



# Diocese of Westminster

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## **Trustee's Safeguarding Committee**

### **Annual Report**

**2021-2022**

## Introduction

This is the first Annual Report of the Diocese of Westminster's Trustee's Safeguarding Committee, which was established following the changes introduced as a result of the recommendations of the Elliott Report on the Catholic Church's Safeguarding Structures and Arrangements in England and Wales. It covers the period from October 2021 to December 2022.

The Committee is a sub-committee of the Diocesan Trust Board of Directors and was established to support, assist and advise the Diocesan Trustee in discharging its duties in safeguarding in accordance with the Trustee's legal and regulatory duties, its Trust Deed and the Canon Law of the Catholic Church, Charity Commission guidance, and operating within the standards, policies and procedures of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency. The Safeguarding Service, led by the Safeguarding Coordinator, is responsible for the delivery of safeguarding services within the Diocese.

The Committee is chaired by a Director of the Trustee and reports to each meeting of the Directors of the Trustee, who can respond to reports and direct the Committee to provide additional information, explanations or guidance and take any necessary action.

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

Much has happened since October 2021, as the new structures have evolved, and the Catholic Church's new national standards policies and guidance have been integrated into the ongoing safeguarding work of the Diocese. There has been much learning and development for all involved and the Committee, in providing governance of the work of the Safeguarding Service and in reporting to and advising the Directors of the Trust, has been constantly aware of the importance of being alert to the needs of those who have been harmed by abuse within the Church. We hope that all those who come into contact with the Safeguarding Service in the Diocese of Westminster encounter a caring, accountable, fair and impartial service.

## The Diocese of Westminster Trustee's Safeguarding Committee

The members of the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee are:

- Baroness Nuala O'Loan, Chair
- Mr Peter Houghton, Vice Chair
- Mr Kevin Barry
- Ms Barbara Beese
- Fr Stephen Coker
- Ms Mary Coller
- Ms Bernadette Herbert (appointed February 2022)
- Dr Edward Morgan KC

- Rev Monsignor Seamus O'Boyle, Episcopal Vicar for Safeguarding
- Miss Rachel O'Driscoll (appointed February 2022)
- Mr Andrzej Wdowiak

Members are drawn from a variety of backgrounds including Law, Midwifery/Nursing, Policing, Probation, Social Work and Youth Work.

### ***Meetings of the Committee***

The Committee meets in plenary session four times a year, and it also meets in plenary when circumstances require an additional meeting of the full Committee.

In the reporting period full meetings of the Committee were held on 13 October 2021, 9 December 2021, 10 February 2022, 12 May 2022, 7 July 2022, 22 September 2022 and 1 December 2022. There is generally a high level of attendance by Committee members at meetings.

### ***The work of the Committee***

The work of the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee is extensive. Among other things it:

- a) Ensures that the Diocesan Policy of Zero Tolerance of the abuse of children and vulnerable adults operates effectively.
- b) Ensures 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, in compliance with national and diocesan safeguarding policies and procedures, providing support to those reporting abuse.
- c) Ensures that those against whom allegations are made (respondents) are provided with as much information as possible, that they are treated by the Safeguarding Service in a respectful and compassionate way, and that they are provided with support by the Diocese.
- d) Provides 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 done by the Safeguarding Service.
- e) Ensures the support of victims and survivors within the financial limits set by the Trust Board and seeks feedback from victims and survivors with experience of diocesan case management and support to inform future practice.

- f) Ensures 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.
- g) Commissions policy and procedures, and advises 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.
- h) Provides a quarterly written report on its work to each Westminster Diocese Trust Board meeting and advice to Trust Board members in response to directions received from the Trust Board.
- i) Contributes to the development of a culture of safeguarding across the Diocese, particularly by ensuring effective information sharing across the Diocese and with the CSSA.
- j) Ensures that the Safeguarding Service has an adequate budget.
- k) Produces an annual public safeguarding report.

## **The new national structures for the independent regulation of safeguarding within the Catholic Church in England and Wales**

Following the interim report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), the Catholic Church in England and Wales commissioned the Elliott Review. This in turn led to the creation of two new regulatory bodies:

- (i) the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) to create national safeguarding standards and to audit, review and monitor safeguarding in dioceses and church bodies, and
- (ii) the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS) which offers safeguarding services to religious orders.

### **CSSA**

The Diocese signed a letter of intent to contract with CSSA in July 2021 and the CSSA is working to develop a formal contract. A first draft was received in August 2022, but there were a number of anomalies, and a second draft was received in December 2022. Work continues to develop the contract.

Pending completion of the contract between the Diocese and CSSA the Committee is overseeing Safeguarding Service compliance with the national safeguarding standards published by the CSSA and with all other published policies and guidance. A significant

amount of work has been done by the Committee and the Safeguarding Service to develop diocesan policies which reflect all identified CSSA requirements. The Committee continues to advise the Trust Board on the implications of this situation.

The CSSA appointed Lady Ellingworth, a Board member, as the member responsible for the Diocese of Westminster. The Committee seeks to maintain good and cooperative working practices with the CSSA. To this end the Chair met with the Chair of the CSSA, Nazir Afzal, Lady Ellingworth and Carol Lawrence, another Board member, to discuss how to ensure maximum understanding and benefit of the new relationship. Subsequently in October 2022 a meeting occurred between Cardinal Nichols, Lady Ellingworth, Mr Steve Ashley, then Deputy Chair of CSSA, the Safeguarding Coordinator and the Committee Chair to develop mutual understanding of the work of both the Diocese and the CSSA. The Committee and the Safeguarding Service continue to work to enhance that understanding through attendance at meetings and other events organised by the CSSA.

In accordance with the requirements of the CSSA the Committee developed an Implementation Plan to ensure that all necessary actions are taken to create and give effect to the new national and diocesan structures, policies, practice and guidance. An Implementation Group comprising those with responsibility for different areas of work within the Diocese, such as Human Resources and Data Protection, was identified so that the relevant expertise would be available to enable the best possible processes for safeguarding within the Diocese.

The Implementation Plan is updated every quarter and considered by the Committee and then transmitted to the Trust Board for information.

## **RLSS**

Prior to the establishment of RLSS in September 2021, the Diocese provided safeguarding services to 68 religious orders and congregations which either worked in the Diocese or had their headquarters in the Diocese. 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.

At the time of writing no agreement had been entered into between the Diocese and the RLSS as the RLSS had not finalised the content of its proposed terms of agreement. Ultimately the Diocese will be required to enter into an information sharing agreement with the RLSS and other matters may also require to be subject to that agreement once there is clarity on outstanding issues.

The RLSS is developing its functions, and some 42 religious orders affiliated to RLSS during the reporting period. The situation with regard to the others remained unclear. However, the requirement is that they either provide their own safeguarding services or affiliate to RLSS. The Safeguarding Service is working to establish the future arrangements for each of the religious orders and congregations which have not, as yet, affiliated to the RLSS. In this situation the Diocesan Safeguarding Service continued to provide services in respect of

existing cases relating to all religious orders, and five new religious order cases received in 2022 have now been referred to the religious orders. The RLSS will not take over cases which are already being dealt with by the Diocese and therefore the Diocese continues to provide case management processes in these cases.

In May 2022, the Committee met with the RLSS when Anne O'Brien, Chair, Fr David Smolira SJ (board member) and Dani Wardman (Chief Executive) attended the Committee meeting to explore the respective responsibilities of the RLSS, the Diocese and the religious orders. Ultimately there will have to be a formal contract between RLSS and the Diocese to enable information sharing, and formal contracts between RLSS and each religious order for the provision of services by RLSS to the religious order. These contracts will determine whether the RLSS or the Diocese is responsible for the processing of DBS applications, training and other safeguarding services. Victims and survivors of abuse will have to know who is responsible but, in the meantime, the Safeguarding Service will signpost people to the appropriate service provider.

The Diocese provides DBS application processes and training both to those who own and run parishes, and to those who run diocesan parishes.

The Committee continues to oversee this work and to contribute appropriately to the processes of the management of allegations which have previously been brought against members of religious orders for which the Diocese had responsibility.

## **Safeguarding in the Diocese of Westminster**

The Diocese of Westminster serves 440,000 people across a very large geographical area, providing pastoral ministry through 210 parishes, 34 ethnic chaplaincies and a variety of other organisations such as the Diocese of Westminster Education Service, Caritas Westminster which is the diocesan agency for social action, and which provides services such as Caritas Bakhita House, which provides a place of refuge for trafficked women, and Caritas Deaf Service, and which, through Community Outreach, supports parishes, schools and community groups in the Diocese of Westminster as they respond to local needs. In addition to this there are pilgrimages, food banks, and the work of organisations like the St Vincent de Paul Society and so many other voluntary groups whose members seek to live the Gospel message through their lives and work.

Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is fundamental to the mission of the Diocese and to all aspects of its ministry, and the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee works to ensure as best it can that a culture of safeguarding pervades all that happens in the Diocese of Westminster.

This is done through ensuring that there is an understanding that safeguarding is a vital part of the Diocese's work through its structures, communications, and training, and by enabling the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults in its parishes, ethnic chaplaincies and in all the voluntary and other work which takes place in the Diocese. Fundamental to that culture

of understanding is the process through which the Diocese listens and responds to the experiences of those who report having been harmed, those against whom an allegation is made, those who live and work in the Church, and those in the wider world who can enhance our knowledge and expertise so that, at the end of the day, the best possible environment and safeguarding structures are afforded to all who come in contact with the Church.

### ***Safeguarding in the parishes and ethic chaplaincies***

Parishes, with their Parish Priests, curates, religious sisters and parishioners lie at the heart of the Diocese's work to protect children and vulnerable adults. In each parish there is provision for one (or more) Parish Safeguarding Representatives (PSR) who acts as the link between the parish and the Diocesan Safeguarding Service, promoting good and safe practices in all activities involving children and vulnerable adults within the parish. In the parish context and in the ethnic chaplaincies, PSRs are actively involved in safer recruitment practices for volunteers working with children and adults within the parish, provide advice on all safeguarding matters and report any safeguarding allegations, information and concerns which are received to the Diocesan Safeguarding Service.

On 31 December 2022 the Safeguarding Service reported that the Diocese had 274 PSRs in its 210 parishes. Seven parishes were without PSRs because of resignations and retirements, and arrangements were made to provide temporary PSR cover in those parishes, often through a PSR in a neighbouring parish. 26 people were in recruitment. The Diocese also has 45 PSRs working in the 34 ethnic chaplaincies which serve members of the Diocese from a variety of countries.

### ***Development of policy and practice***

During the reporting year the Committee approved the following policies and practice guidance and recommended all policies to the Trust Board for adoption:

Safer Recruitment, accompanied by a flow chart for the appointment of volunteers and a flow chart recruitment and appointment process planner.

DBS Processing and the Statement on the Recruitment of Ex Offenders.

Handling of DBS related Complaints.

Information Security for Disclosure and Barring Services.

The Whistleblowing Policy.

Management of Allegations, Information and Concerns about Child Abuse.

Working with Survivors and those who report being harmed.

Parish Safeguarding Representative Procedure.

Safeguarding Service Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Procedures for Serious Incident Reporting.

Diocese of Westminster – Case Closure Guidance and Procedure.

Terms of Reference for the Review of Historic/Open Safeguarding Cases.

In addition to this the Committee is working to develop the existing Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities document.

### ***Serious Incident Review***

One of the responsibilities of the Committee is the review of serious incidents. Such an incident occurred on 8 November 2020 when Fr Alan Griffin, who had been an ordained minister in the Church of England and subsequently became a priest of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham died tragically. Fr Griffin had retired and was providing supply services in the Diocese. At the time of his death, Fr Alan was the subject of investigation by the Safeguarding Service of the Diocese, and by an agent of the Anglican Diocese of London.

On 2 July 2021, HM Senior Coroner for Poplar concluded an inquest into Fr Alan's death, recording a conclusion of 'suicide'. In delivering her Ruling, HM Senior Coroner was critical of the manner in which the 'investigation' had been conducted and, among other things, formed the view that it was appropriate to issue prevention of future death reports to the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (the CSSA) and the Church of England (The Regulation 28 Reports).<sup>1</sup> She reported that there was no substance to the allegations made against Fr Griffin.

Whilst the reports issued by HM Coroner were not directed to the Diocese, it was considered both necessary and appropriate that an internal investigation and review be undertaken into the handling of this matter within the Diocese. The Directors of the Board of the Trust resolved on 1 October 2021 to appoint Baroness Nuala O'Loan DBE MRIA, member of the Trust Board of the Diocese and Chair of the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee, Monsignor Martin Hayes BA BD KCHS, member of the Trust Board of the Diocese and the Vicar General of the Diocese, Dr Ed Morgan KC, JCD, PhD FCI Arb FRSA specialist in employment, regulatory and corporate governance law, Employment Judge and Assistant Coroner who holds a licence (JCL) and a doctorate (JCD) in canon law, and Rev Dr Barry O'Sullivan MA, PGCert, BPsych, D Couns, MBACP, a priest of Salford Diocese and a member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy who is currently seconded by his bishop to work as a Safeguarding Consultant developing safeguarding practice in the developing world, to a Sub-Committee to conduct an internal investigation and review of the case.

The Terms of Reference required the Sub-Committee to investigate and to provide a written Report upon existing practices and procedures in the light of the issues raised in the Coroner's Report to the CSSA and empowered it to make recommendations for the enhancement of

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation 28 of the Coroners (Investigation) Regulations 2013.



such practices and procedures within the Diocese, in accordance with the requirements of the CSSA.

The Sub-Committee contacted (i) a member of Fr Griffin's family, (ii) the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, (iii) the Chair of the CSSA, (iv) the Director of the CSSA and (v) the Ordinary of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham (Fr Griffin's bishop), advising them of the internal review and inviting them to contribute to the review.

In March 2022, the Sub-Committee reported to the Trust Board on its work, making seven recommendations for the future handling of cases to improve the practice and processes of the Diocese. The recommendations were accepted by the Directors of the Trust Board and incorporated into the Manual for the Handling of Allegations, Information and Concerns of Child Abuse, which was then being drafted.

The Sub-Committee also communicated its findings to Fr Griffin's family member who responded on behalf of Fr Griffin's family and friends and thanked the Sub-Committee for the 'thorough review' saying that 'in general' it was 'direct, fair and honest.'

### ***Independent audit of the governance of safeguarding in the Diocese***

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 Committee decided to commission an independent audit of its safeguarding governance. The Committee asked the Audit and Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee, under its Chair, to take responsibility for the design, commissioning and process of the audit.

The Trust Board approved the Committee's recommendation for an audit and following a tendering process, at the end of September 2022 independent safeguarding specialists, Ms Moira Murray and Sir Roger Singleton were selected from a shortlist of three applicant organisations.

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.

By December 2022, the auditors were completing their draft report, which will be reviewed for factual accuracy by the Committee. Once agreed the report will be finalised and presented to the Trust Board. An action plan will be designed to give effect to agreed recommendations.

### **The Committee's Sub-Committees**

The Committee conducts much of its work through its three Sub-Committees:

- (i) The Audit and Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee;
- (ii) The Blemished DBS Sub-Committee. and
- (iii) The Casework Sub-Committee.

The membership of the Sub-Committees is as follows:

***The Audit and Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee***

Mr Kevin Barry (Chair)

Ms Barbara Beese

Ms Bernadette Herbert

Miss Rachel O'Driscoll

***The Blemished DBS Sub-Committee***

Mr Peter Houghton (Chair)

Ms Barbara Beese

Mr Kevin Barry

Ms Mary Coller

Fr Stephen Coker

Mr Andrzej Wdowiak

***The Casework Sub-Committee:***

Mr Peter Houghton (Chair)

Ms Barbara Beese

Mgr Seamus O'Boyle

Baroness Nuala O'Loan

**Other structures to facilitate the work and culture of safeguarding in the Diocese**

In addition to the meetings of these Sub-Committees, two further processes have been established to ensure regular and effective communication between the various parts of the Diocese, and to ensure that safeguarding is integrated into the work of the Diocese, thus facilitating the enhancement of the best possible culture of safeguarding in the Diocese. These are:

**(i) *The Vicar General Information Sharing Meeting***

This meeting occurs approximately every two weeks and is designed 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)

Ms Barbara Beese

Mgr Seamus O'Boyle (Trustee, Episcopal Vicar for Safeguarding, member of Trustee's Safeguarding Committee)

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

Mgr Martin Hayes, Trustee, Vicar General

Ms Geraldine Allen (Safeguarding Coordinator)

Ms Monawara Bakht (Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator)

The meetings are also attended by the caseworker responsible for any case which is under discussion.

***(ii) The Cross Curia Safeguarding Meeting.***

This meeting is designed to ensure that safeguarding issues are discussed by those in leadership roles in the Curia (the diocesan administration) so as to facilitate the enhancement of the culture of safeguarding throughout the Diocese. Its membership is:

Bishop John Sherrington (Chair)  
Ms Geraldine Allen (Safeguarding Coordinator)  
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)  
Ms Gail Williams (Caritas)  
Mr Robert Walker (Director of Human Resources)  
Mr Andrzej Wdowiak (Director of Youth Ministry, member of Trustee's Safeguarding Committee)

This meeting occurs every three months and enables both sharing of information and the agreement of policies, practices and procedures applicable across or to different parts of the Diocese, or to different diocesan functions.

***Safer recruitment and DBS checking***

The Committee oversees the work of the Safeguarding Service which works to create a safe environment for everyone who comes into contact with the Catholic Church in the Diocese. In this context the Safeguarding Coordinator works closely with the Director of Human Resources.

The Diocese has a policy on Safer Recruitment which has been approved by the Trust Board on the recommendation of the Committee. This element of the work includes the safe recruitment of all those ministering to and working in activities involving children and vulnerable adults in the Diocese. Such recruitment is carried out by, for example, the Human Resources Department, Caritas and the Safeguarding Service. When determining whether someone can minister or work in the Diocese a check is 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 they can work in the Diocese. The DBS status of all those working and providing ministry in the Diocese is checked every three years.

During 2022 approximately 1245 applications to the DBS were submitted by the Diocese. In some cases, these were renewals of existing DBS clearance certificates and in others they were new applications. Almost 900 appointments were made or affirmed following this procedure.

During the year six 'blemished' DBS certificates were received, in which there was information about a conviction or other police information and five were considered and responded to with recommendations by the Committee's Blemished DBS Sub-Committee, which considers the implications of a blemished DBS certificate which has been issued to an individual (see below p.17).

### ***The work of Parish Safeguarding Representatives, Parish Priests and Ethnic Chaplains in parishes and ethnic chaplaincies***

Parish Priests and Ethnic Chaplains working collaboratively with PSRs provide vital safeguarding leadership. PSRs are volunteers who act as the link between their parish and the Safeguarding Service, promoting good and safe practices in all activities involving children and vulnerable adults within the parish. They are appointed, trained and supported by the Safeguarding Service, which provides advice, as required, to individual Parish Priests and PSRs, so that they can participate in safer recruitment practices for volunteers working with children and adults within the parish, provide advice on all safeguarding matters, can receive and report safeguarding allegations, information and concerns and report all matters to the Safeguarding Service in compliance with best practice.

By the end of the year there were some 274 PSRs in the 210 parishes and a further 45 in ethnic and other chaplaincies. The Committee is engaged in an audit of a number of individual parishes to ensure that a quality service is provided. (see pp 15-16 below)

The work of both the Parish Priests and the PSRs is fundamental to safeguarding in the Diocese and is very much valued within parishes and by the Trustees. It is a most important part of the work of the Diocese. The Committee is very grateful to all those who serve as PSRs and to the Parish Priests who provide leadership within the parishes, for all that they do.

### ***Training***

The Safeguarding Service works to facilitate and, in some cases, provide the initial and ongoing training of all those in the Diocese who occupy positions of governance, who minister as deacons or priests in the Diocese, who are members of religious orders working in the Diocese or contracted to the Diocese for safeguarding purposes, who are priests from

overseas and of all those employed in the Diocese or working as volunteers in activities involving children and vulnerable adults.

Training is provided online and in person and is mandatory for those working with children and vulnerable adults and for all those employed in the central services departments of the Diocese. Training must be refreshed every two years and completion of specified modules is a mandatory part of the staff annual review process. All Directors of the Trust and all members of the Committee have completed all required training.

During the year records show that training sessions were attended by 150 diocesan priests, 20 by deacons, 29 by religious order priests and 89 by seminarians.

In addition to this, online training was accessed by 105 diocesan priests, 13 permanent deacons, 34 religious order priests, nine ethnic chaplains, two religious order sisters, seven ethnic chaplains and 20 seminarians and others including new Committee members.

77 PSRs also completed modules of online training and a further 60 attended virtual training provided by the Safeguarding Service.

The Committee receives and considers the reports of training accessed and provided, to ensure that the training is completed by all who are required to do so, and that necessary action is taken if a person fails to complete the necessary training through the appropriate person, for example the area bishop in the case of clergy and deacons, or the Director of Human Resources in the case of employees.

The Committee also planned its own additional training and development, supplementary to mandatory training, for 2023.

### ***Working with those who report having been harmed***

All involved in the work of safeguarding within the Diocese seek to ensure that the service provided by the Diocese is responsive to the needs of victims and that the Diocese does not, by its actions, further traumatise those who may be suffering as a consequence of their experiences within the Church.

To this end the Committee sought to involve victims and survivors in its work and the Audit and Quality Enhancement Committee has done specific work in this area (see pp 16-17 below). The Committee sought advice from CSSA as to how it was handling such matters, but the Agency was still in the initial stages of developing its work in this area. Additionally, the Committee sought the input of two survivors, Ms Marie Grant and Fr Andrew Browne of Survivor Training, who had previously worked with the Catholic Bishops' Conference for England and Wales at its plenary meeting in 2019 which focused on increasing understanding of and learning from the experience of victims of abuse.

Ms Grant and Fr Browne attended a plenary meeting of the Committee, at which there was discussion about how the Committee might, through its work, enhance the experience of those

who come to the Safeguarding Service. They provided advice on concrete steps which might be taken to improve the experience of those who come into contact with the Safeguarding Service, which was very useful in developing the Committee's thoughts about how to move forward on this issue. Subsequently the Audit and Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee invited Ms Grant and Fr Browne to assist them in revising processes for obtaining feedback from those who had used the service. The Committee is grateful to Ms Grant and Fr Browne for their assistance to the Committee.

### ***Effective and impartial management of concerns, information and allegations about the abuse of children and vulnerable adults***

Fundamental to the work of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in the Diocese of Westminster is the provision of a process for handling and managing concerns, information and allegations about child abuse in a way which is compliant with the law, CSSA national standards and procedures (see <https://catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/>) and diocesan procedures and policies.

This is very sensitive work: the person who wishes to report abuse to the Safeguarding Service needs to gain confidence that they can report, that they will be listened to with great respect, and that their concerns will be appropriately dealt with. Once any report has been made, it is essential that all processes are followed properly, and that both the person making the report and the person against whom an allegation is made (the respondent) knows, in so far as is possible, what is happening at any stage and that matters are being dealt with in as timely a manner as is possible.

To assist and inform these processes a Diocesan Manual for Handling Concerns, Information and Allegations of Child Abuse was developed by the Committee in conjunction with the Safeguarding Service and was adopted by the Trust Board in December 2022. It reflects all the guidance currently issued by the CSSA in terms of case management and is a living document which will be changed to reflect all relevant developments. The Diocese is currently using the CSSA procedures for dealing with allegations about vulnerable adults but will now develop its Manual for handling child abuse concerns, information and allegations to include procedures for situations in which reports are made about vulnerable adults.

It is, of course, necessary to take into account the fact that police procedures can be very lengthy even where there is no evidence to support a prosecution. The Committee endeavours to ensure that the Safeguarding Service and the Diocese respond to all police requests for information in a timely manner, and that matters proceed as rapidly as possible. In this situation, it may be necessary to support the person reporting and the respondent who will probably know nothing of the content of the allegation for what may be a long period of time.

Once any police involvement has ceased, either because they have concluded that there is no case to answer, there has been a prosecution which has not resulted in a conviction or there has been a conviction, the Diocese has to consider whether any canon law investigation,

any internal or independent non-criminal investigation, risk assessment, training or other action is necessary, and then take such steps as are required.

Finally, the Diocese through its Safeguarding Service, its Vicar General and, ultimately, its bishop must bring the matter to closure, caring equally for the person who reported abuse and the respondent as provided for in diocesan and national standards and procedures, and ensuring that parish communities are appropriately informed about what has happened.

### **The work of the Audit and Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee**

The Audit and Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee has designed, developed and implemented three areas of internal audit of the work of those involved in safeguarding within the Diocese. The first area involved taking responsibility, with the Trust's Chief Operating Officer, for the design, commissioning and process of an independent audit of the governance of safeguarding within the Diocese. (see above p.9). The Audit Sub-Committee reports to the Committee on its work. The two other areas of internal audit during this year were:

#### ***(i) An audit of safeguarding practices within parishes in the Diocese.***

As stated above, parishes are the key communities which make up the Catholic community of the Diocese, so they are the key focus of this area of audit.

To get a sense of how safeguarding is being regarded and practiced at a parish level across the Diocese and to establish a sense of the prevalence of the culture of safeguarding at parish level, it was decided to review a sample of parishes and examine their safeguarding practice.

The initial plan for the first year of the audit was that a 10% sample of the 210 parishes of the Diocese would be audited. However, staff absence within the Safeguarding Service resulted in a reduced ability to visit all the parishes, and the Committee approved a reduction of the target sample to 5%.

Each of the 11 randomly selected parishes was visited by a member of the Committee and a member of the Safeguarding Service. Prior to the visit, the Parish Priest and the PSR completed a short questionnaire which formed the basis of the discussion during the visit. The meeting was designed to be engaging, consultative and developmental: an opportunity to discuss and explore issues and where appropriate to advise.

The physical premises were inspected to ensure that the arrangements in place ensured a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults, and that visible helpful information about how to contact the Safeguarding Service and how to make a complaint, provide information or report a concern about the abuse of a child or a vulnerable adult was displayed within the premises.

After the visit a short report was drafted by the Committee member which was then sent to the Parish Priest and PSR for comment and ultimately it was agreed between the Committee member, the Parish Priest and the PSR and presented to the Sub-Committee. An aggregated

report was then compiled so that the Committee and the Safeguarding Service could benefit from the information acquired as part of the Committee's process of learning and improvement, and it was submitted to the Trust Board for their information.

The Committee members who have been part of the audit team have reported that these visits have been a positive experience for all concerned, largely because of the emphasis placed on dialogue and learning rather than inspection.

This audit work continues during 2023.

## ***(ii) The response of the Diocese to complainants, survivors and victims***

Working with all who report having been abused is a priority for the Safeguarding Service and for the Committee, as part of the Church's response to the institutional failings and abuse by individuals. It is vital that work with complainants, victims and survivors is delivered to the highest standards.

Victim/survivors of abuse must be supported throughout their interaction with the Diocese and often seek support and restitution from the Church. The outcome of this work is often critical for their recovery. Thus, measuring outcomes of this work is of great importance. Feedback from those who engage with the Safeguarding Service is vital if we are to measure the success of the Diocese in supporting their recovery. There are many difficulties in getting such feedback, yet this is necessary. It is important that the Committee finds ways of obtaining feedback so that it can foster a culture of learning and improvement.

Establishing how the Safeguarding Service cares for complainants/ victims/ survivors has developed over the year and is done in three ways:

- i. The Safeguarding Service, as a group, formally and regularly review how they work with survivors using their case files, in order to identify good practice to share and also to identify learning points to enhance future casework. On case closure learning is identified in the proforma case closure document presented to the Casework Sub-Committee and subsequently incorporated into the practice of the Safeguarding Service. The Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator is responsible for this process and chairs the Casework Learning Group
- ii. Where casework support is taking place, a questionnaire is sent to each of those who have reported having suffered abuse. Subsequent questionnaires will then be sent to those who respond to the initial questionnaire every six months, until the case is closed. This is designed to provide direct feedback from those in receipt of casework support.

However, no responses were received to any questionnaire issued and the Audit and Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee therefore sought the assistance of survivors, Ms Marie Grant and Fr Andrew Browne of Survivor Training, seeking advice about how to encourage those who had engaged with the Safeguarding Service to report back on their



experiences. As a consequence of their advice, which was generously given, a new much improved questionnaire was designed and is now being used.

- iii. When a case is closed, the name and contact details are passed to the Audit and Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee. The victim-survivor is then invited to a private structured exit interview to seek their considered reflection on the services and support that they have received. No positive response has been received from any such invitation. There may be many reasons why people do not feel able to respond but this work is vital, and the Diocese will continue to seek information from those who have needed to use the services provided by the Diocese.

In addition to this work the Safeguarding Coordinator commissioned an external safeguarding consultant trading as Interim Solutions of Loughton Ltd to provide supervision of her work, and to conduct reviews of a small number of case files approximately every six weeks.

This audit work continues during 2023.

### **The work of the Blemished DBS Sub-Committee**

This Sub-Committee examines each case in which a DBS application has resulted in the provision by the DBS of information about a criminal conviction or relevant other information provided by police to the DBS. Five cases were opened to deal with blemished DBS certificates.

Members of the Sub-Committee establish whether there has been any previous declaration of the information disclosed in the DBS certificate and whether the information which has been received is such that the member should recommend that the application to work in the Diocese (whether as a volunteer, an employee or in ordained ministry) should not be granted as the view is that the information indicates a possible current risk to children or vulnerable adults. A final decision is made by the Chair of the Sub-Committee in the light of the responses received from each member and communicated to the Safeguarding Coordinator for onward transmission to the person responsible for making the decision in the particular case.

### **The work of the Casework Sub-Committee**

The Casework Sub-Committee exists to enable the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee to exercise its responsibility to:

- (i) Act in a case advisory capacity and consider the need formally to seek advice from the CSSA;
- (ii) Evidence compliance with the CSSA national safeguarding standards; and to
- (iii) Inform the Trust Board of the existence of allegations and confirm the responses made.

The Sub-Committee is briefed on all new cases and receives reports on more complex cases which are in progress. It ensures that the cases are dealt with in compliance with national and diocesan procedures and responds to requests for advice and consultations by the Safeguarding Service. It recommends specific actions to be taken, makes specific recommendations in respect of support being offered to those who report concerns and to those against whom concerns have been raised. It considers all decisions in respect of priests and others against whom allegations have been made, monitors the impact of actions and recommends further actions if required. It also approves case closures, ensuring that all lessons to be learned from the conduct of a particular case are identified and moved forward whether through training or by way of amendment of policies and practices.

The Sub-Committee is also responsible for ensuring liaison with the CSSA in relation to casework as required. The Sub-Committee generally meets fortnightly.

## ***Casework Data***

### ***Safeguarding consultations 2022***

During the year 90 safeguarding consultations were conducted by the Safeguarding Service. Such consultations cover a very wide range of issues raised and include situations in which somebody seeks advice, raises a concern, provides information or makes an allegation. Of these five were referred to the newly established RLSS.

### ***Cases opened 2022 after an allegation of abuse.***

If an allegation of the abuse of a child or vulnerable adult is received it will be reported to the police and to the local authority designated safeguarding officer (the LADO), and a case file will be opened. During 2022 26 allegations were received, and appropriate action was taken:

Allegations against diocesan priests:	6
Allegations against members of religious orders	5
Allegations against lay people	15
<b>Total allegations received</b>	<b>26</b>

### ***Safeguarding Plans 2022***

Those under investigation, or those who have been convicted in a criminal court, or by a canonical court (respondents) are subject to Safeguarding Plans (previously called Covenants of Care). 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 (in the case of clergy and religious) not wearing clerical dress or habits and not engaging in public ministry, 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.

Number of diocesan priests' safeguarding plans	9
Number of religious order members' safeguarding plans	11
Number of lay people's safeguarding plans	12
Number of safeguarding plans managed by other dioceses	2
<b>Total number of safeguarding plans</b>	<b>34</b>

### ***Case closures***

The Diocese is conducting a review of all case files and papers relating to matters received before 2019 when the current Safeguarding Coordinator was appointed. Terms of Reference for the Review of Historic/Open Safeguarding Cases were agreed by the Committee. The review was 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. During 2022 some 568 historic cases were reviewed and some 382 cases were closed.

In addition to this the Diocese closed a further 83 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.

### **Conclusion**

The work of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is fundamental to the mission of the Church and is vital for the Diocese. Everybody within the Diocese can contribute to this work, which is led by Cardinal Nichols and the auxiliary bishops, whether as a consequence of their ministry, of their employment, as a volunteer or as a member of the Church in Westminster. 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.

Much work has been done to develop further the work of safeguarding in the Diocese in accordance with the standards, policies and guidance of the CSSA. The Committee will

continue its work to ensure, as best it can, that the Safeguarding Service continues to be fully resourced, that all necessary work is done to secure a safe environment for everyone, that appropriate training is delivered and that all those who minister and work within the Diocese avail of that training, and that all those who report having been harmed and those against whom allegations are made receive a service which operates to the highest standards.

*Nuala O'Loan*

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