of resources, and such prioritising appeared to be appropriate.

A clear theme from the files, and one which reflects the approach taken to other

aspects of the team's work, is that of good quality multi-agency working. Statutory partners – the police, probation, Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs) and other local authority staff – are engaged promptly and effectively. Information sharing works well, the case files suggest, and there is evidence of useful meetings and shared home visits between the DSA and statutory staff. The impression of good multi-disciplinary working is backed by several pieces of feedback from statutory agencies to the auditors prior to the site visit, which are positive about working relationships with the Diocese, with a couple making explicit reference to how the situation has improved since the current DSA came into post.

The auditors also saw examples of effective engagement with other dioceses of the Church of England, and with other faith groups locally, as people were tracked as they moved regions or churches. Another good partnership would seem to be with the diocesan communications team, whose advice was sought in cases involving tricky parish communication challenges.

Crucially, the safeguarding decision-making evident on the files was sound. The DSA and his team sought support as necessary, for example from senior clergy, and in turn they supported parishes with their safeguarding difficulties. Many people to whom the auditors spoke referred to the DSA and his colleagues as being reassuring, and the case evidence would support that view; their actions, as well as being timely, were well-reasoned and clear.

In addition, the DSA and his team handle the nuances and complexities of cases well, for instance where congregations were divided over a case, or where perpetrator and survivor were well-known to each other. Much of this complexity was eased by the DSA's clear, methodical communication, ensuring people are informed and supported as appropriate. The Parish Focus Group concurred with the view that the quality of case support from the team is reliably high. They spoke of receiving expert advice, reassurance and support, and clearly valued the Safeguarding Team.

A number of case files testified to the challenges of the recent high turnover of safeguarding staff (see 2.2). It is positive that the current team has gone over cases where there had been earlier concerns, so as to bring a degree of clarity to those that got muddled in the past by frequent changes of personnel.

Core groups are typically used appropriately and the auditors saw four cases in which groups were brought together. There was though one case involving an organist, where the broad definition of 'church officer' should have suggested a core group was required, especially as a high degree of coordination was required in the case. In another instance, a core group was brought together a couple of months after a referral, when it might usefully have been convened earlier and in accordance with the 24 hours required in the guidance. Nonetheless, the core groups held generally appeared to work well, and to include the right people, with the Bishop of Crediton often acting as chair, and the Director of Communications brought in as necessary. The archdeacons who spoke to the auditors commented positively on the role and functioning of core groups.

The Diocese is considering instituting another group, the Bishops' Safeguarding Oversight Board (BSOB). The purpose would be to provide the pool from which core group members are drawn, and also for the group to explore complex cases and

challenging issues. The auditors were by no means of the view that this was necessarily a bad idea, but were also unconvinced that other existing groups – the Safeguarding Operations Group, for example – could not be modified to fulfill the oversight function. Core group members could then be brought together only as and when necessary.

2.5.2 Quality of risk assessment and safeguarding contracts

Risk assessments are generally being used effectively. The ones the auditors saw were classified as Type A and Type B assessments, which was appropriate to National Safeguarding Team policy at the time, although these have recently been reclassified as standard and independent assessments².

One Type A Risk Assessment had a great deal of relevant detail and considered thinking as to what the concerns were, and how they could best be addressed. It was thus a useful and important document, but other parts of the case record demonstrated yet more consideration of the case, and these further thoughts, if captured on the assessment, would have strengthened it yet more.

One case highlighted the potential for an individual of concern being requested to pay for their type B Risk Assessment, albeit such an assessment has not as yet been needed. It is positive that changes in national guidance mean that any such arrangement would now be undertaken by a NST-approved assessor. However, it remains important for the Diocese to commission such assessments, regardless of who is responsible for paying for them, so there can be no doubt for whom the assessor is undertaking the work.

Safeguarding agreements, known locally as Attendance Agreements, were appropriately employed. One was significantly overdue a review, but the team was aware of the case, and of the need for a review; the delay reflects a backlog of catch-up work on cases that had slipped prior to their arrival. It is positive that the Diocese has recently become signatories to Attendance Agreements, so the agreement does not appear to be only the responsibility of the parishes.

Similarly, there were two cases in which a person causing concern ought to have, but does not have, a Safeguarding Agreement. In one case, the person does not have a conviction, and in another the person has long refused to sign an agreement. In both instances, this approach was taken long before the arrival of the current DSA, and in both cases, the situations are well-monitored. Attendance Agreements are voluntary by nature, and where a person refuses to sign/agree to such an agreement, the only option might be to take a pragmatic approach (as in this case) of writing a letter advising of the clear expectations and put in place suitable arrangements to mitigate and monitor risk. However, in both these cases the diocese should consider further attempts to make Attendance Agreements, so as to have such explicit written agreements acknowledged by all parties. It is also important to be clear with the person concerned (and with those working in the Church), that the lack of a conviction is not an impediment to such agreements.

² Practice Guidance: Responding to, Assessing and Managing Safeguarding Concerns or Allegations against Church Officers, House of Bishops, October 2017

Improvements in the team's database and case recording means that Safeguarding Agreement reviews are now easier to track and therefore schedule.

(Reference: part 1 of S. 11 audit: Provide access to a risk assessment service so the Bishop and others can evaluate and manage any risk posed by individuals or activities within the Church.)

2.5.3 Recording systems

The Safeguarding Team is in a period of transition from paper files to a case management system. All new cases are recorded wholly electronically on a case management system which has been devised locally. It lacks the capacity to store documents, but the team has developed a straightforward way of linking to files of risk assessments, safeguarding agreements, and emails.

The system seems effective, and the case recording within it is good. It appears full and well-expressed, and backed by reliably consistent personal information. The Safeguarding Team includes people who understand systems generally, and how to work in structured ways. The benefits of this are becoming evident.

Considerations for the Diocese

The Diocese to satisfy itself of the need for a Bishop's Safeguarding Oversight Board.

The Diocese to consider how to retain full control of the external risk assessment process, even if the individual concerned is asked to pay for the risk assessment.

Consider whether to formalise Safeguarding Agreements in cases where they are currently lacking.

2.6 TRAINING

2.6.1 Delivery

Delivery of the Church of England's learning and development framework for safeguarding is a considerable task, not least in such a large, rural county, but the Diocese of Exeter has put a lot of effort into planning and preparatory work to meet the challenge. This reflects in part the high priority given to training by the DSMG. There is a diocesan training strategy, put together largely by the DSO, which sets out minimal training requirements for people in different roles, and how the training will be supplied.

The strategy also sets out a plan for the recruitment, support, and quality assurance of volunteer trainers, to deliver C0 and C1 overview courses for non-licensed staff and volunteers. This is a new development, and had been running for around five months at the time of the audit. Thus far, 12–15 people had been recruited, from a range of relevant backgrounds. They are somewhat clustered geographically at the moment, and the aim is to have 25 people in place by April 2018. A good deal of thought appears to have gone into mitigating any concerns about this approach to training; so volunteers, having had a 'train the trainer' session, are observed and evaluated, and are required to do a minimum number of sessions annually. There are to be regular

'team' meetings. It is too soon to say whether the volunteer approach will be effective, but the planning put in will optimise its chances.

Reflecting the developing relationship around safeguarding, a volunteer trainer has been recruited to assist in the training of volunteers and to increase resilience and capacity.

Clergy training is led by the DSA, and is seen as an opportunity for a dialogue, and for the DSA to become known to priests across a very large diocese. There is no clerical involvement with training.

A number of people spoke to the auditors about how the growing enthusiasm for training is a positive indicator of culture change. Indeed, the parishioners to whom the auditors spoke did talk of a high demand for training, but there was frustration that this outstrips supply to the extent that it can be hard to access. Two people mentioned delays in getting clergy trained in particular. The DSA acknowledged that he perforce prioritised casework backlogs upon arrival, but will focus more on training from here on.

Some people commented that courses are overwhelmingly delivered in office hours, and the spring 2018 training schedule would seem to back this concern. The Diocese is aware of the challenge of asking the busy Safeguarding Team to do much evening and weekend working, and the possibility of a dedicated trainer was discussed. Nonetheless, the Diocese has made significant efforts to make the training accessible through evening and weekend sessions, volunteer trainers and bespoke sessions on request.

Despite these concerns, significant numbers of people are being trained. To date in 2017, 500+ people have had C0 training; nearly 500 have done C1; and 165 clergy have done the C3 course. These numbers represent significant increases on the year before.

Comments from people who had been trained were positive about the content of the courses, except for the C0 basic awareness course. There is some resistance to the concept of e-learning, with people concerned that elderly parishioners – some with poor or no broadband – would not engage with it. The auditors heard about the offer of face-to-face C0 training if over 20 people can be brought together, but other parishioners were not aware of this, suggesting a communications challenge.

The Diocese has also developed a strategy for the delivery of the specialist modules of the learning and development framework. This starts with the roll-out of Safer Recruitment training, which will be largely video-based, and domestic abuse training. Other specialist courses will, depending on resources, start in late 2018 and early 2019.

2.6.2 Organisation and recording systems

The Diocese now seems to have a database that allows it to track safeguarding training – who has and has not done it, and when it needs refreshing.

(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

Consider how to introduce a clerical voice into training, to reinforce the theological messages behind safeguarding.

Consider mechanisms to increase the availability of training, which may include more volunteers, more flexibility, or – when reflecting on the balance of the Safeguarding Team – a recruited training professional.

2.7 SAFE RECRUITMENT OF CLERGY, LAY OFFICERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Recruitment appears to be well-organised in the Diocese. The clergy Blue files demonstrated a good degree of consistency in the collection of identity documents, DBS checks, and references. A sufficient proportion of an admittedly small sample lacked a Confidential Declaration for it to be worth the Diocese checking on what their approach is to filing these. A change in practice adopted by the current DBS coordinator has seen standard retention of confidential declaration forms submitted as part of the DBS application process.

Blue Files for clergy where there was a safeguarding concern had clear flags to the existence of the issue, and of a separate safeguarding file.

Lay recruitment files were explored, and it became evident that key information, such as DBS checks and references, are stored electronically. One auditor looked at some examples of the electronic storage. The systems appear to work well.

(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

Ensure Confidential Declarations are consistently stored on clergy Blue files.

2.8 DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE (DBS)

The Diocese has a contract with CCPAS to manage DBS checks, and this broadly appears to function effectively. For those holding the Bishop's License, DBS check renewals are managed for parish clergy by the four archdeacons' PAs; the issuing and renewal of DBS checks for those with PtO is managed by the Suffragan Bishops' PAs; and Reader DBS checks are managed by the Readers Administrator. Ordinands and

clergy new to the Diocese are DBS checked through the Bishop's Office. Checks for senior clergy and Diocesan staff are managed by the ADSA, who has a tracking system that alerts him to everyone who is due a renewal in the coming six months.

The Safeguarding Team is working with other departments to improve functionality of the existing IT and to implement a single process that enables diocesan-wide oversight of the DBS data and ability to identify when any such DBS certificate has lapsed or due renewal.

The Parish Focus Group members with whom the auditors met acknowledged that the DBS situation was more straightforward than in the pre-CCPAS times, but still displayed a degree of uncertainty about who at parochial level requires a DBS check. In part, this may be a reflection of the grey areas which pervade in this area, but there was a sense of mixed messages from the Diocese about DBS, in particular the question of the Diocese not accepting portable DBS checks.

Blemished DBS checks are referred to the Safeguarding Team, who discuss the risks with parishes. On the evidence of the two cases seen by the auditors (see 2.5), the decision-making is sound.

Considerations for the Diocese

Consider how to provide clear communication with parishes about DBS generally, and portable DBS checks in particular.

2.9 COMPLAINTS AND WHISTLEBLOWING

The Diocese has two complaints policies – a general one and one specific to safeguarding, which nonetheless makes the distinction clear between a complaint about the service provided by the Safeguarding Team, and a disclosure of abuse. The safeguarding complaints policy in particular is very good, with different stages set out clearly, timescales laid out, and details of how to take complaints externally. It offers complainants a number of options for how they might wish to make a complaint.

The policy also highlights that the Diocese will seek to learn from complaints, with the DSMG taking a thematic overview of complaints that have been raised.

The staff handbook for diocesan employees contains a good whistleblowing policy. This gives staff options in terms of who they can approach to raise a concern, and again sets out how to escalate issues, including how to report them externally. It is not evident that volunteers have sight of the policy, as it is contained in the staff handbook. Good practice would suggest volunteers should have access to whistleblowing procedures.

(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

Consider how to publicise the whistleblowing policy to volunteers.

2.10 QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES

The Chair of the DSMG has made quality assurance one of the three key areas for the group. As discussed in 2.3, much of the quality assurance focus to date has been on preparing for the SCIE audit, but the Chair has clear ideas of how he wishes to take this part of the group's work forward. He is planning for a dip-sampling of cases, and has himself led two case reviews, which have highlighted the need for more of a focus on domestic abuse. The Chair sees responding to the SCIE audit as a major strand of the next stage of quality assurance work.

Other work in this area has gone on independently of the audit. Two full and detailed section 11 responses have set out to the Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) in the area how the Diocese is meeting its requirements as a faith group under the Working Together agenda. These returns represent a significant amount of work, and reflect well both on the Diocese's willingness to hold itself to account, and on its determination to forge statutory links.

The DSMG is also planning to look thematically at complaints, in addition to the thematic overviews it takes of casework. Both of these approaches ought to yield useful learning.

Additionally, diocesan staff, and the DSMG Chair, make use of regional and national church safeguarding events, which should help the Diocese progressively improve its sense of how well it functions in terms of safeguarding. A recent trip to the Diocese of Truro, to learn from approaches there, should have a similar impact.

The Bishop of Exeter spoke of the learning he took from national cases and this adds to an overall sense that the Diocese is keen to understand and address safeguarding.

As discussed in 2.11, the archdeacons have collated considerable safeguarding data from their Articles of Enquiry. This information could provide a basis of an annual cycle of auditing and reviewing that would help the Diocese assure itself that its safeguarding work is effective, and to identify and support parishes that appear to need additional help to meet their safeguarding requirements.

The Diocese's quality assurance efforts generally are collated into a Performance and Quality Assurance Monitoring Framework, covering audits, case management, training, and safe recruitment.

Considerations for the Diocese

Consider how Articles of Enquiry data can feed into planned quality assurance developments.

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

2.11.1 Archdeacons' responsibilities

The four archdeacons in the Diocese – Totnes, Exeter, Barnstaple and Plymouth – have made considerable efforts to put together a picture of safeguarding in the parishes. The 2016/17 Articles of Enquiry to churchwardens centred primarily on safeguarding – covering adults and children – and have produced a wealth of information as to which parishes have in place the necessary people, training and policies to manage local safeguarding. Work has gone into collating responses, and the auditors have seen a breakdown, by archdeaconry and by deanery, that clearly highlights which parishes may give rise to concerns.

The archdeacons to whom the auditors spoke, however, recognised that such data collation is merely a first step; the key is using it to help shape and focus the more important work of changing cultures and mindsets. Both were confident that progress was being made in this regard. The recent publication, *The Gospel, Sexual Abuse and the Church*³, was credited with having helped spread the theological messages underpinning safeguarding, and they cited as evidence of shifting cultures in the parishes that there is no longer any pushback from church wardens to be DBS checked, and that there is a much-increased take-up of training. The Bishop of Crediton was another who spoke to the auditors about this; she too felt things were changing, and noted that internal clergy candidates at interview typically gave stronger safeguarding answers than those from other dioceses. This, she believed, is a sign of the message of safeguarding being well-understood locally. She noted too that when she now looks for safeguarding policies being posted in churches, they almost invariably are.

The archdeacons doubted that their offices had the resources to analyse all of the Articles of Enquiry data fully, but recognised that the central office was perhaps not resourced to do so either. If the data is to be collected regularly, this analysis is key to maximising its effectiveness, and the Diocese should consider how to glean the most possible information from it.

It may also be useful if future Articles of Enquiry employ more open, discursive questions, to build on the factual data thus far gathered. This would help identify areas where the culture changes are not fully embedded, but open questions would only further highlight the need for someone to analyse the returns properly.

One significant use to which the data could be put, the archdeacons explained, was in identifying parishes which may need support during a vacancy between incumbents. The possibility of information getting lost and risks going unmonitored at these times remains a concern.

³ The Gospel, Sexual Abuse and the Church: A Theological Resource for the Local Church; the Faith and Order Commission; 2016

2.11.2 Support given to Parish Safeguarding Coordinators

The auditors held a Parish Focus Group, to which three Parish Safeguarding Coordinators (PSCs) came. The small size of the sample group is to be borne in mind, but the auditors were struck with a very clear sense that the PSCs felt that their role was challenging, and at times simply too large for one person to handle.

All PSCs did acknowledge that the level of support is much better now than before the current team was put in place, and they recognised the extra investment that the Diocese had put in to enable an improved service to be delivered. The templates for various parish documents, recently added to the website, were particularly appreciated. However, there was a general sense that the PSC role remains a complex one; one PSC cited the many different skills needed, such as administration, communication, negotiation, attention to detail and many more, which when combined make for a challenging role for volunteers to take on.

One difficulty that was apparent to the auditors was that PSCs were discussing both the complexity of the role, and how time-consuming it was, acknowledging that extra support with the task – through deanery surgeries, more contact with the diocesan team etc – would make it even busier.

The Diocese is aware of that the PSC role can be felt as a burden. The ADSA, who has been a PSC himself, suggested the splitting of the PSC and DBS administrator roles in each parish, which could be a practical step forward, if there are sufficient volunteers locally.

The Devon geography was also cited as an issue. A recent training/open day event held in Exeter itself for PSCs was simply too far away for many people to attend. The Diocese is already planning to run four similar events, one for each archdeaconry. The large number of small rural parishes also means that some people are acting as PSCs to a number of churches across a benefice. This added to a sense that the role brings with it too much responsibility. The notion of events to thank PSCs for their efforts was not especially welcomed by the people to whom the auditors spoke; they stated a clear preference for more practical assistance.

The feeling of anxiety about the PSC role was clear, but within it, there was repeated recognition that the current team has significantly improved matters. The auditors felt that the churn of DSAs in recent years has been unsettling for people in the parishes, and this will take more time to counteract.

People appreciated the effort that had gone into safeguarding newsletters, but confessed to experiencing some slight fear upon their arrival, as they tend to herald more work at parish level. Other people spoke of the newsletters being overly-long, and therefore not read. The auditors shared this particular concern.

As mentioned, the proportion of PSCs to whom the auditors spoke was very small. Given the concerns they expressed, however, it may be that the Diocese needs to focus more effort on its parish-facing roles. A standing Parish Focus Group might assist the Diocese to shape its support to the parishes effectively.

A number of people, including at diocesan level, accepted that the parish

understanding of adult safeguarding is not as well developed as the awareness of child safeguarding issues. More generally, the Diocese is well aware that proactive support to parishes needs to be a focus of their work.

Considerations for the Diocese

Articles of Enquiry to include more open, exploratory questions.

The Diocese to consider if any data that is collected can be analysed so that its usefulness is maximised.

The Diocese to satisfy itself that systems are able to monitor parish priest vacancies, and ensure that safeguarding information is not lost during these periods.

The Diocese to factor in what support the parishes need when it considers work patterns/allocations in the future.

An ongoing parish reference group could be considered to help shape diocesan safeguarding work.

2.12 RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

2.12.1 Responding to victims/survivors

The Diocese has a Memorandum of Understanding with a local Christian counselling service to provide the local Authorised Listeners. However, the Bishop of Crediton said that the Authorised Listeners are 'simply not used', and she described how it can be difficult to know when an Authorised Listener is the right offer.

She went on to say that the general culture around responding to survivors is better now than in the past. In part, the Bishop credited this to clergy in the parishes, who will recognise the importance of listening and apologising to survivors. The Bishop of Crediton herself is an advocate for survivors, and the Bishop of Exeter described how he also meets with survivors. The Bishop's Chaplain told the auditors of taking a phone call from a survivor living overseas, with no connection to the Diocese of Exeter, who had tried several Church of England establishments, before finding someone willing to listen. This perhaps reflects the efforts of the Diocese to develop a listening culture, which offers support to victims and survivors rather than defensiveness.

The Bishop of Crediton and the Chair of the DSMG shared the view that more focused work needs to be done on how best to support survivors, and this ties into the issue of the DSA's team being wholly male. The work mentioned in 2.2 to build links with voluntary groups such as the Rape Crisis Centre and SAFE (Stop Abuse For Everyone) will be part of this effort.

Should a victim of abuse hold the Bishop's License, they have access to a pastoral counselling service.

2.12.2 Proactive efforts to create a safe culture

The Diocese employs both a Children's Work Adviser and a Youth Work Adviser. The auditors did not speak to them, but the relevant web pages suggest that keeping children and young people safe is part of their remit. The DSA is developing links with the Children's Mission Enabler and the Youth Mission Enabler to find ways of capturing the views of children and young people about safer churches.

Interesting work is being started with a group called Allies Against Abuse, an organisation that works with men to reduce domestic abuse. The Diocese is looking at including some aspects of this work in, for example, its youth work and its marriage preparation sessions.

The DSA's strength in partnership working is evident here, as he develops links with the Devon Safeguarding Adults Board to create a sub-group to share good adult safeguarding practice, and with the NSPCC to put together resources for church leaders around child neglect.

The Diocese has parish and diocesan level policies on the inclusion of people with disabilities.

Considerations for the Diocese

Develop an effective model for supporting a range of victims and survivors.

2.13 INFORMATION SHARING

The only evidence the auditors saw of formal information-sharing agreements was a draft document with the Devon & Cornwall Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), and the information-sharing aspects of the service-level agreement with the Cathedral.

Nonetheless, information sharing with statutory and other external agencies appeared from the case files to be working well, reflecting in part the efforts put into organisational relationship building by the DSA and his team.

Internally, there was again evidence of prompt and appropriate information sharing, with the DSA involving senior diocesan figures as necessary, and in turn being kept up to speed by them. There is – see 2.1 and 2.3 – a coherent management structure around safeguarding, and people are informed of issues appropriately. The Bishop's Chaplain appears to be a useful link figure in this regard.

Information is stored in locked filing cabinets, or on secure computers – all stored within an office to which public access is restricted.

2.14 LINKS WITH NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING TEAM

The Bishop of Crediton sits on the National Safeguarding Strategy Group, so at a senior level, the Diocese enjoys a strong link with the NST and with the direction of travel nationally. Indeed, it has a key player in shaping that direction.

At an operational level, the DSA has made use of the Lambeth Palace Provincial Safeguarding Adviser (PSA), and reported favourably on the assistance he received. The auditors did not see cases involving the NST, but nor were there cases where the involvement of the NST would have been helpful, but was not sought.

The Diocese has a considerable challenge to implement the full NST training programme (see 2.6), but there was no sense of resistance to the importance of that training task.

2.15 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

As discussed, the Diocese of Exeter has made good progress on safeguarding. People in the Diocese and in recognition that the next stages of development need to be around domestic abuse and adult safeguarding – both areas in which there is less understanding and focus than there is around protecting children.

Another priority, the auditors were told, has to be working more closely alongside survivors of abuse.

3 Conclusion

3.1 WHAT'S WORKING WELL?

The auditors have confidence that the Diocese of Exeter has the people and systems in place to deal safely and well with any cases or concerns that come into the Safeguarding Team.

The systems around safeguarding broadly work well, starting with the Bishop of Exeter as the head of that system, and the prominence he gives to safeguarding. The diocese is fortunate to have a Suffragan Bishop of Crediton with such a rich safeguarding background and experience.

There is evidence that cultural change around safeguarding is happening, and there is a strong commitment to continue with this. This aligns with the strong sense of the diocese being an open, learning organisation, as demonstrated in the review of their work and systems in the New Year; the reaching out to regional networks; and in their approach to the SCIE audit.

The current Safeguarding Team is well-regarded across the Diocese, not least for the stability it has brought following the recent turbulent history of the service. They are dealing with a 'catch-up' from what they inherited, and have made good progress towards delivering timely and positive responses to approaches from people in the parishes. Case files show consistently sound safeguarding judgements. They have led on other improvements, for example on the website and on parish resources. This was greatly appreciated by the people in the Parish Focus Group with whom the auditors met.

The whole team are good networkers and communicators, and are very keen to build partnerships among the churches and other agencies.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Management Group has a very committed Chair who has a clear vision for what he wants the group to achieve.

The networking among the senior officers seems to work well, with good access, openness and transparency. The Bishop's Chaplain works particularly closely with the Safeguarding Team, and there is regular contact between the team and the Bishop of Crediton.

A lot of work has gone into a training strategy, and the delivery of the new learning and development framework.

The archdeacons have worked to gather a large amount of very useful data about the state of safeguarding in the parishes.

The Diocese has good complaints and whistleblowing policies.

3.2 AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

A more visible role for the bishops or archdeacons in the delivery of safeguarding training – for example by video introduction, or in the case of archdeacons, sometimes sharing personally in training delivery – would help with the effort to make safeguarding a central part of the work of the Diocese.

The responsiveness of the Safeguarding Team is rated very highly by people in the parishes, but they speak of their need for more proactive initiatives, particularly to support Parish Safeguarding Coordinators in their complex and time-consuming roles. The size of the PSC role needs to be thought about.

The future make-up of the Safeguarding Team needs to be carefully thought through, including a potential reconfiguring of roles. It would be helpful to recruit a female member of staff.

The Diocese recognises the importance of multi-agency working, and social work clearly has an important role in safeguarding. Given that, and the emphasis of the National Safeguarding Team on having social work input with diocesan structures, opportunities to bring social work into the professional mix should be explored.

The Diocese should secure professional supervision for the DSA, as recognised by the Diocesan Secretary and the Director of Finance, and in line with national policy.

The transfer of paper files onto a case management system needs to be finalised.

Safeguarding/Attendance Agreements need to be consistently applied, and a system for their review needs to be developed, and review dates adhered to wherever possible.

The DSMG needs more consistent representation from outside agencies, and perhaps a more focused agenda and safeguarding action plan.

To get further away from a 'tick box' safeguarding culture, the Articles of Inquiry could build on the good information gathered thus far by asking more nuanced questions, to support a better understanding of safeguarding in the parishes. The Articles of Enquiry returns from parishes should be fully used to inform safeguarding efforts in the future.

There is an ongoing challenge to be met of how to make training more flexible and accessible around the large county of Devon.

There is a good communications strategy, but communications are also an ongoing challenge in such a large and diverse area. Some communication is received as being overly long and daunting.

The Authorised Listener service is not working as well as envisaged. Given the experience and understanding of the needs of survivors among senior staff, there is an opportunity to contribute to the discussion about how to devise a better offer to survivors and victims.

APPENDIX: REVIEW PROCESS

DATA COLLECTION

Information provided to auditors

In advance of the audit, the Diocese of Exeter supplied the auditors with a file containing:

- An overview of the Diocese
- An overall vision and strategy for the Diocese
- The diocesan safeguarding strategy
- The diocesan safeguarding policy statement
- Details of safeguarding governance and meetings structures
- The service level agreement for safeguarding support between the Diocese and Exeter Cathedral
- Diocesan Safeguarding Management Group documents, including its Terms of Reference, Performance and Quality Assurance Framework, Strategic Action Plan, Chair's role description, and minutes of the last four meetings
- The safeguarding roles and responsibilities of Bishop's Staff members
- The job description of the DSA
- Minutes of the Safeguarding Operations Group
- Minutes of the Safeguarding Case Management Group
- The two most recent diocesan safeguarding self-evaluation returns
- Two Local Safeguarding Children's Boards' section 11 self-audits
- Forms and returns for 2017 Archdeacons' Articles of Enquiry
- DBS statistics
- CCPAS safeguarding review (2014)
- Past Cases Review Report (2008) and follow-up (2010)
- Two case reviews by the DSMG Chair
- Safeguarding training strategies and reports to DSMG
- Safeguarding communications strategy and update
- Examples of safeguarding communications, including a pocket guide, screen shots of the website, fliers, and newsletters
- Case management and recording process
- Blemished DBS process
- Proposal for a Bishop's Safeguarding Oversight Group
- Draft information-sharing protocol with Devon & Cornwall MAPPA
- The Pastoral Care & Counselling Advisory Group: overview, Terms of Reference, and policies and procedures
- Memorandum of Understanding with Acorn Christian Foundation regarding the Authorised Listener service
- Communication regarding the Bishop's Visitors service
- Complaints and whistleblowing policies
- Several local/parish-based templates, policies and procedures

Participation of members of the Diocese

During the visit, the auditors had conversations with:

- The Bishop of Exeter
- The Bishop of Crediton
- The Archdeacon of Plymouth
- The Archdeacon of Totnes
- The Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Management Group
- The Diocesan Secretary
- The Diocesan Director of Finance (in his role as having been covering the Diocesan Secretary post)
- The Bishop's Chaplain
- The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser
- The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer
- The Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser

Additionally, there was a Parish Focus Group meeting comprising one vicar; one youth leader/parish safeguarding representative; one churchwarden/parish safeguarding representative; and one parish administrator/parish safeguarding representative.

The audit: what records / files were examined?

The auditors looked at 17 case files. Of these, ten involved concerns relating to children; four related to concerns about adults; one involved issues relating to adults and children; two others were for blemished DBS checks.

The auditors also examined six clergy Blue Files and seven lay employee files for evidence of Safe Recruitment.