



5 October 2022

## Executive Summary for Diocese of Exeter Past Cases Review Two

### Background

In May 2007, the Church of England decided on the need for a national review of the recording and the handling of cases where a member of clergy or church officer was subject to allegations, or where circumstances suggested, they posed a risk **to children**. This became known as the 'Past Cases Review' 2007-2009 (PCR) with the objectives of ensuring that:

- Any current or future risk to children was identified
- Action was taken to address these concerns- for example, referrals to the statutory authorities where necessary
- Where cases were identified, support could be provided for the survivors of abuse
- Lessons from the past could be learned to inform the work of the Church today and in the future

An independent person with recognized professional qualifications and expertise carried out the review in the Diocese of Exeter during 2008. The findings of the review were submitted in early 2009.

In 2015, concerns were expressed to the National Safeguarding Adviser about how well the PCR had been conducted (nationally). Consequently, a nationally appointed Independent Scrutiny Team undertook a review of the adequacy of the PCR as it was delivered in every Diocese.

The Independent Scrutiny Team found that the review undertaken in the Diocese of Exeter in 2008, was effective and delivered within the requisite scope and terms of reference. However, the panel considered that in some dioceses, it was not possible to confirm the

adequacy of the PCR process. Moreover, the reviewers considered that there were areas, not covered in the PCR, which needed to be addressed across all dioceses.

Given these findings, the Independent Scrutiny Team recommended that all dioceses carry out further review work that would address issues not considered by the original PCR process. The decision was also made that any further work would, in addition to concerns relating to children, include consideration of **vulnerable adults or adults at risk, and domestic abuse**. This further review is referred to as the Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2).

## **Past Cases Review 2: Process and Findings**

The PCR2 process involved the review of personnel files of clergy, church officers, and Diocesan staff to ensure there were no records indicating an unaddressed concern. It also included an audit of existing safeguarding case records.

The Diocese of Exeter appointed an Independent Reviewer, Mr Paul Northcott, who was identified as suitable by the National Safeguarding Team (NST) for the Church of England.

The Independent Reviewer had access to all relevant paper and electronic systems in the Diocese. The information contained in these files included the documented concerns raised by parishes who had submitted returns as part of the review. In total the reviewer scrutinised 2648 files and case records.

In addition, the Bishop of Exeter, The Right Reverend Robert Atwell, wrote to every parish in the Diocese, circa 500 in number, and other settings associated with the Diocese, seeking assurance that every concern of a safeguarding nature about a member of clergy, church officer, volunteer or member of staff, had been properly shared or reported.

From the scrutiny of files and enquiries with parishes, a total of 17 cases, previously unrecorded or unreported as raising a safeguarding concern, were identified, of which 4 required different or further action.

### **Exeter Diocese Independent Review Findings:**

- The review identified that there is effective strategic governance and oversight of safeguarding.
- People working in the Diocese are progressive in their thinking towards safeguarding.
- The current safeguarding team is experienced, highly motivated and led by an experienced Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor\*. The team members are highly regarded and pride themselves on their visibility and accessibility.
- Historically, the quality of initial response, investigation and management of cases has varied considerably both nationally and within the Diocese. In recent years the staffing and experience of the safeguarding team has ensured a consistent and robust approach to managing and investigating safeguarding concerns.
- Overall, current case recording was considered to be excellent.

- The safeguarding team has established effective working practices in relation to risk management for current cases.
- Multi-agency working and partnership relationships were found to be effective and in line with national guidance and legislation.
- The Diocese has a victims/survivors' strategy in place. Cases demonstrate that the quality of support provided by the safeguarding team adheres to expected standards.
- Overall, current practice is robust and the safeguarding team is well-staffed and has good knowledge and experience. There was clear evidence of proactive intervention and investigation with the full support of senior clergy in the Diocese.

### **Implementation of Local Recommendations**

The Independent Reviewer identified some areas of learning, and made recommendations that broadly fit into the following areas:

1. Increased promotion of and interface with victim and survivor support services.
2. Improved administration and maintenance of ordinand and clergy personnel records (national and local).
3. Improvements to IT systems used for safeguarding casework recording.
4. Standardisation of the process to manage records relating to DBS.
5. Enhanced scrutiny of all 'incoming' clergy files for safeguarding issues.
6. Scrutiny of the nature of complaints made under the Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM) for safeguarding issues.

The recommendations have been addressed through an action plan scrutinised by the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) and the Bishop of Exeter.

### **Survivor Strategy**

The Bishop of Exeter and those responsible for contributing to this review consider the survivors and victims of abuse to be of paramount importance, and a strategy for ensuring survivor engagement is in place.

The contact details of our Independent Reviewer were circulated and were available for direct contact by anyone who felt the need to do so. Arrangements were made to secure independent advocacy and advice should the enquiry have needed to make contact with any known victims, survivors or complainants, to ensure this was done appropriately and sensitively.

### **Role of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (or equivalent)**

The Nationwide PCR2 process is being coordinated by a Project Manager within the National Safeguarding Team and overseen by the National Safeguarding Steering Group and the House of Bishops. The local delivery of the PCR2 was overseen by the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel, chaired by our Independent Chair, Mr Stephen White. The panel includes

senior members of clergy, Diocesan staff and lay officers and representatives from our statutory partners.

## **Concluding Comments**

### **Anthea Carter-Savigear, Diocesan Director of Safeguarding:**

This was a huge undertaking nationally and within the Diocese of Exeter. We are very pleased and grateful for the positive engagement across our diocese with this process, not least the prompt responses from all of our parishes. The records reviewed, in many instances, date back many years, often decades, and whilst there is always room for learning and development, and this has been the case in some of the predominantly more dated cases, we are pleased that this thorough and intrusive review did not identify any unresolved issues that required substantive remedial action. We are also very pleased that this report, building on the very positive [2017] Independent Audit of our diocesan Safeguarding arrangements, has further endorsed the quality of the contemporary safeguarding provision within our diocese in which we, and I believe others, can have confidence.

### **Steven White, Independent Chair of Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel:**

I am pleased with the outcome of the PCR2 process for Exeter Diocese. This lengthy and detailed review has identified the governance and structures for safeguarding within the Diocese meet or exceed expected standards and those responsible for delivery are visible, accessible and forward thinking. I take this opportunity to thank the safeguarding team and their managers for the full cooperation with the independent reviewer ensuring an open and transparent process. As the Independent Chair I am reassured the Exeter Diocese places safeguarding at the heart of daily church activities to ensure a safe environment for our communities it serves across just over 500 parishes. There is no room for complacency and I will ensure the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel will oversee the implementation of the recommendation from this review over the coming months.

### **Bishop of Exeter, the Rt Rev'd Robert Atwell, comments:**

"This latest Past Cases Review has been impressively thorough in its scrutiny. The report's positive assessment of safeguarding in the Diocese of Exeter is reassuring and I welcome its recommendations. Accountability and external auditing are important if we are to enjoy the confidence and trust of the people of Devon.

*\*At the time of the PCR2 review the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor was Charles Pitman, he has recently been promoted to be the new South-West regional safeguarding lead for the Church of England's National Safeguarding Team. Costas Nassaris is currently Acting Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor for the Diocese of Exeter.*