

Trustee's Safeguarding Committee



Annual Report **2023**

About the Diocese of Westminster

The Diocese of Westminster is one of the smallest dioceses in England and Wales in geographical area, but the largest in terms of Catholic population and priests. The diocesan boundaries include the London boroughs north of the River Thames, between the River Lea to the east and the Borough of Hillingdon to the west, the County of Hertfordshire to the north and the Borough of Spelthorne in Surrey.

Since the restoration of the Catholic Hierarchy in 1850, its bishop has often been appointed a Cardinal. His Eminence Cardinal Vincent Nichols is the eleventh Archbishop of Westminster, having been installed as Archbishop on 21 May 2009. In an increasingly cosmopolitan city, the diocese reflects wide ethnic and cultural diversity amongst its Catholic population.



Diocese of Westminster

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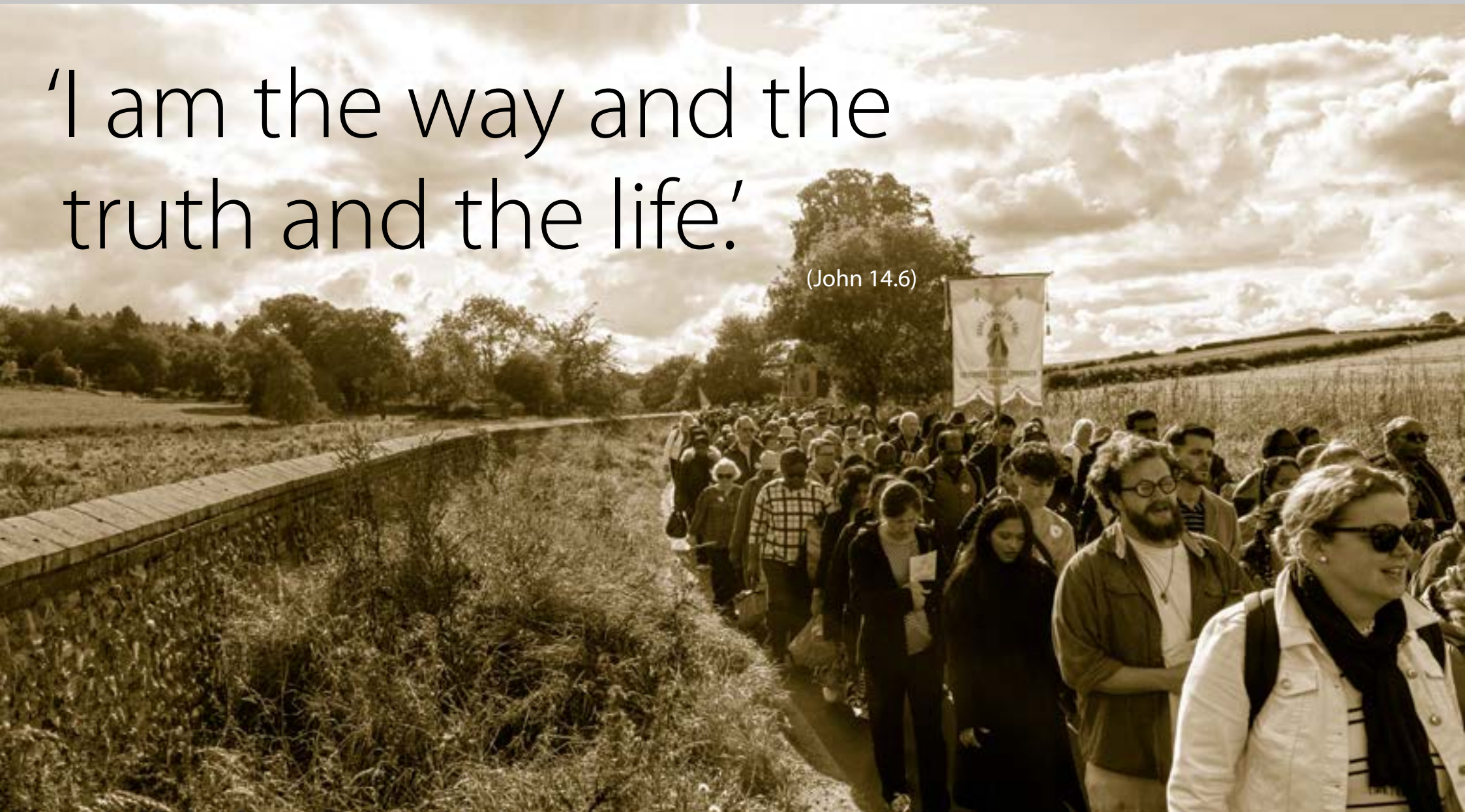
Registered Charity number: 233699

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'I am the way and the truth and the life.'

(John 14.6)





INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This second Annual Report of the Diocese of Westminster's Trustee's Safeguarding Committee covers the period from January to December 2023.





Safeguarding

Ensuring a culture and practice of safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults in all our activities and responding to those who report having suffered harm is a vital part of the mission of the Diocese of Westminster. Safeguarding is not just the work of the Safeguarding Service. It is, and must be, at the heart of all everyone does every day.

The Safeguarding Service Budget 2023:

£500,000

The Committee's Terms of Reference are to be found at: <https://rcdow.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-committee/>

The Diocese of Westminster 2023

Number of Catholics: **430,000** (approx)

Parishes: **207**

Diocesan priests: **295**

Permanent deacons **41**

Ethnic chaplains **40**

Volunteers **20,000**

Diocesan employees **710**

In addition:

- A few parishes are run by religious order priests, and a number of other religious order priests also work in the diocese.
- Our chaplains work in schools, universities, hospitals, and prisons.
- Caritas Westminster serves individuals with particular needs as well as those who find themselves in circumstances where they need some support.
- Caritas Bakhita House provides safe accommodation and support for women escaping human trafficking, sexual exploitation and slavery, and has accommodated 186 guests since opening in 2015.
- Caritas St Joseph's works with individuals with intellectual disabilities to enable them to participate fully in their communities and in church life. It currently has 204 students.
- Caritas Deaf Service works with Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing people of all ages to facilitate and enable their full participation in the life and worship of the Church, sharing their own gifts. It also facilitates access to counsellors who can use British Sign Language.
- Caritas Seeds Hub works with people, from communities which face social and economic equalities, offering advice and mentoring to those who have an idea for a charity, social enterprise or business that makes a positive contribution.
- Caritas Safe in Faith aims to provide survivors of domestic abuse, who are part of a faith community, with safe, faith-based support and counselling that is tailored to their needs as believers.
- Caritas Volunteer Service aims to make voluntary service as easy as possible in the Diocese of Westminster.
- The Caritas food team, which supports food banks, pantries, community shops, and other food projects through parishes and schools across the diocese. Additionally, the Supermarket Voucher Scheme has supported over 20,000 people since inception, with 1,000 households and 3,500 individuals receiving assistance in 2023 alone.
- Pilgrimages, especially the annual diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes, when pilgrims are encouraged to support those who are sick or requiring additional assistance.



THE REGULATION OF AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFEGUARDING



THE TRUSTEE'S SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE



The Regulation of and Responsibility for Safeguarding

In all its work the Trust, as a registered charity, must operate in compliance with English law, including the requirements of the Charity Commission and the Information Commissioner, and its Trust Deed. The diocese must also comply with the Canon law of the Catholic Church.

At a national level, in 2021 the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) was established to create national safeguarding standards and to provide training, advice, audit, review and monitoring of safeguarding in dioceses and church bodies.

The Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS) was created in 2022 to offer safeguarding services to members of religious orders. RLSS is subject to audit by the CSSA. It was developing its services during 2023 and clarifying the extent of the services which it would provide to religious orders which affiliate to it.

The Trustee's Safeguarding Committee

The Committee is a Sub-committee of the Diocesan Trust Board of Directors. It supports, assists and advises the Directors of the Diocesan Trust Board (Trustees) in all safeguarding matters.

The Committee is chaired by a Trustee and reports every three months to the Board. Trustees can respond to reports and direct the Committee to provide additional information, explanations or guidance and take any necessary action.

The membership of the Diocese of Westminster Trustee's Safeguarding Committee during 2023

Baroness Nuala O'Loan , Trustee and Chair
Mr Peter Houghton , Vice Chair (to October 2023)
Rev Monsignor Seamus O'Boyle , Trustee and Episcopal Vicar for Safeguarding
Mr Kevin Barry
Ms Barbara Beese
Fr Stephen Coker
Ms Mary Coller
Ms Bernadette Herbert
Dr Edward Morgan KC
Miss Rachel O'Driscoll
Mr Andrzej Wdowiak

Members have relevant professional experience in a variety of fields, including law, regulatory matters, midwifery/nursing, policing, probation, social work and youth work.¹

Mr Peter Houghton, Vice Chair of the Committee, resigned in October 2023 on medical advice, following a long period of serious illness. He had served on the Committee since its inception and was previously the Chair of the predecessor body, the Safeguarding Commission. He made a great contribution to the work of safeguarding in the diocese over his long years of service, and will be much missed. A new Vice Chair will be appointed by the Cardinal.

The Committee decided to advertise for two new members following the retirement of Peter Houghton and to fill the remaining vacancy.

Meetings of the Committee

Six meetings of the Committee were held on 9 March 2023, 10 March 2023, 17 May 2023, 6 July 2023, 28 September 2023, and 7 December 2023.

There is generally a high level of attendance by Committee members at meetings.

At the time of publication the membership of the Committee is as follows:

Baroness Nuala O'Loan, Trustee and Chair

Ms Bernadette Herbert, Vice-Chair

Bishop Jim Curry

Fr Stephen Coker

Ms Mary Collier

Deacon Paul Hewitt

Dr Edward Morgan KC

Ms Nicola O'Brien

Miss Rachel O'Driscoll

Mr Andrzej Wdowiak

Ms Susie Worthington

Ms Victoria Wilson

The work of the Committee

The work of the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee is extensive and includes:

1. Ensuring that there is zero tolerance of the abuse of children and vulnerable adults in the diocese.
2. Ensuring that allegations, complaints, and concerns about abuse of children and vulnerable adults can be reported and are responded to by the Safeguarding Service in a compassionate, supportive, timely and effective manner.
3. Ensuring that those against whom allegations are made (respondents) are provided with as much information as possible and are treated by the Safeguarding Service in a respectful, compassionate and supportive way.
4. Providing a case advisory function supporting the Safeguarding Coordinator's management of cases through advice, scrutiny, support and quality assurance of risk assessment, case management and safeguarding plans, ensuring that there is learning from the work of the Safeguarding Service.
5. Ensuring the support of victims and survivors within the financial limits set by the Trust Board and seeking feedback on their experience with the Safeguarding Service to inform future practice.
6. Contributing to the development of a culture of safeguarding across the diocese.
7. Ensuring that appropriate professional advice is accessible from organisations such as the police, probation service, local authority and healthcare providers, either through Committee members themselves, or through contact with relevant representatives of these organisations.

8. Commissioning and advising on the development of policy and procedures, informed by the perspective of complainants, victims and survivors, and respondents as appropriate, in compliance with national policies.
9. Reporting quarterly on its work to the Westminster Diocese Trust Board.
10. Ensuring that the Safeguarding Service has an adequate budget.
11. Producing this annual public safeguarding report.

Notes of the meetings of the Committee can be found on the diocesan website at <https://rcdow.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-committee/>





THE VICAR GENERAL
INFORMATION SHARING
MEETING



The Committee conducts much of its work through its three Sub-Committees. In 2023 their membership comprised:

The Audit and Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee

Mr Kevin Barry (Chair)

Ms Barbara Beese

Ms Bernadette Herbert

Miss Rachel O'Driscoll

There were 10 meetings of the Audit and Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee in 2023

The Blemished DBS Sub-Committee

Baroness Nuala O'Loan (Chair)

Ms Barbara Beese

Ms Mary Coller

Fr Stephen Coker

The Blemished DBS Sub-Committee considered 3 blemished DBS reports in 2023

The Casework and Case Closure Sub-Committee

Mr Peter Houghton (Chair to October 2023)

Ms Barbara Beese (Acting Chair)

Mgr Seamus O'Boyle

Baroness Nuala O'Loan

There were 13 meetings of the Casework and Case Closure Sub-Committee in 2023

Two other structures facilitate the work of safeguarding, ensuring regular and effective communication between the various parts of the diocese, and that safeguarding is integrated into the work of the diocese, thus facilitating the enhancement of the best possible culture of safeguarding in the diocese:

1. The Vicar General Information Sharing Meeting

This meeting occurs approximately every four weeks to facilitate the sharing of information between the Vicar General, who is responsible for matters relating to clergy appointments and conduct, and the Safeguarding Service. Its membership is:

Mr Peter Houghton (Chair to October 23)

Ms Barbara Beese (Acting Chair)

Mgr Seamus O'Boyle (Trustee, Episcopal Vicar for Safeguarding)

Baroness Nuala O'Loan (Trustee, Chair of the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee)

Mgr Martin Hayes, (Trustee, Vicar General)

Ms Geraldine Allen (Safeguarding Coordinator) (to November 2023)

Ms Monawara Bakht (Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator and Interim Coordinator from December 2023)

The meetings are also attended by the caseworker responsible for any case under discussion. There were 11 Vicar General Information Sharing Meetings in 2023.

2. The Cross Curia Safeguarding Meeting.

This quarterly meeting ensures that safeguarding issues are discussed by those in leadership roles in the Curia (the diocesan administration) to facilitate the enhancement of the existing culture of safeguarding throughout the diocese and the agreement of policies, practices and procedures applicable across or to different parts of the diocese, or to different diocesan functions.

Its membership is:

- Bishop John Sherrington (Trustee and Chair)
- Ms Geraldine Allen (Safeguarding Coordinator) (to November 2023)
- Ms Monawara Bakht (Interim Safeguarding Coordinator from November 2023)
- Mr Paolo Camoletto (Chief Operating Officer)
- Mgr John Conneely (Judicial Vicar)
- Deacon Adrian Cullen
- Mr Matthew D’Souza (Data Protection Officer)
- Mgr Martin Hayes (Trustee, Vicar General)
- Mgr Seamus O’Boyle (Trustee, Episcopal Vicar for Safeguarding, member of Trustee’s Safeguarding Committee)
- Baroness Nuala O’Loan, (Trustee, Chair of Trustee’s Safeguarding Committee)
- Ms Marie Saba (Director of Communications)
- Mr Peter Sweeney (Director of Education)
- Mr Richard Harries (Director of Caritas from September 2023)
- Mr Robert Walker (Director of Resources)
- Mr Andrzej Wdowiak (Director of Youth Ministry, member of Trustee’s Safeguarding Committee)
- Ms Nicola Atkinson (Special Projects and EA to COO)

There were 4 Cross Curia Safeguarding meetings in 2023. At those meetings matters discussed included:

- the Code of Conduct for tenants in diocesan premises, a new volunteer strategy, and safeguarding in ethnic chaplaincies,
- improving communication with clergy in relation to processes when an allegation of abuse is made,
- arrangements for the consequences of religious orders moving from alignment to the diocese for safeguarding purposes to affiliation to the Religious Life Safeguarding Service,
- Canon law agreements with religious orders operating within the diocese, and
- the diocesan Safeguarding Communications Plan.

The Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA)

The Diocese signed a letter of intent to contract with CSSA in July 2021, and subsequently signed the CSSA contract in August 2023. It operates until the end of 2024. Each diocese has a link member. The link member for Westminster Diocese is Lady Amanda Ellingworth, who became Deputy Chair of the CSSA in June 2023, after the previous Deputy Chair, Steve Ashley, became the CEO of the CSSA in February 2023.

The Committee was joined at its meeting in October 2023 by Lady Ellingworth and Steve Ashley. They updated the Committee on recent developments and addressed a range of issues in relation to the work of CSSA which the Committee had referred to CSSA after its meeting in September, which included communication and dissemination of information by CSSA, the imposition of





umbrella agreements by CSSA which created additional pressures on staff, a national Case Management System and when the CSSA Training Strategy, with which dioceses must comply, was expected to be delivered. The discussion was positive, although no solutions emerged in relation to the imposition of umbrella agreements and the training strategy has yet to be completed. It was agreed that a further meeting would take place later in 2024.

Implementation of the new national safeguarding procedures

As required by CSSA, the diocese has an Implementation Plan for the transition from the previous systems and processes to the new CSSA systems and all other reforms, including the establishment of the RLSS.

An Implementation Group was established under the Plan, chaired by the Chair of the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee. Its members include those with responsibility for different areas of work within the diocese, such as Ministry, Communication, Human Resources and Data Protection, so that relevant expertise would be available to enable the best possible processes for safeguarding within the diocese. The Implementation Plan is updated quarterly, discussed at Committee meetings, and reported quarterly to the Trust Board.

Initially the Plan comprised 29 items involving 88 issues. At the end of December 2023, 18 issues had been completely closed, and 56 had reached such a state of development that it was agreed that they should be transferred out of the Implementation Plan process and into the normal three-yearly strategic planning process. They involved matters such as the arrangements for cooperative working with the RLSS and the CSSA, the provision of leadership in safeguarding, the ongoing provision of adequate resources for safeguarding, and ongoing training developments.

Compliance with the eight National Safeguarding Standards

The Committee oversaw Safeguarding Service compliance with the eight national safeguarding standards published by the CSSA ([see The Eight National Safeguarding Standards \(catholicsafeguarding.org.uk\)](https://www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk)) and with all other published policies and guidance. The Committee and the Safeguarding Service developed and reviewed diocesan policies, procedures, documents and guidance which reflect all identified CSSA requirements. They were then presented to the Trust Board for approval.

Ongoing work by the CSSA and RLSS

Remaining issues, such as compliance with the CSSA training requirements, the creation of necessary agreements for information sharing with the RLSS and the exact responsibilities of RLSS in the context of religious order activities within the diocese, cannot be progressed until the CSSA produces its training requirements and there is clarity on the safeguarding arrangements of all religious orders which operate within the diocese. These matters are outside the control of the diocese. It is anticipated that the Implementation Plan process will be fully merged with the strategic planning process by the end of 2024.

CSSA review of all its policies and procedures

The CSSA began a review of all its national policies and procedures during the reporting year. It had been anticipated that new policies would be available at the end of 2023. However, this work is ongoing and further development of their procedures is expected in 2024.

The Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS) and Religious Orders operating in the Diocese

The role of RLSS

During the year the RLSS continued to develop its understanding of its role and its contractual arrangements with the various religious orders which operate within England and Wales. Some 116 religious orders are based or operate within the diocese, many of which were affiliated to the diocese for safeguarding purposes before the establishment of CSSA and RLSS. This meant that the diocese had responsibility for providing safeguarding services to them. Some religious orders are based in the diocese, but do not run parishes. Others own and run parishes in the diocese. Some run parishes on behalf of the diocese. It is a complex and varied situation.

Work continued on the transitional processes required for religious orders which run or run and own parishes in the diocese.

Ongoing responsibilities of the diocese in some matters

The RLSS will not take case files relating to previous complaints even where the religious life group affiliates to the RLSS. A summary of some 250 such historic cases will therefore be made available to RLSS. However, even religious orders affiliated to RLSS will continue to require some diocesan safeguarding services, such as diocesan specific training and matters relating to DBS clearance.

By December 2023, there was no clarity as to whether the RLSS or the diocese was responsible for the processing of DBS applications, training and other safeguarding services where religious orders run parishes. Victims and survivors of abuse need to know who is responsible, and in the interim the Safeguarding Service continued to signpost people to RLSS where appropriate. The diocese

continues to provide DBS application processes and training for volunteers and non-clergy staff, both for those religious orders which own and run parishes, and to those which run diocesan parishes.

Transfer of matters to the RLSS

At the end of the year some religious orders had signed contracts with the RLSS, and the diocese has begun referring new complaints or concerns about affiliated religious order members to RLSS.

The diocese has also prepared some 14 live religious order safeguarding files for transfer to the religious orders concerned and to the RLSS. If a new complaint or allegation were to be received against a religious order member, it would be necessary for RLSS to establish whether any previous safeguarding matters had been dealt with by the diocese, and if so the outcome of that work.

Current safeguarding plans relating to members of religious orders affiliated to RLSS will be transferred for ongoing management and review. The outworking of these arrangements has yet to be finalised, but the diocese will work to ensure that safe practices operate within the diocese. By December 2023 the diocese was still managing safeguarding plans relating to eight members of religious orders.

New National Disciplinary Tribunal to hear Canon law cases

A National Disciplinary Tribunal Service (NTS), approved by the Holy See, was established by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales in November 2023. Details can be found at [NTS-Information-110123.pdf](#)

The National Tribunal is the only body which can carry out judicial canonical trials in England and Wales, with the exception of offences which are reserved to the



INDEPENDENT AUDIT
OF SAFEGUARDING
GOVERNANCE



Holy See. In these cases, the Holy See is able to grant competence to the NTS, should this be considered the most appropriate way forward in a particular case.

Where there is a need for a Canonical Preliminary Investigation of a safeguarding allegation the bishop of the diocese or religious congregation superior will refer the case to the NTS, which will conduct the Preliminary Investigation. If a Penal Trial becomes necessary, it will be conducted by the NTS.

When a case is referred to the NTS, the first instance Tribunal, based In London, will make a determination on the allegation, the culpability of the person implicated in misconduct and, where the allegation is sustained, what penalty, if any, is to be imposed according to the procedure in the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

Appeal lies to the second instance Tribunal, based in Liverpool, except in cases reserved to the Holy See which can be appealed to the relevant Dicastery. The existence of the national appeal Tribunal does not prejudice the right of a party to appeal a case to the Roman Rota. The National Tribunal is also competent to hear cases of members of Churches which fall under the 1990 Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches.

The principal officers of the two Tribunals are:

	First Instance	Second Instance
Judicial Vicar	Rev John Poland	Rev Christopher Dawson
Chancellor	Dr Ed Morgan	Dr Ed Morgan
Promoter of Justice	Rev Canon Bill Agley	Rev Sean Riley

The NTS is accountable to the Apostolic Signatura in Rome for its work and must make a yearly report to the Holy See.

The NTS will also provide advice, guidance and assistance in relation to Canon law processes.

Father John Poland JCD of Liverpool Diocese, who was instrumental in the creation of the Tribunal said at the launch of the NTS that, 'Fairness and justice lie at the heart of our Christian life. The establishment of the NTS demonstrates the commitment of the Church in England and Wales to promote and encourage consistent and fair practice in the determination of penal cases in accordance with the law of the Church, and so to foster confidence in a just outcome for all those involved.'

This is an important development for safeguarding in England and Wales and is very much welcomed.

Independent Audit of Safeguarding Governance

Crucial to the work of the Safeguarding Service is its governance, and in September 2022 independent safeguarding specialists were appointed to establish how the governance of safeguarding within the diocese might be improved, and to measure the state of compliance with the new national safeguarding standards.

The auditors were given full access and conducted a review of diocesan governance documentation and conducted interviews with key people responsible for the governance of safeguarding throughout the diocese. The auditors also attended a meeting of the Committee to observe its procedures.

The auditors reported in February 2023 and the report was presented to the Trustee Board in March 2023. The auditors commented that "we thought that the Archdiocese had made a genuine effort to adopt the recommendations of the Elliott Report".

Following receipt of the report a special Trustee Safeguarding Committee meeting was convened in May

THE CSSA AUDIT OF SAFEGUARDING

2023 and agreement was reached as to the way forward in relation to the recommendations which had been made and which required action. That work was led by the Audit and Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee.

Two matters were beyond the remit of the Committee: CSSA has yet to produce standards for Committee membership, and CSSA is currently reviewing all its policies and practices. It is hoped that revised national policies will be received to inform the further development of diocesan documentation.

The CSSA Audit of Safeguarding

Following the signing of the agreement with the CSSA, the Diocese received notice on 4 October 2023 that it would be audited in January 2024, with the audit covering the period from January to December 2023 although, it was stated that, in particular circumstances, it may be appropriate to provide evidence from previous years. The audit process involved self-evaluation against the eight national standards together with the presentation of supporting evidence. All documents were to be provided for the audit by 18 December 2023.

Three questionnaires were issued by CSSA: to clergy, Parish Safeguarding Representatives, and ethnic chaplains. The Diocese of Westminster is very complex and multi-faceted by comparison with many other dioceses and CSSA said that they were aware of this. The auditors indicated that, following review of the documentation they would be in the diocese and would conduct interviews as they deemed appropriate, for a period of two weeks from 15 January 2024 (it was initially to be a week, but the period was extended when CSSA realised the complexity and size of the diocese).

The report was published by CSSA in September 2024 and a grading of "Firm Progress" was received. This will receive greater attention in the 2024 report.

THE WORK OF SAFEGUARDING

The Work of Safeguarding

The Safeguarding Service, led by the Safeguarding Coordinator, is responsible for the delivery of safeguarding services within the Diocese. It is hoped that all those who come into contact with the Safeguarding Service in the Diocese of Westminster encounter a caring, accountable, fair, impartial, and professional service. The Committee is responsible for the governance of the work of the Safeguarding Service.

During the year there were a number of staffing changes and in November 2023 the Safeguarding Coordinator, Geraldine Allen, resigned. Her deputy, Monawara Bakht, became Acting Safeguarding Coordinator.

The Development of Policy and Practice in Safeguarding

The following policies and procedures were developed, approved, or amended by the Committee in conjunction with the Safeguarding service in 2023:

- The Diocesan Safeguarding Policy.
- Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities.
- Conflict of Interest in Safeguarding Matters.
- Safeguarding Induction for Trustee's Safeguarding Committee Members and for Trustees on Safeguarding Matters.
- The Lourdes Pilgrimage Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.
- New terms of reference for the Vicar General Information Sharing Meeting.
- The Survivor Commitment.
- Westminster Cathedral Safeguarding Information and Procedures.





- The Risk Information Framework and Safeguarding Plan for Lay Respondents.
- Code of Conduct for Tenants (of diocesan residential properties).

The Committee and the Safeguarding Service also participated in the updating of the Safeguarding Risk Register.

Providing a safe environment

The provisions of a safe environment and regulating access to roles within the Church is an enormously important part of the work of the diocese. Training is provided to enable risk assessment of locations in which Church activities take place and such assessments inform procedures about how, when and where children and vulnerable adults may be engaged in the huge range of activities from liturgy and worship to, for example, attendance at mother and toddler groups. Following any risk assessment, decisions will be taken about any developments which may enhance the protection of vulnerable people, and appropriate action will follow.

PSRs and priests working together in safeguarding

Our priests and PSRs are at the front line in terms of ensuring a safe environment for children and vulnerable people and responding to complaints and concerns. They must work very closely together. That work of communicating the safeguarding culture and demonstrating it through their ministry is fundamentally important in the diocese.

Working with the Parish Priest, the PSRs are volunteers, carefully selected and trained, who assist other volunteers who may wish to work with children and vulnerable adults to understand their safeguarding duties, explaining the safer recruitment process which involves conducting DBS checks to ensure that nobody

who presents a risk to others is allowed to be involved in volunteer work or employment in the parish. In August 2023² we had 303 PSRs working voluntarily in the diocese, 261 in parishes and 42 in ethnic chaplaincies and the LGBT chaplaincy. They are supported in all they do by the Safeguarding Service's PSR Support Team.

Last year the Audit and Quality Improvement Sub-Committee launched its audit of safeguarding practices within parishes in the diocese, which was very successful, identifying scope for improvements, but very much recognising the very high-quality work done by PSRs with the support of Parish Priests. Regrettably, it was not possible to carry out any parish audits in 2023 because of staff shortages within the Safeguarding Service. It is intended that this work will resume in 2024 with a target of 20 parishes to be visited over the year.

Development of new procedures for the Lourdes Pilgrimage

During 2023 the diocese established a working party, chaired by the Chief Operating Officer, involving members of the Pilgrimage Executive team, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, a member of the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee, and the Diocesan Director of Youth Ministry, to review safeguarding procedures and practices for and during the pilgrimage and identify areas of practice which required strengthening.

The working party met seven times during 2023, before and after the pilgrimage. The work undertaken included review of role descriptions, codes of conduct, safeguarding policies for the pilgrimage, processes for recruiting volunteers, safeguarding training for young volunteers, group and team leaders and the process for raising concerns

during the pilgrimage. A new Pilgrimage Safeguarding Representative (PSR) was appointed in June 2023.

After the pilgrimage a review group was established to review pilgrimage governance. It has now been established as a Committee of the Trustee's Board. The Lourdes Pilgrimage Committee is chaired by Bishop Sherrington. Father Andrew Gallagher was appointed as Interim Pilgrimage Director. Sub-groups of the Lourdes Pilgrimage Committee are the Pilgrimage Executive Group meetings, which deals with the operational aspects of the pilgrimage and the Pilgrimage Safeguarding Working Group.

At the end of 2023 the pilgrimage team made preparations for the forthcoming CSSA audit of the Diocese of Westminster and undertook a self-assessment against the eight safeguarding standards. The development plan has now formed part of the work plan for the pilgrimage going forward into 2024.

Safer Recruitment

The diocese has a policy on Safer Recruitment which has been approved by the Trust Board. This policy informs safer recruitment by the Human Resources Department, Caritas, or the Safeguarding Service or others, of all those ministering to and working in activities involving children and vulnerable adults in the diocese. The policy is also used by the Committee in its recruitment of members.

Checks for suitability for ministry, employment or volunteering

Newly ordained clergy, those who move into Westminster from other dioceses, and visiting clergy from other dioceses and overseas who come to work in the diocese are subject to detailed processes to assess their ability to minister in the diocese and to DBS checks. Similarly checks

are carried out on anybody seeking paid employment or appointment as a volunteer in the diocese. Nobody is allowed to start ministry, employment or voluntary work without completing training and all necessary checks.

DBS Checks

Initial DBS checks are made through the Government's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to determine whether the person has a relevant conviction or whether there is non-conviction information supplied by relevant police forces which must be considered and responded to appropriately, to determine whether that person can work in the diocese.

These checks are carried out for Trustees, clergy, retired priests, permanent deacons, transitional deacons, seminarians, as well as all Curia employees, parish employees, and parish and chaplaincy volunteers whose work is with children and vulnerable adults, and pilgrimage volunteers. Every three years the DBS checks are repeated.

DBS certificates

During 2023 approximately 983 DBS certificates were issued to people ministering, working and volunteering in the diocese. Some 84 DBS certificates were issued for the Lourdes pilgrimage alone, a testament to the huge number of people of all ages who volunteer to enable the success of all aspects of this major diocesan pilgrimage.

Blemished DBS Certificates

During the year three 'blemished' DBS certificates were received, containing information about a conviction or other police information in relation to someone wanting to minister, work or volunteer in the diocese.

The implications of the three "blemished" DBS



certificates were considered and responded to with recommendations by the Committee's blemished DBS Sub-Committee.

Training

Safeguarding training is essential for those involved in the ministry and work of the Church whether they are ordained, in religious life, employees or volunteers.

A significant volume of training is provided for a huge range of people. Everyone who ministers, and anybody who works or volunteers in the regulated areas (children and vulnerable adults), and every employee of the diocese must do basic safeguarding training when they start, and refresher training every two years. Specialist training is delivered to enable the work of different categories of people.

Some of the training is online, but much of it is delivered by the Safeguarding Service face to face, to ensure that our safeguarding practice remains up to date and effective, and supports those who report abuse.

Advice on safeguarding concerns

The Safeguarding Service provides an advice service to the parishes and others. The number of people contacting the Service seeking help, advice and support on a huge range of safeguarding matters and concerns generally has grown very rapidly. In 2022, 90 consultations were undertaken to respond to requests for advice and support. In 2023, **126 such consultations** ranging from requests for information about whether altar servers are required to go through the DBS process, concerns that a volunteer was using drugs on parish premises, and a child who had reported that his father smacked him at home, were opened and dealt with. This appears to result from enhanced understanding of the work of the Safeguarding Service, and growing

awareness that the Service will readily respond to clarify uncertainties or explain issues. It is testament to the outreach and development work undertaken by the Safeguarding Service in recent years. Some 18 consultations remained open at the end of the year.

In all the work that goes on in the diocese which involves children or vulnerable adults, whether on pilgrimage, during sacramental preparation, in our seminaries, during special events or just every day, the diocese operates robust systems to create a safe environment for all.

Concerns, information and allegations about the abuse of a child or of a vulnerable adult

Reporting concerns, information and allegations of abuse

Abuse can be physical, sexual, psychological, financial or emotional and can happen in person or online through telephone, electronic or mobile devices. Neglect of a child or a vulnerable adult by lack of love, care and attention also constitutes abuse.

Anybody who wants to report allegations, information or concerns about abuse can tell the police or social services or any other individual. Alternatively, they can contact the Safeguarding Service or tell the Parish Priest or the PSR or both. Details of how to report abuse must be displayed in every church:

If there is information of a safeguarding nature where a child or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger or requires immediate medical attention

CALL EMERGENCY SERVICES ON 999

Those wishing to report to the Safeguarding Service can email safeguarding@rcdow.org.uk or Phone: 020 7798 9352, and choose option 1



Responding to reported concerns, information and allegations of abuse

Those who minister and work in the diocese are trained to forward all allegations to the Safeguarding Service within 24 hours. The Safeguarding Service must notify the police and the Local Authority Designated Officer (for children) or Adult Social Services (for vulnerable adults) of all allegations within 24 hours. If the police, Children or Adult Social Services are told about an allegation against somebody in the diocese, they normally inform the diocese.

The Committee through its work seeks to ensure that matters reported are dealt with properly and in accordance with all laws and procedures.

Casework and Case Closure

Conviction of a priest

During the reporting period, a priest of the diocese, Fr Reginald Dunkling, was convicted of the abuse of a child some 30 years ago. He was sentenced to a 12-month community order with additional requirements. He has not been in ministry since the allegation against him was reported.

Safeguarding consultations 2023

As stated above, during the year 126 safeguarding consultations occurred in which somebody sought advice or raised a concern, 18 remained under consideration at the end of the year. This is a significant increase in the number of such consultations even from 2022 when 90 consultations were responded to, and this appears to result from enhanced understanding of the work of the Safeguarding Service, and growing awareness that the Service will readily respond to clarify uncertainties or explain issues.

Cases opened during 2023 after an allegation of abuse.

If an allegation of the abuse of a child or vulnerable adult is received it must be reported to the police and to the local authority designated safeguarding officer (the LADO), and a case file will be opened.

During 2023 10 allegations were received, and appropriate action was taken:

- Allegations against diocesan priests: 3
- Allegations against members of religious orders: 5
- Allegations against lay people: 2

Cases opened after an allegation of abuse and closed during the year

Of the 10 cases opened following receipt of an allegation of abuse in 2023, 5 cases were subsequently closed during the year

- 1 was an historic case involving a priest who died several decades ago;
- 1 related to a religious order priest and was referred to the newly established RLSS;
- 1 was not a safeguarding matter.
- 2 related to lay people.

Safeguarding Plans 2023

Those under investigation, or those who have been convicted in a criminal court, or by a canonical court (respondents) are normally subject to Safeguarding Plans. These are entered into by agreement between the respondent and the Cardinal Archbishop in the case of priests, the Religious Order Superior in the





case of religious order members, or the Parish Priest in the case of lay people. They are based on a clear and shared assessment by the Safeguarding Service of the risk posed by the person and of the agreed measures necessary to manage or mitigate any such risk. Such measures may include not wearing clerical dress or habits and not engaging in public ministry (in the case of clergy and religious); avoiding contact with individuals of a particular age group, and provisions as to when, where and in what circumstances worship is to occur. Safeguarding Plans continue to apply until they are either closed because a complaint is not substantiated or they are no longer necessary, or the individual subject to the plan dies. The Committee reviews all Safeguarding Plans bi-annually to ensure that all necessary reviews have occurred, and that Safeguarding Plans have been closed where necessary.

The Safeguarding Service was managing 20 safeguarding plans at the end of 2023:

- 4 related to diocesan clergy – one in the case of Fr Reginald Dunkling, who has been convicted of abuse (see above), 3 cases related to diocesan clergy where there has been no criminal conviction. None of these individuals are in ministry.
- 8 related to members of religious orders, two of whom had criminal convictions and none of whom were in ministry.
- 8 related to lay people, 6 of whom had criminal convictions.

Case closures

The diocese continues to review all case files and papers relating to matters received before 2019 when the incumbent Safeguarding Coordinator in 2023 was appointed, to determine whether any action needed to be taken by the Safeguarding Service in respect of each case, to ensure that all risks had been managed or mitigated before closure of the case. Following such review and action, cases will be closed. By December 2023 only 10 such cases remain to be closed. Some 78 matters which resulted from consultations with the Safeguarding Service (37 dating from the period 2000-2004, and 41 from 2019), which did not result in the opening of case files, will require to be reviewed and it is anticipated that this historic work will all be completed by March 2024.

In addition to this the diocese closed a further 40 cases and other matters (such as Safeguarding Plans) during the year under its Case Closure Guidance and Procedure, having established that all risk had been managed or mitigated, all necessary action had been taken, that any victim or survivor had been supported, that, where necessary, support was being provided to any respondent, that all records had been completed, and that lessons had been learned, where appropriate, from the circumstances and handling of particular cases.

The care of those who report abuse

In all cases where someone reports abuse, great care is taken to support and assist the person through the process which follows the making of the report. The care of those who have suffered abuse by anyone in the Church is of the utmost importance. The caseworkers are trained to deliver trauma informed services through person centred processes, and to assist people in accessing appropriate therapeutic support services both



during and after their contact with the Service. These processes are monitored by the Casework and Case Closure Sub-Committee at its monthly meetings.

Learning from and listening to those who report abuse

The diocese seeks always to learn from those who have suffered abuse through various processes such as consultation with those who have reported abuse about their experiences in engaging with the Safeguarding Service, lessons learning exercises conducted within the Safeguarding Service and a requirement for the inclusion of a record of any lessons learned in the closure report for any case.

The Audit and Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee is endeavouring to improve the experience of those victim-survivors to whom the diocese provides services and support.

It examines the processes through which the Safeguarding Service formally and regularly reviews its casework, meeting as a team to identify good practice to share and to identify learning points to enhance future casework.

A questionnaire is sent to each person who has reported abuse or each victim/survivor when the case is being dealt with. Where they respond, subsequent questionnaires are sent every six months until the case is closed. This is designed to provide direct and contemporaneous feedback from those in receipt of casework support.

When a case is closed, anyone who has reported abuse is invited to a private (carefully designed and structured) exit interview to seek their considered reflection on the support that they have received. Questionnaires have been sent out since 2021 but none have been returned. The questionnaire was revised in January 2023 in conjunction with survivors from "Survivor Training – Beyond Words." However there has still been no response.

Victim-survivors whose cases are completed have also been offered a meeting with two members of the Committee. To date none have taken up the opportunity of this meeting.

Developing the diocese's trauma informed response

The diocese is absolutely committed to the importance of involving victims and survivors in training and to learning from those who have suffered abuse. To enhance understanding Baroness Sheila Hollins, who has held a very significant number of prestigious roles, including President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, of the British Medical Association, of the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund, of the Royal College of Occupational Therapists and Member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Centre for Child Protection at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, and who became President of the Catholic Union in November 2023, provided training this year for the Committee and staff which related to the impact of abuse on victims and survivors and the consequential trauma.

The Safeguarding Coordinator also provided training on the delivery of a trauma informed response by the Safeguarding Service and all those who come into contact with victims and survivors.

Working with victims and Survivors

Members of the Committee had a further meeting with Fr Andrew Browne and Marie Grant of Survivor Training to discuss options for training which would enhance understanding of the trauma associated with abuse, and subsequently received a proposal for bespoke training for clergy and PSRs, in the first instance. It was agreed to consider how this might be developed in the context of the Diocese of Westminster. It is hoped that the work involving Survivor Training will lead to the involvement of victims in the diocese's training in the coming year.

LISTENING
TO CLERGY**Listening to clergy**

It is also important to listen to the voice of those who work in ordained ministry in the diocese. To give clergy the opportunity further to inform the work of the Committee and the Service, four meetings, attended by the Chair of the Committee and the Safeguarding Coordinator and organised by the Auxiliary Bishops, were held with large groups of clergy, at which the work of the Safeguarding Service was presented and priests and deacons had the opportunity to raise issues of concern and to comment. The meetings were well attended, and a variety of issues were raised. These included:

- Questions about the fairness of the processes adopted within the diocese;
- The fact that, when an allegation is made against a priest and he is asked to step aside from ministry, he loses not only his work and access to his friends within the parish, but also his home, with all that it contains and is for him, from the point where the allegation is made and during the entire investigation. In this respect it is very different from the situation which prevails for other professionals who can continue to live in their own homes;
- The availability and suitability of alternative accommodation;
- The fact that a priest may not be told what the allegations against him are for a long period, and this causes great stress;
- The adequacy of support provided for priests in this situation;
- Problems in relation to access to and the cost of legal and Canon Law advice;

LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF
THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ACCUSED

- The loneliness and stress arising from months and even years of enforced absence from work with the attendant inability to live their vocations of ministry.

A similar meeting was held with the ethnic chaplains.

Much of the delay inherent in the conduct of any safeguarding matter is outside the control of the diocese. Rightly, any police investigation, any recommendation for prosecution, and any trial take priority over Church processes. These and other processes can take years. Until such matters have been dealt with, investigation under Church Law cannot proceed. Once the work of the state has finished, any necessary investigation under Canon Law, any assessment and any other action by the diocese can proceed. These matters too can take a long time, as can consideration by the Disclosure and Barring Service of any subsequent DBS referral, and it is hoped that national initiatives such as the establishment of the National Tribunal Service and the re-creation by CSSA of the list of available expert assessors and investigators will bring greater timeliness.

Listening to the voices of those who have been accused***What happens when an allegation is received by the diocese***

Everyone who works in the diocese is regularly trained in safeguarding matters and is given opportunities to understand the processes involved when a complaint is received. However, when a complaint is received, the operation of those processes can cause concern to anybody who may be implicated in an allegation. For example, any person against whom a complaint is made may be asked to participate in a risk assessment to identify any safeguarding risk attaching to their



presence at church services and events. Where risk is identified, this may be followed by a request to enter into a safeguarding plan which will provide proportionate protection for those who may be at risk. This applies equally to members of the laity and clergy.

A lay person will normally be able to remain in their home during any period of investigation unless the local authority and/or the police decide that that is not safe and take any necessary action to remove the person from their home. They will be able to continue to be in familiar surroundings with all the support attaching to that environment. They may be able to continue working. However, if the person implicated is a member of the clergy, they may be asked to step aside from ministry and they may also have to move to different accommodation while allegations are investigated. They will, in most cases, have to stop work immediately either voluntarily in response to a request to do so, or they may be ordered to do so. It is important to listen to the voice of respondents, clerical and lay, and the Committee seeks to do so through the work of its sub-committees.

The care of those against whom allegations are made

The care of those alleged to have perpetrated abuse is profoundly important. It is acknowledged that the period of investigation is a period of very significant stress and pressure, and the diocese is working to develop more timely internal procedures and to enhance its support mechanisms for all those who are accused, including the development of a process for establishing what more can be done to support any respondent. Cases are discussed at the Casework Sub-Committee meeting and there is always consideration of the welfare not only of the person reporting abuse but also of any respondent. The Safeguarding Service will seek to ensure that any support which can be offered by the Church is made available.

The Committee is aware, from its regular meetings with the Vicar General, of the considerable work which is done to support priests who are the subject of allegations. However, the Committee is aware of the concerns among clergy.

The diocese has agreed to support the Committee's proposal for the introduction of a training programme for support persons for those against whom allegations are made and to encourage individuals to become involved and train as support persons. It is hoped to take this work forward in 2024.

Learning from and listening to those against whom allegations are made

The Safeguarding Service must respond to all allegations or concerns which may involve lay people (employees, volunteers and other lay parishioners), clerics or religious. In 2023 the Safeguarding Committee began to consider the impact that such investigations have on the life of the accused, to understand the experience of the accused and what learning the diocese might gain from this feedback, and recommended that any feedback of experience should encompass all accused, and not just clerics. Any review should only take place once all investigations, both statutory and internal have been completed. It was further recognised that the experience of being accused, subjected to risk assessment and investigated can be overwhelming, even if the investigation concludes that there is no case to answer.

The Audit and Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee has prepared two alternative proposals for enabling those against whom allegations are made to provide information about their experience of the safeguarding processes and support structures which applied or were offered in their specific cases: one through





the completion of a questionnaire which has been developed, and the other through a structured meeting with two Committee members. The Committee decided to adopt both processes and to offer them as alternatives to clergy. This will require some further development.

The Committee will work with the Safeguarding Service and other members of the diocese, particularly the Vicar General, to develop the programme and hope to launch it in early 2024.

After an investigation

Where an allegation is substantiated, the outcome will depend on what has happened and whether there has been a conviction and sentencing. The Safeguarding Service works with the statutory authorities: the police, probation service, prison service, local authority social services, to ensure that all appropriate action is taken. The Committee needs to be satisfied that all necessary action has been taken and that support has been provided before any case is closed, and that ongoing therapeutic needs are considered, whether or not an allegation has been substantiated. If an allegation is not substantiated the person who was accused will be offered help and supported in returning to ministry, work or voluntary activity.

Conclusion

The work of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is vital to the mission of the Church. Everybody within the diocese can contribute to this work, led by Cardinal Nichols and the auxiliary bishops, through their ministry, their employment, as a volunteer or as a member of the Church. Parish priests, ethnic chaplains and PSRs lead the day-to-day work of safeguarding within parishes and ethnic chaplaincies. The Committee is most grateful to everyone who participates in this work. Despite some of the difficulties which are the inevitable consequence of changes within the Safeguarding Service this year, much valuable work has been done by the staff and by all those with whom they work in the diocese. Much work has been done also by those who volunteer as members of the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee. They are generous in giving of their time and working to provide governance of the safeguarding service in the diocese. Much remains to be done.

Baroness Nuala O'Loan
 Chair, The Trustee's Safeguarding Committee
 October 2024

How to support the Diocese of Westminster

The Diocese of Westminster is dependent on voluntary donations and you can make a real difference by supporting one or more of the following activities, besides your parish:

- The care of sick and elderly priests
- The training of new priests
- Evangelisation and formation
- The inclusion of all people in the life of the Church
- The Trinity Fund (which provides a lifeline to parishes with financial problems)
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- Lourdes pilgrimage
- Preserving church buildings

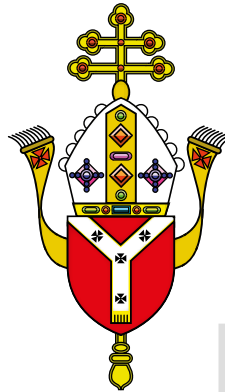
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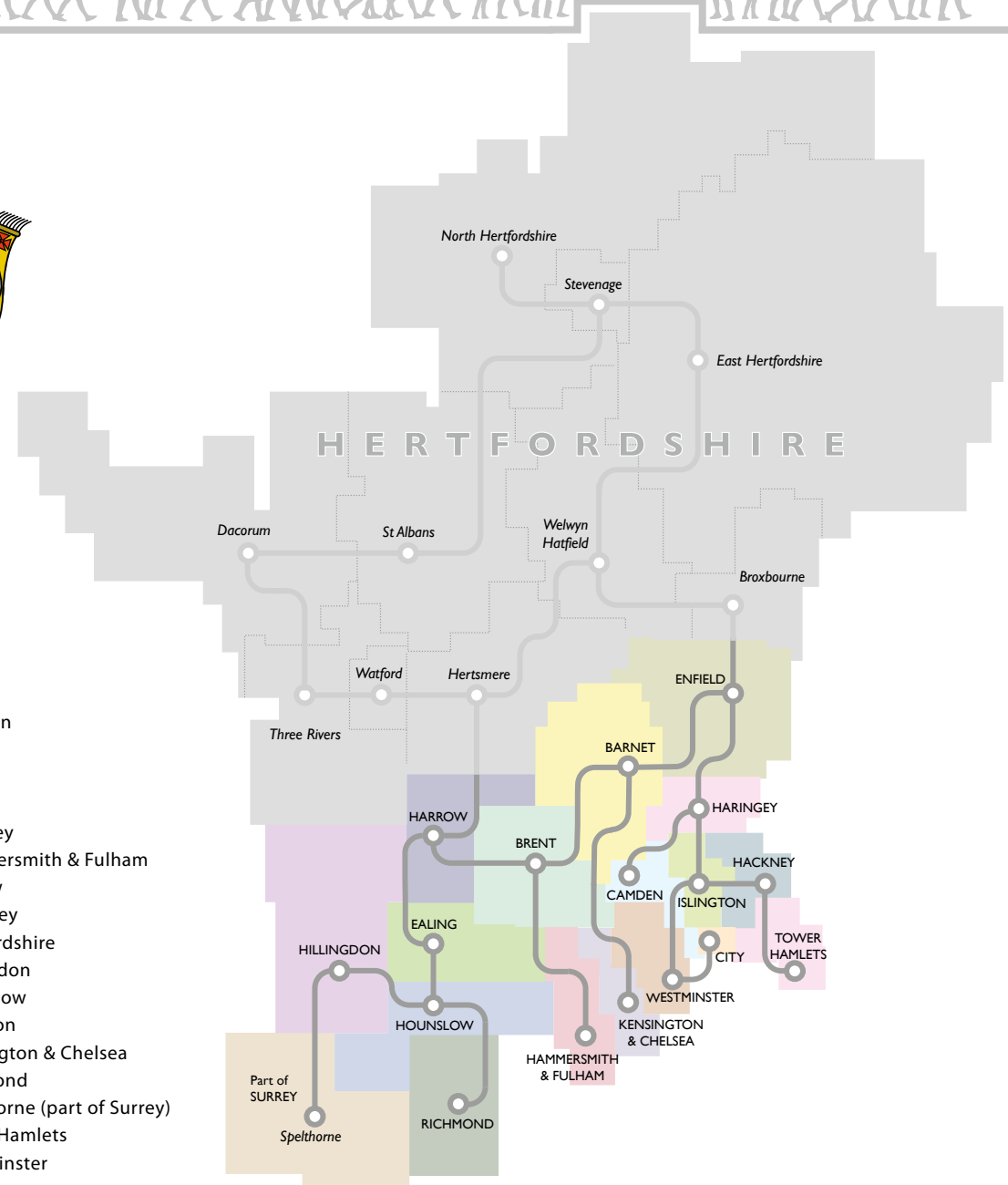
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The Diocese of Westminster



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- Hertfordshire
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- Hounslow
- Islington
- Kensington & Chelsea
- Richmond
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- Tower Hamlets
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Our website has the latest news about the work and mission of the Catholic Church in the diocese. It also includes full listings of all Catholic parishes, schools and chaplaincies.

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Westminster Year Book 2025

Westminster Year Book contains full listings of Catholic parishes, priests, schools and societies. To be published in November 2024, it also includes the 2025 Liturgical Calendar. To order a copy please contact wyb@rcdow.org.uk



Diocese of Westminster