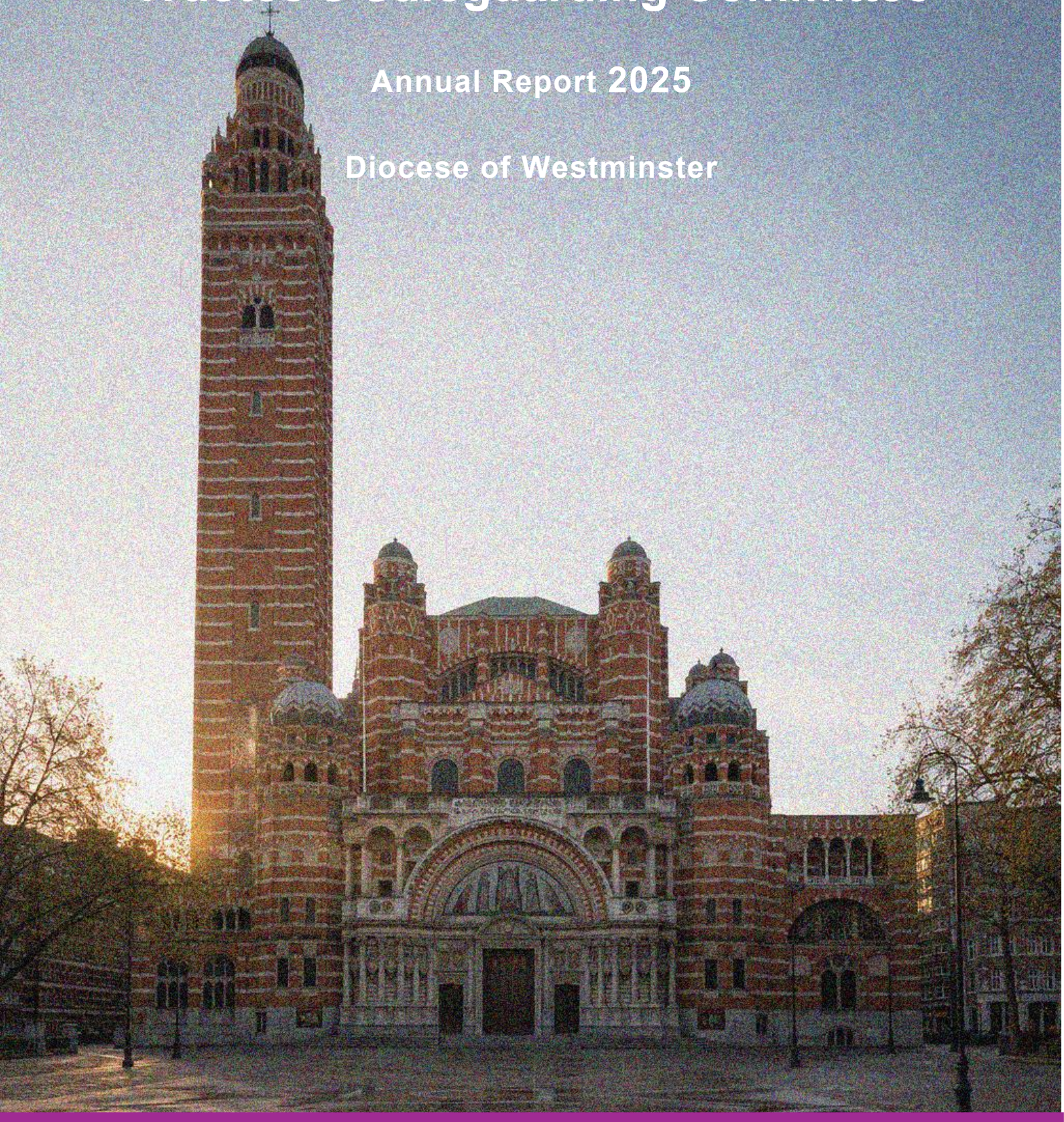
Trustee's Safeguarding Committee

Annual Report 2025

Diocese of Westminster



Introduction

This fourth Annual Report of the Diocese of Westminster's Trustee's Safeguarding Committee covers the period from January - December 2025.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a vital part of the mission of the Diocese of Westminster. We are all called to fulfil the Gospel imperative to protect those who are vulnerable and to uphold the dignity of every human being. This mission is supported by the Diocese's Safeguarding Service, whose professional staff are responsible for delivering safeguarding functions across the Diocese. It is hoped that all those who come into contact with our Safeguarding Service will encounter a caring, accountable, fair, impartial, and professional service.

The Trustee's Safeguarding Committee is responsible for the governance of the work of the Safeguarding Service which:

1. Takes the lead in the promotion of the culture of safeguarding, working across the Diocese and with the Trust Board;
2. Ensures open and transparent processes for the receipt and handling of concerns, information and allegations of abuse within the Diocese;
3. Co-ordinates, trains, promotes and supports clergy, curia staff, parish employees and volunteers who work within the Diocese to safeguard and protect from harm, or the risk of harm, those who come into contact with the Diocese;
4. Ensures that those who report allegations of abuse or raise safeguarding concerns and those who are the subject of such concerns or allegations are provided with and / or signposted to appropriate guidance and support; and
5. Identifies and disseminates safeguarding learning and continuous improvement opportunities and good practice.

Safeguarding is, and must be, at the heart of all our activities, maintaining the culture of safeguarding, responding with respect and compassion to those who report having suffered harm, and those against whom allegations are made.

The work of the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee

The work of the 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 and compassionate and supportive way.

4. Providing a case advisory function supporting the Head of Safeguarding's[1] 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. 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.

It also:

7. Commissions 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.
8. Reports quarterly on its work to the Westminster Diocese Trust Board.
9. Contributes to the development of a culture of safeguarding across the Diocese.
10. Ensures that the Safeguarding Service has an adequate budget.
11. Produces this annual public safeguarding report.

The Safeguarding Service Budget for 2025 was £440,000

The Diocesan Landscape

The safeguarding service provided by the Diocese is extensive and operates in the context of a huge number of people, parishes, and other venues. They include:

- **Number of parishes:** 206
- **Number of Diocesan Priests:** 300
- **Number of Permanent Deacons** 47
- **Number of ethnic chaplains** 55
- **Number of priests of other Dioceses** 119
- **Number of priests of religious congregations** 215

Activities within the Diocese in 2025 included:

- 115,000 people attended Mass every Sunday.

[1] The former Coordinator of Safeguarding post was amended to create a new Head of Safeguarding in September 2024.

- 500+ adults entered the Church.
- 1,000+ people participated in the annual London Corpus Christi procession.
- 5,677 attended the Westminster Youth Ministry's Retreat Centre.

- Caritas Westminster[2] offers many services and offers expertise, network links and project management support to help our parishes and schools start or grow charitable initiatives that address the needs of their local communities. It serves individuals with particular needs, or those who find themselves in circumstances where they need some support.

- Caritas Ambassadors' Festival brought together 360 pupils leading social action projects in their schools.

- More than 800 Caritas Ambassadors have organised initiatives including supporting foodbanks and homeless projects, campaigning for Fairtrade, caring for the local environment, running activities for elderly parishioners and care home residents, and providing practical support for families in need.

- 500+ Social Action Projects ran across parishes and schools during 2025.

- 35% of all parish projects are weekly social action programmes, demonstrating sustained year-round commitment.

- 32,894 Volunteer-role assignments were recorded across the 206 parishes.

- Bhakita House (our centre for trafficked women) is now 10 years old. Since opening in 2015, it has been home to 224 women and 19 babies from 50 different countries. The safe house also assists with accessing medical and psychological support, seeking legal advice and asylum, as well as supporting guests to bring perpetrators to justice. To date, guests of Caritas Bakhita House have contributed to securing over 223 years of prison sentences for traffickers.

- Many religious orders work in the Diocese. 215 priests of religious orders worked or were based in Westminster Diocese. Some, such as the Mill Hill Missionaries and the Jesuits, run parishes.

- Chaplains work among our ethnic communities and in schools, hospitals, prisons and young offenders' centres.

- 10,000+ people were supported by Caritas schemes.

- 2.620 miles were travelled by the Caritas Deaf Service which provides support for deaf,

[2] See all the work of Caritas during 2025 in the Annual Review 2025 - Caritas Westminster

hard of hearing and deafblind people to participate in their parishes and to give of their talents.

- 200+ students were enrolled at Caritas St Joseph's which works with individuals with intellectual disabilities to enable them to participate fully in their communities and in church life.

***There are also**:*

- pilgrimages, especially the annual Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes, and meetings such as Flame, 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.

The Safeguarding Service works very hard to support all those who minister, work and volunteer in our Parishes and all the associated activities, so that the culture of safeguarding pervades all these activities.

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 direct the Committee to provide additional information, explanations or guidance, and take any necessary action.

Committee Members can serve for a maximum of 2 terms of three years each. There have been 4 meeting of the Committee in 2025. There is generally a high level of attendance by Committee Members at meetings.

The Committee's Terms of Reference are to be found at: Trustee's safeguarding committee – Diocese of Westminster

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

The membership of the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee 2025

- Baroness Nuala O'Loan, Trustee and Chair
- Fr. Stephen Coker
- Ms. Mary Coller
- Bishop James Currie, Trustee

- Mrs. Bernadette Herbert, Vice-Chair
- Deacon Paul Hewitt
- Dr Ed Morgan
- Ms. Nicola O'Brien
- Mrs. Rachel O'Driscoll
- Mr. Andrzej Wdowiak
- Ms. Victoria Wilson
- Ms. Susie Worthington.

Members have a variety of experience including Law, Regulatory Matters, Education, Midwifery/Nursing, Policing, Social Work, and Youth Work.

The Committee's Policing Advisor

The Committee was very pleased in 2024 when Commander Kevin Southworth of the Metropolitan Police Service agreed to act as an advisor to the Committee, attending meetings and assisting the Safeguarding Service where necessary. In September 2025, he was replaced by Detective Superintendent Dickson-Leach. The Committee is very grateful to these officers, and to the Metropolitan Police Service for its ongoing support of safeguarding in the Diocese of Westminster.

The Sub-Committees of the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee

The Committee conducts much of its work through its four Sub-Committees, whose Convenors were appointed by Cardinal Nichols:

i. **The Blemished DBS Sub-Committee**, convened by Baroness O'Loan, Member of the House of Lords, first Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and chair or member or various Commissions of Inquiry and Boards over many years. Its other members are Ms. Mary Coller and Fr. Stephen Coker.

   The Blemished DBS Sub-Committee considered 3 blemished DBS reports in 2025.

ii. **The Casework and Case Closure Sub-Committee,** convened by Deacon Paul Hewitt,former Director of Children's and Adult Services, currently a registered soc ial worker. Its other members are Ms. Mary Coller and Baroness Nuala O'Loan.

   There were 12 meetings of the Sub-Committee in 2025.

iii. **The Practice Development and Training Sub-Committee** convened by Andrzej Wdowiak,Director of Youth Ministry in the Diocese, who has worked for charities in different countries and in different fields:asylum seekers and refugees, homele

ss people, vulnerable adults, young offenders and people suffering from drug and alcohol addiction. Its other members are Ms. Victoria Wilson and Fr. Stephen Coker.

There were 4 meetings of the Sub-Committee in 2025.

iv. **The Quality Enhancement and Assurance Sub-Committee**, convened by Rachel O'Driscoll,
who has over 30 years' experience in the legal services sector, including on regula tory and standards issues and was lay Vice Chair of the National Catholic Safeguar ding Commission. Its other members are Mrs. Bernadette Herbert, Ms. Nicola O'Brien and Ms. Susie Worthington. It supports the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee in promoting and enhancing the quality of safeguarding activity across the Diocese.

There were 6 meetings of the Sub-Committee in 2025.

Maintaining the culture of safeguarding requires regular and effective communication about safeguarding matters across the Diocese. Two other structures exist to facilitate this:

i. The Vicar General Information Sharing Meeting

The Vicar General is responsible for matters relating to clergy appointments and conduct. This meeting occurs approximately every six weeks to facilitate the sharing of information about safeguarding and clergy conduct issues, to ensure the best possible response. Its membership is:

- Ms. Catherine Edginton, Head of Safeguarding
- Mgr. Martin Hayes, Trustee, Vicar General
- Ms. Monawara Bakht, Deputy Head of Safeguarding
- Baroness Nuala O'Loan Trustee, Chair of the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee

There were 6 Vicar General Information Sharing Meetings which discussed such matters as ensuring that training requirements are met by clergy, enabling discussion about processes for dealing with cases which may involve both safeguarding and clergy conduct issues, checking that any known welfare issues which require attention in particular safeguarding cases are identified. The Meetings also facilitate the appropriate sharing of knowledge about matters which have come to the attention of either the Safeguarding Service or the Vicar General, and which may be relevant to both.

ii. The Cross Curia Safeguarding Meeting.

Four times a year those in leadership roles in the Diocesan Curia (the administration) meet to ensure that matters relating to safeguarding which require input from the various elements of the Curia are identified and discussed by all, 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 to May 2025
- Bishop James Currie, Trustee and Chair from May 2025
- Ms. Catherine Edginton, Head of Safeguarding
- Mgr. Martin Hayes, Vicar General
- Mgr. John Conneely, Judicial Vicar
- Baroness Nuala O'Loan, Chair, Trustee's Safeguarding Committee
- Deacon Adrian Cullen
- Paolo Camoletto, Chief Operating Officer
- Mr. Mathew D'Souza, Data Protection Officer
- Mr. Richard Harries, Director of Caritas
- Mr. Robert Walker, Director of Human Resources
- Mr. Nicholas Seed, Director of Finance
- Mr. Simeon Elderfield, Communications
- Mr. Peter Sweeney, Director of Education
- Mr. Andrzej Wdowiak, Director of Youth Ministry, Member of Trustee's Safeguarding Committee)

There were 4 Cross Curia Safeguarding meetings in 2025.

Archbishop John Sherrington, who was installed as Archbishop of Liverpool in May 2025, made a massive contribution towards Diocesan implementation of the significant changes introduced following the Report of the ICCSA Inquiry and the delivery of the Elliott Report. As Chair of the Cross Curia Meeting, Archbishop John ensured that there was a formal structured process through which safeguarding matters, including those deriving from the establishment of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency and the Religious Life Safeguarding Service could be raised and addressed across the various Curial departments, that there was regular monitoring of the new structures and that there was a forum for identifying and seeking to resolve the various issues which arose in that context. This work has been very important for the development of the Culture of Safeguarding in the Diocese.

Matters discussed this year included responses to the recommendations in the CSSA Audit Report; safeguarding organisational developments, including the evolution of the responsibilities of the Strategic Council for Catholic Safeguarding; Human Resources issues such as the application of safer employment processes, and financial and legal matters. These meetings fulfil a very useful function in keeping all members of the Curia informed about ongoing developments and identifying necessary actions within the Diocese.

Other necessary meetings, such as those with CSSA, and between the Cardinal Archbishop,

the Council of Deans, the Head of Safeguarding and the Chair of the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee, took place during the year.

Accountability: The Regulation of and Responsibility for Safeguarding

In all its work the Diocese, must comply with English law and its Trust Deed, and is regulated, as a registered charity, by the Charity Commission and the Information Commissioner. The Diocese must also comply with the Canon Law of the Catholic Church.

In addition to the national statutory processes, the Catholic Church has created an independent process for safeguarding accountability. It has three elements

i. The Strategic Council for Catholic Safeguarding (SCCS)

A new Strategic Council for Catholic Safeguarding (SCCS) (see https://catholicsafeguardingcouncil.org.uk/) was established by the Catholic Bishops Conference for England and Wales during 2025. It exists to ensure a "One Church, One Voice" approach to Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in England and Wales. The Council is the strategic leadership body for the Catholic Church in England and Wales and sits at the top of the safeguarding hierarchy, providing oversight to both the CSSA and RLSS. Its function has been described as setting the overall direction, ensuring accountability, and monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding structures. As an organ of the Catholic Bishops Conference for England and Wales it is now responsible for virtually everything except audit, which remains the responsibility of CSSA.

ii. The Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA)

The CSSA created the 8 national safeguarding standards, (see The Eight National Safeguarding Standards (catholicsafeguarding.org.uk) and was originally responsible for policy and practice guidance, training and auditing the Diocese's compliance with those standards. The CSSA initiated a review by SCIE[3] of all the national safeguarding policies and guidance in 2023, which is ongoing at the present time. It was decided that with the creation of the Strategic Council for Catholic Safeguarding (SCCS), the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) would cease to provide in-person safeguarding training and materials at the end of 2025, and its policy and training responsibilities would transfer to the SCCS. The CSSA will still provide a process for dealing with unresolved complaints against the Safeguarding Service and continues to hold the audit function.

iii. The Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS) and Religious Life Groups operating in the Diocese

The RLSS (see https://religioussafeguarding.org) offers safeguarding services to members of religious orders. Most religious life groups have signed up to RLSS, though there continue to be a few religious orders working in the Diocese who have not done so. A few religious life groups organise their own safeguarding services. Volunteers working for the religious orders will be regulated by SCCS and CSSA safeguarding

[3] The Social Care Institute for Excellence

arrangements and will therefore be the responsibility of the Diocesan Safeguarding Service.

The Diocese and its Safeguarding Service work closely with all three organisations.

The Work of Safeguarding

Reporting concerns, information and allegations of abuse

It is vital that people know, or can easily find out how, to bring an allegation or concern about abuse to the attention of the Safeguarding Service.

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.

To report a safeguarding concern please contact the Safeguarding Service on:

- Email: safeguarding@rcdow.org.uk
- Phone: 020 7798 9352, and choose option 1

The Safeguarding Service operates Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm only. Emails and phone calls are not monitored outside these times.

Anyone who brings concerns or allegations to the Safeguarding Service will be responded to sensitively, respectfully and seriously.

If anyone is concerned about the welfare of a child or a vulnerable adult at risk, they should not delay in contacting the police, using 999 if a child or adult is believed to be in immediate danger.

Notices in parishes and other locations also provide information about how to report an allegation or concern.

Allegations and concerns are sometimes reported to Parish Safeguarding Representatives or other clergy, employees or volunteers of the Diocese.

Responding to reported concerns, information and allegations of abuse

Those who minister, work and volunteer with children or vulnerable adults 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.

Sometimes an allegation against somebody in the Diocese may be reported directly to the police, or Children or Adult Social Services, who will normally inform the Diocese.

Once an allegation or concern has been received, the Safeguarding Service will deal with it as required by its policies. The Committee through its work seeks to ensure that matters reported are dealt with properly and in accordance with all laws and procedures: see Safeguarding policy, procedures and guidance – Diocese of Westminster

Responding to an allegation of abuse

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. In addition to responding to the complainant in accordance with law and policy, a 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 of the clergy.

Advice on safeguarding concerns

The Safeguarding Service also 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.

Caring for those who have experienced abuse – a trauma informed response

At the heart of all our work lies the care of children and vulnerable adults who have suffered abuse. One of the outcomes of the 2025 CSSA case audit was the following statement, "The safeguarding team should be commended on their engagement with those who raise concerns and those who are the subject of the concern."

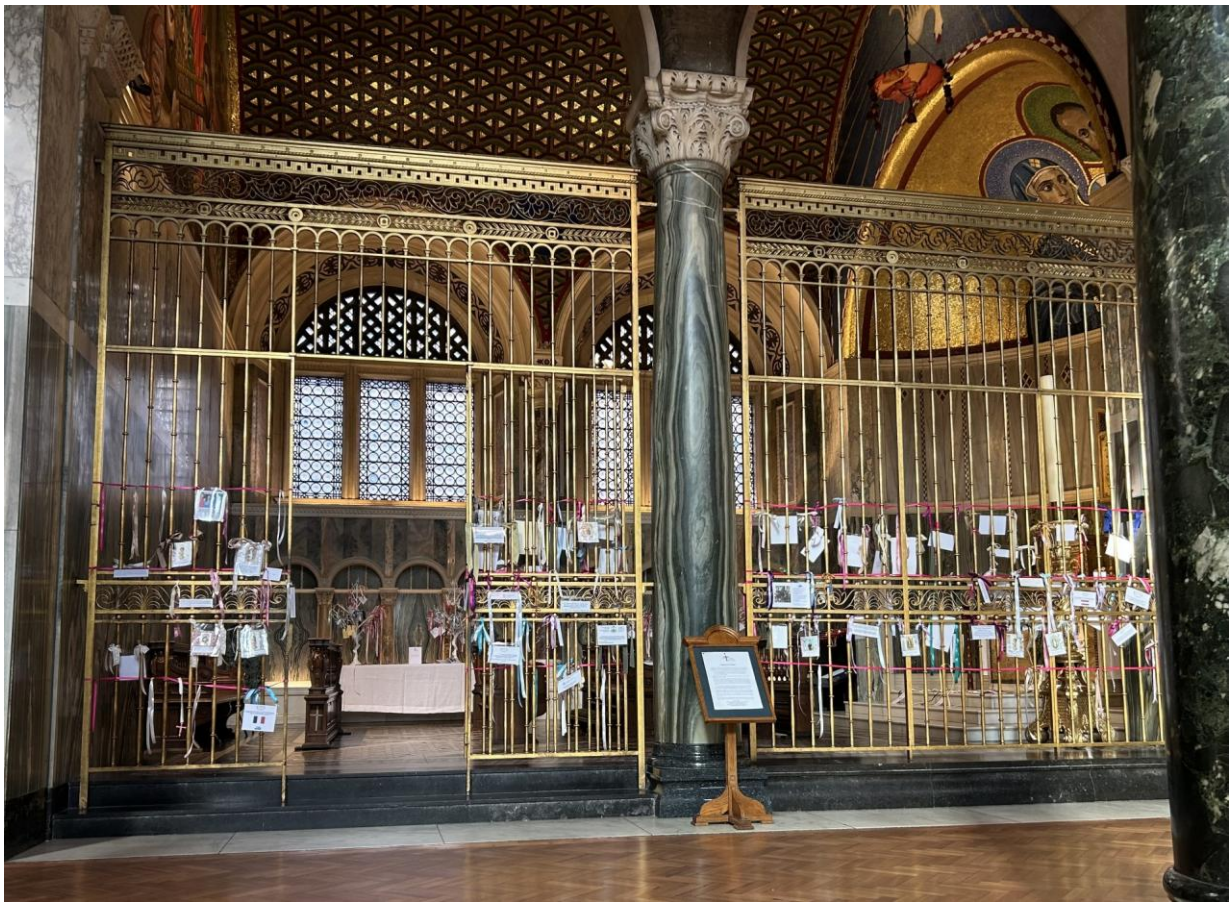
When someone reports abuse, great care is taken to support and assist the person through the process which follows the making of the report. The care of those who have suffered abuse by anyone in the Church is of the utmost importance. Our caseworkers are trained to deliver trauma-informed services and to assist people in accessing appropriate therapeutic support services both during and after their contact with the Service.

The Healing and Hope Service

Perhaps one of the outstanding moments of the year was the Healing and Hope Service for those who have been impacted by abuse and those who work with or support them, which was held on 10 May in the Cathedral. We invited LOUDFence to help us create the service.

LOUDfence is an organisation which creates events where ribbons of all colours and styles attached to cards are tied to railings, suspended wires, around trees and on internal displays as a visible act of solidarity, enabling people to say what happened to them and send and receive messages of care and support. The aim of LOUDfence is to give survivors, the entire church and wider society a voice. LOUDfence states that it celebrates the act of openness and truth telling. This provides a direct challenge to any culture which seeks to hide in the silence.

The service was organised by Bernadette Herbert, Andrzej Wdowiak and Antonia Sobocki, the founder of LOUDFence in the UK, working with Bishop Jim Curry, the Cathedral Administrator and the Safeguarding Service.



As part of the event, LOUDFence volunteers, many of whom travelled very long distances to be with us, and Committee Members provided a craft workshop in the morning where people were able to create their own messages for display in the Cathedral. LOUDFence provided beautiful ribbons and other materials for those who wished to create a message.

Members of the Committee and of the Safeguarding Service attended the Service and were available to talk to people. Leaflets describing the Safeguarding Service were distributed

Cardinal Nichols had intended to speak at the Service, but sadly Pope Francis died on 21 April 2025 and, Cardinal Nichols had to go to Rome both for the funeral and as a Cardinal Elector to take part in the Conclave which led to the election of Pope Leo XVI. As he was unable to attend the Service, he sent a special message to all who came, which was printed in the Order of Service and read by Bishop James Currie, who led the service. The Cardinal's words included a renewed apology for abuse within the church and prayers. He said,

"Today I express my deep sorrow for the abuse which so many have suffered at the hands of clergy and other people associated with the Church. When this horrific abuse takes place in the very house of the Lord, and when it is hidden instead of disclosed, then the pain suffered is so much more destructive, for it undermines the faith and trust in God of those who have been so betrayed. This deep suffering and pain which you, victims and survivors, have suffered moves me to express again my distress and sorrow at what has happened and, in the name of the Church, to apologise to you all.

We, in Westminster Diocese, have been working consistently to make sure that such crimes

have no place in the life of the Church; to ensure that there is a culture of safeguarding in the Diocese; that our churches and other premises are places of safety; and that everyone associated with the Diocese, whether as clergy, religious, employee or volunteer, understands their obligations to be vigilant and to work closely with our Safeguarding Service. Our practice is now clear. All allegations of abuse are reported to the statutory authorities. We cooperate fully with them in any investigation or work related to any such allegation.

Today is a day when we hope that our presence together and our prayers together will bring some measure of healing and hope.

We ask God our Father to be with us all, to extend to those who suffer his hope and peace, and to those who are genuinely repentant of their offences, mercy and forgiveness."

The Chapel of the Holy Family: a LOUDFence for victims and survivors of abuse.



Many messages were attached to the railings, and people lingered for a long time after the Service. The messages which had been attached were left on display in the Chapel of the Holy Family until the end of May. They were then gathered together and kept for future learning and use.

Care of those against whom an allegation is made

The care of all 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.

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 or they may be asked to step aside from their role in the Church, depending on the nature and circumstances of the allegation. However, if the person implicated is a member of the clergy they may 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 not only to the voices of those who report abuse, but also to the voices of respondents, clerical and lay, and the Committee seeks to do so through the work of its sub-committees.

The Companion Priests Initiative

This initiative derived from a series of meetings between the Chair of the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee, the Safeguarding Coordinator, area bishops and large groups of priests of the Diocese who had the opportunity to raise issues of concern and comment in relation to what happens when allegation is made against a priest. Issues which were raised included, questions about the fairness of the processes adopted within the Diocese, what happens to a priest when an allegation is made against him and he is asked to step aside from ministry and, on most occasions, leave his home, and the adequacy of support provided for priests in this situation.

The only document available to priests at the time was the brief on-line CSSA Guide for Clergy and Religious who are the subject of an allegation. It was decided to create a document for the Diocese which would answer many of the questions which the priests asked, and to ask the Cardinal to permit the development of a group of support priests to walk beside those who are the subject of allegations. The Cardinal gave his approval. A group of 5 priests was identified, and they have chosen to call themselves "Companion Priests."

Training was provided for these priests. Following a very useful input by Catherine Edginton, Head of Safeguarding, on the work of the Safeguarding Service, and a compelling and very helpful input by Rev Dr Barry O'Sullivan on the psychological aspects of the work which the Companion Priests will do, Dr Ed Morgan KC, Chancellor of the National Tribunal and Member of the Committee, gave a presentation on matters of civil law and the current situation with regard to canon law processes after any criminal investigation and any interagency work. He

framed his presentation within the context of the spiritual lives of the Companion Priests themselves and encouraged them to meet together as a group to reflect on their work, as Rev Dr O'Sullivan had already done. His final exhortation was that they should remember how Simon of Cyrene helped Jesus to carry his cross, saying that their role is "To support, NOT to advise, To facilitate, NOT to deliver, To guide, NOT to direct and To care, NOT to be responsible."

Documentation for the service to be offered by the Companion Priests was developed in conjunction with them, and the Diocese of Westminster Guide for Clergy who are the subject of an allegation of abuse was produced and approved in July 2025. Accompanying guidance for the operation of the work of the Companion Priests has been produced.

This work was undertaken as a specific response to concerns articulated by priests, and demonstrates compliance with National Standard 5 which requires that the Diocese will be "mindful of the impact on the wellbeing of the respondent and appoint a support person with the responsibility for listening to and addressing the pastoral needs of the respondent." The Vicar General who has particular responsibility for clergy contributed to this work.

Work has now commenced on the preparation of a guide for people other than clergy who are the subject of allegations of abuse. The issues for such people are in some ways different from those faced by priests, as they will not normally have to leave their home, find accommodation and stop working while any investigation is conducted. However, in all cases there will be a need to understand the processes of the police and other statutory services, as well as those of the Diocesan Safeguarding Service. It is generally acknowledged that being the subject of an allegation or complaint can cause stress and other difficulties.

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, the prison service, and local authority social services to ensure that all appropriate action is taken. The Committee must be satisfied that all necessary action has been taken, 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 support in returning to ministry, work or voluntary activity.

Diocesan Casework Statistics

Standard 1 of the National Standards LG3, requires that the minutes of leadership meetings contain reference to safeguarding matters being discussed in line with the Standards. Furthermore, Standard 4, EF 1 requires that trustees are informed of the existence of allegations and that the responses being made are confirmed. This is achieved in Westminster Diocese through the reporting of all cases to the Casework Sub-Committee, and ultimately to the Committee.

The Casework and Case Closure Sub-Committee provides the Trustees' Safeguarding Committee with assurance, accountability and informed learning from the Diocese's

casework. This supports continuous improvement and helps sustain a safeguarding culture marked by vigilance, fairness, compassion, transparency and governance.

The Casework and Case Closure Sub-Committee is presented with details of all new and continuing cases, proposed case closures, and the full range of contacts received by the Service, including enquiries, disclosures, requests for advice and lower-level concerns. Members consider the actions already taken, current risks, involvement of statutory or external agencies, support offered, outstanding work and the rationale for decisions. Completed cases are reviewed before closure, while open cases, safeguarding plans, parish plans and offender management arrangements are tracked and revisited as necessary.

Where appropriate, counselling support is provided in accordance with policy.

The Sub-Committee does not direct operational practice. Its role is advisory and strategic, bringing together members with relevant professional experience to act as critical friends to the Safeguarding Service. It may recommend further action, identify where specialist legal or national safeguarding advice should be sought, and test whether decisions are evidence based, defensible and centred upon the safety and dignity of those involved. Particular attention is given to the welfare both of people who report concerns and of those against whom concerns or allegations have been raised.

A central part of the Sub-Committee's work is identifying learning from cases as they are opened, progressed and closed. Themes arising from individual cases and from the wider pattern of contacts are used to strengthen risk assessment, improve consistency, inform training and highlight issues requiring further attention. This has included recognising the importance of responding promptly to lower-level concerns, where patterns of grooming, boundary violations or predatory behaviour may otherwise be missed.

34 matters were reported to the Committee during the year and appropriate action was taken. Of these

- 15 related to lay people in the Church of which
  - 10 were allegations of abuse against lay people of which 1 was an historic allegation, and
  - 5 were cases in which a Safeguarding Plan was required to allow an individual to worship safely where a possible risk to others had been identified.

- 15 related to clergy of which
  - 9 were historic allegations: of these 2 were against priests who were members of religious orders, and
  - 6 involved current matters of which 3 were safeguarding matters. The other cases did not involve safeguarding issues.

- 1 related to a religious sister who wished to speak about historic abuse – the matter was transferred, following initial enquiries, to the RLSS.

- I was an anonymous complaint which was not capable of investigation but was reported to the appropriate authorities.

- 1 was a general safeguarding alert issued by another diocese about an individual who may represent a risk to themselves or others.

- 1 was a police request for information under the Data Protection Act.

22 cases were closed during 2025 of which

- 16 were cases which were opened in 2025.
- 1 was the anonymous complaint referred to in the previous paragraph.

- 13 were cases relating to members of the clergy. 3 of these cases involved clergy who were members of religious orders, 2 of which were transferred to the RLSS as the orders are affiliated to the RLSS. 3 of these cases, on examination did not involve safeguarding issues.

- 7 were cases relating to lay people.

- 1 Safeguarding Plan was closed, as it was no longer needed.

None of the matters dealt with during the year by the Sub-Committee and reported to the Committee and ultimately to the Trustee Board resulted in a criminal conviction. There were no canonical proceedings against anybody for any breach of the safeguarding elements of Canon Law.

In addition to this, as part of its advisory service, the Safeguarding Service dealt with a further 148 consultation and requests for information and help on safeguarding matters, which did not involve cases.

Safeguarding Plans 2025

Those under investigation, or those who have been convicted in a criminal court, or by a canonical court (respondents) and who wish to be involved and worship in the Church 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 closed because a complaint is not substantiated, they are no longer necessary, or the individual subject to the plan dies. The Sub-Committee reviews all Safeguarding Plans quarterly to ensure that all necessary reviews have occurred, and that Safeguarding Plans have been closed where necessary.

Most individuals who have been released from prison and come to our attention do so by simply arriving at church on a Sunday morning and making themselves known to the Parish Priest. We then instigate a safeguarding plan as appropriate.

The Safeguarding Service continues to collaborate with Police and Probation to improve and encourage early engagement with statutory services for the pre-emptive development of Safeguarding Plans for people subject to statutory supervision, specifically those recently released from prisons. Work is now underway, led by the London Probation Lead for Faith groups, to ensure more effective linkages with faith organisations. Our Safeguarding Service has contributed to the discussions and offered to be part of a pilot programme. Unfortunately, the Probation Lead, is based in South London and will conduct the pilot scheme there in Southwark Diocese. We will remain in the working group providing input and helping to shape the programme as it rolls out.

The Safeguarding Service has also consulted with the National Prison Chaplaincy Lead to support this initiative, through the local provision of training around safeguarding and prison security for volunteer parish clergy.

Parish Safeguarding Plans are created to manage the possible risk presented by an individual who may represent a safeguarding risk but is unwilling or unable to sign a safeguarding plan.

16 Safeguarding Plans were in place in December 2025. 2 related to diocesan clergy, neither of whom is in ministry, and 14 to members of the laity. There were also 3 active Parish Safety Plans being monitored by parish priests.

Seeking feedback from those affected by abuse about their experience of engaging with the Safeguarding Service

Identifying ways to seek the feedback from those affected by abuse about their experience of using the Safeguarding Service has been a priority for the Safeguarding Service and the Committee. The Quality Enhancement and Assurance Sub-Committee continued its work to strengthen service-user engagement.

A questionnaire is sent to each person who has reported abuse or each victim/survivor and, on response, every six months until the case is finished, so that we can get direct and contemporaneous feedback. When a case is closed, anyone who has reported abuse is invited to a private (carefully designed and structured) exit interview to seek their feedback or is invited to fill in a questionnaire.

During 2025, following consultation on feedback from victims/survivors, the Sub-Committee

finalised amended documentation to enable structured feedback to be sought from respondents following safeguarding enquiries or investigations.

The Quality Enhancement and Assurance Sub-Committee also 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. Learning from casework, training, the work of our PSRs, national developments in the Church and other safeguarding organisations, and all our other activities, helps develop our service.

The Development of Policy and Practice in Safeguarding in the Diocese

Sustaining and developing safeguarding in the Diocese is done through the creation and regular review of Diocesan policies and guidance which implement the National Safeguarding Standards. Throughout the year the Quality Enhancement and Assurance Sub-Committee reviewed and provided advice on a range of strategic documents and initiatives, in conjunction with the Safeguarding Service, and the following policies and procedures were developed or amended, and approved by the Committee:

- Home Visiting (Adults) Guidance;
- Home Visiting (Families) Guidance;
- Strategic Safeguarding Plan 2025-2028;
- The Safeguarding Risk Register;
- The Diocese's Commitment to Survivors;
- The Safeguarding Policy;
- The Whistleblowing Policy;
- The Safeguarding Service Complaints Policy and Procedure;
- The Trustee's Safeguarding Committee Terms of Reference;
- The Safeguarding Service Terms of Reference;
- The leaflets 'Hurt by Abuse' and 'Respond, Listen Support';
- The Lourdes Pilgrimage Policy Statement: Safeguarding all pilgrims
    - The Lourdes Pilgrimage Safeguarding Policies: Safeguarding procedures;
    - The Lourdes Pilgrimage Safeguarding Policies: Safeguarding Code of Conduct: Adult Leaders and Volunteer Helpers;
    - The Lourdes Pilgrimage Safeguarding Policies: Code of Conduct: Redcaps;

- The Lourdes Pilgrimage Safeguarding Policies: Roles and Responsibilities: Redcap Group Leaders and Team Leaders;
- The Lourdes Pilgrimage Safeguarding Policies: Volunteers Messaging Policy.

Checks for suitability for ministry, employment or volunteering

Everyone who works in the Diocese with children and vulnerable adults is checked to ensure, as best possible, that nobody who presents a risk to others is allowed to be involved in ministry, employment or volunteer work in the parish or Diocese. Diocesan policies provide the processes for safer recruitment, and these must be followed in all cases. This applies to all Trustees, Committee Members, clergy, retired priests, permanent deacons, transitional deacons, seminarians, Curia employees, parish employees, and parish, pilgrimage and chaplaincy volunteers. 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 also subject to detailed processes.

DBS Checks

DBS checks are carried out by the UK Government Disclosure and Barring Service. Each person who wants to minister, work or volunteer makes an application to the DBS service, providing information required by the Service and receives a DBS certificate. If the DBS certificate contains information about a conviction or other police information in relation to someone wanting to minister, work or volunteer in the Diocese, the Safeguarding Service is notified and carries out a risk assessment of the information identified during the DBS process. The Safeguarding Service then reports the findings of the risk assessment to the Blemished DBS Sub-Committee which will consider and respond to recommendations made in the risk assessment. A decision will then be made as to whether the person is able to enter into ministry, employment or volunteer activity.

Every 3 years the DBS checks are repeated. Trustees, clergy, staff and volunteers are reminded when their DBS expires.

The number of DBS applications continues to rise and turnaround times for applications have improved very significantly.

1712 DBS applications were processed during 2025, (1408 in 2024) This represents a considerable volume or work, both by the Safeguarding Service and by our Parish Safeguarding Representatives (PSRs) who give so generously of their time to ensure a culture of safeguarding prevails, and that there is compliance with the law and national standards. Only 3 of the 1712 applications were returned with blemishes and these were dealt with in accordance with Diocesan policy.

PSRs play a very significant role in advising and helping volunteers to fill in their DBS applications, which require the provision of documented evidence, and in ensuring that DBS

renewal applications are submitted on time. The Safeguarding Service is creating a specialist online webinar specific to DBS and recruitment to assist PSRs in this very valuable work.

Training

Everyone involved in the ministry and work of the Church in the Diocese, whether they are ordained, in religious life, employees or volunteers must do safeguarding training. Refresher training must be completed every two years. Specialist training is also delivered to enable the work of different categories of people. There has developed an emphasis on trauma informed training.

The Diocese was pleased when the Venerable English College in Rome invited the Safeguarding Service to provide safeguarding training to its clergy, staff and seminarians in May 2026. The Safeguarding Service will therefore be expanding the in-person clergy training programme having agreed to undertake the training of the College's clergy and staff. It will also develop a new 2-year training syllabus for Diocesan clergy training bringing in new and emerging themes and topics. Following the successful team presentation at the PSR conference (see below) the Safeguarding Service has received requests from clergy, after feedback from their PSRs, to include a presentation on managing mental health issues which they may encounter in the context of parish work.

Once the policies and guidance being reviewed and developed by SCIE, initially for the CSSA and now for the SCCS, become available to SCCS, it will develop training materials to reflect the documentation. It is anticipated that this process will be completed by the end of 2026 and any new requirement will be provided for in the Diocese's Training Plan.

Pending this, the Diocese continued to operate its comprehensive 3-year training plan for 2023-2026. The Practice Development and Training Sub-Committee monitors, updates and reviews the Diocesan Training Plan as necessary, to ensure that National Safeguarding Standard 7 requirements are met and exceeded. During the year the Sub-Committee focused on aligning safeguarding training provision with the National Safeguarding Standards. It also audits safeguarding training provision and compliance so that it could alert the Trustees, through the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee, to any failures to meet Diocesan training requirements which may impact negatively on its practice.

The Practice Development and Training Sub-Committee works with the Safeguarding Service to ensure that learning from casework and other sources is fed into future training where appropriate. An example of this was the production of the Guide for Eucharistic Ministers and Volunteers Visiting Places of Residence and the associated training. Given the sacred nature of Eucharistic Ministry and its importance for vulnerable parishioners, the Practice Development and Training Sub-Committee will now consider whether any additional inputs are required to ensure maximum protection for vulnerable people.

A high standard of bespoke safeguarding training is provided in the Diocese, which is responsive to clergy needs in the busy parish context, and is structured to meet the particular needs of different categories of people working across the Diocese. Training is provided to enable risk assessment of locations in which Church activities take place. 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.

On several occasions and, in particular in the area of bespoke clergy training, feedback from participants indicated that the training delivered by the Diocese was now of a better quality and more responsive to clergy need in the busy parish context than had been the case previously. Following a number of conversations with CSSA, which had previously stated that it would provide all clergy training, the Diocese has been permitted to deliver its own bespoke programme.

The Safeguarding Service is ever conscious of the need to measure the impact of the training which it delivers, in addition to the ongoing evaluation of the training itself. The Practice Development and Training Sub-Committee endorsed the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Sub-Committee view that, in addition to the qualitative data presented to the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee, there was a need to measure and evaluate the impact of the Safeguarding Service's work. It was agreed with the Safeguarding Service that such work would focus initially on training and on the implementation of new processes. Methodology is being further developed for measuring impact. Clergy training will be the first area in which impact will be measured.

During 2025:

- 193 priests and deacons attended in person training and 146 completed online training.
- 63 seminarians attended in person training and 5 completed online training.
- 34 PSRs completed initial training and 69 completed refresher training
- 330 Curia and parish employees completed online training.

Parish Safeguarding Representatives (PSRs) and priests working together in safeguarding

Much work is done to promote the culture of safeguarding throughout the diocese and to ensure a safe environment for all who come to the Church, and all who belong to the Church Community in our parishes and other locations such as chaplaincies. This work is led by the PSRs and the Parish Priests, and by chaplains, supported by the Safeguarding Service's Parish Support Team which works with parishes in fulfilling their duties to promote a culture of safeguarding in the community, including assessing the suitability of and inducting new PSRs.

Our PSRs, who give so generously of their time and talents, are volunteers, carefully selected and trained, who may receive reports and allegations of abuse, and who assist other volunteers who may wish to work with children and vulnerable adults, to understand their safeguarding duties, explaining the safer recruitment process and the necessity for applications to the Government's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) (see above). To assist PSRs a specialist online webinar specific to DBS and recruitment will be provided by the Safeguarding Service in February 2026.

During 2025, 40 new PSRs were recruited by the Diocese. The process of recruiting, DBS checking and training each PSR is working well.

The 2025 Parish Safeguarding Representative conference



Our Diocesan PSR conference took place on Saturday, 11 October 2025 on the theme "Seeds of Change: Cultivating Hope and Healing Together". HE Cardinal Nichols came to the Conference and spoke. The aim was to enhance understanding of the impact of abuse, and how a trauma informed approach can provide a sensitive and respectful response to those who have experienced harm. It was a learning and networking event which brought our PSRs together to share good practice and encourage cross-parish boundary relationships. It enabled identification of existing gaps in knowledge, and exploration of the important role of the PSR. This day was also an opportunity to celebrate and thank PSR volunteers for their time and contribution in enhancing the culture of safeguarding and responding to safeguarding matters arising in the parishes.

The conference was a great success with over 63 PSRs from across the Diocese in attendance. Feedback was very positive.



Parish Self-Assessment Audits:

The Quality Enhancement and Assurance Sub-Committee worked with the Safeguarding Service this year to develop further the Parish Self-Assessment Audit forms which parishes will use to self-audit compliance with safeguarding standards, so that we understand better how safeguarding is practiced within each of our parishes, identify gaps, improve practice and provide appropriate support. The electronic Parish Self-Assessment Audit forms were circulated to all 215 parishes, PSRs and Parish Priests. 98 responses were received. Efforts are being made to improve the response rate. Most of the responses were created by the Parish Priest, PSR and Parish Administration Team working in partnership. A few provided individual responses. Parishes were offered a visit by the Safeguarding Service following the audit and 39 parishes responded that they would like a visit.

A number of parishes provided examples of good work which they have undertaken during the year, such as:

- Creating a PSR WhatsApp group with other parishes to enable communication and discussion
- Having a team approach to safeguarding in the parish
- Focussing on children and adults with special educational needs.
- Holding in parish safeguarding training with coffee and a croissant for participants
- The translation of safeguarding posters into languages spoken in the parish

The Safeguarding Service and the Quality Enhancement and Assurance Sub-Committee are taking this work forward in 2026.

Diocese of Westminster Lourdes Pilgrimage



Planning for the 2025 Lourdes pilgrimage began in September 2024. Lessons learned during the 2024 pilgrimage were incorporated into the planning process. During 2025 the Lourdes Pilgrimage Committee met four times, chaired by Bishop John Sherrington. The Committee oversees the governance of the pilgrimage and develops the pilgrimage strategy, reporting to the Trustee Board. Members include the Chief Operating Officer, representation from

Clergy, the Pilgrimage Director and Pilgrimage President of Hospitalité, the Pilgrimage Co-ordinator, the Pilgrimage Safeguarding Representative (who is a PSR and member of the Trustee's Safeguarding Committee, Bernadette Herbert) and Pilgrimage volunteers.

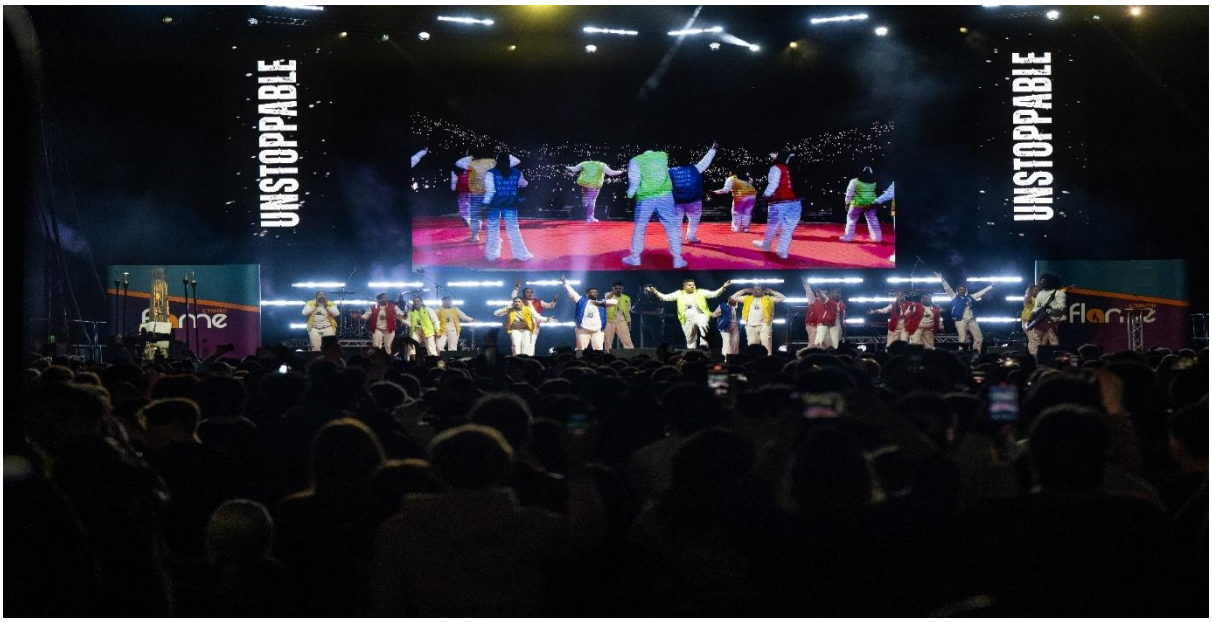


The Pilgrimage took place in July. Committee Member, Bernadette Herbert, again worked with the Pilgrimage Committee and the Safeguarding Service to ensure preparations were adequate and appropriate. In addition to this, Bernadette, who acted for years as a nurse on the pilgrimages and has an extensive knowledge of all that is involved, again acted as the Pilgrimage Safeguarding Representative, supported by Monawara Bakht, Deputy Head of Safeguarding, who attended the pilgrimage for the first time. It was reported to be a very successful pilgramage

After the pilgrimage, the process of debriefing and preparing for the 2026 pilgrimage began.



FLAME 25



On the 15th of March 2025, the Flame Congress event took place at Wembley Arena with over 5000 young people in attendance. It is the UK s Largest Catholic Youth Conference and was filled with inspiring speakers, incredible live music, prayer, adoration - an event like no other.

- Bear Gryls OBE
- Ashley and Brian from the Jesuit Hakimani Centre in Nairobi
- World Youth Dance Crew
- Allo Mate Introducing Stage with Guvna B
- Lily Jo
- Adenike Adewale
- Isaac Harvey MBE
- One Hope Project and
- Brother Chris Patino F.S.C





It was supported by the Diocesan Safeguarding Service who attended the event to manage any reported concerns, with the Head of Safeguarding being the events Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Continuous improvement and development

Demonstrating Compliance with the 8 National Safeguarding Standards

The Diocese received a good outcome of the CSSA audit of 10 safeguarding cases this year, and having been selected to take part in the CSSA Thematic Audit of Survivor Engagement in the Catholic Church, participated, at the beginning of November 2025, in this general thematic audit of compliance with Standard 3 of the National Standards which states that "Those that report having suffered harm receive a compassionate, caring and timely response, and are provided with access to appropriate support, advice, and pastoral care." The results of that audit are awaited.

The next planned audit of the Diocese is due to take place in November 2026.

Learning and Continuous Improvement

The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Sub Committee considered the Charity Commission's "10 Actions Trustee Boards Need to Take to Ensure Good Safeguarding

Governance" together with the trustee assurance questions contained within the CSSA Baseline Audit Programme Report, with a view to using these resources to inform and strengthen its oversight of safeguarding governance. It reported to the Committee and Charity Commission's document was brought to the attention of the Trust Board at its next meeting.

A standing item at every meeting of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Sub Committee was the review of the Safeguarding Service's Learning and Continuous Improvement Tracker. Introduced during the year. This has become an important governance tool in demonstrating compliance with Standard 8 of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, which focuses on learning and continuous improvement.

The Sub-Committee also oversaw the introduction of a Complaints Log, designed to identify learning from complaints about the delivery of the Safeguarding Service, and support improvements in service delivery. The log is now reviewed at every meeting. When a complaint has been concluded, the Head of Safeguarding provides the Sub-Committee with a confidential summary of the findings and outcomes to facilitate organisational learning and appropriate oversight.

One complaint was received against the Safeguarding Service during the reporting period. It was resolved at the informal stage of the complaints process.

The Head of Safeguarding conducted a review of the collection of casework data, to ensure that data collected is relevant and meaningful and reflects and informs priorities and strategic objectives. The Committee considered the outcome of that review and approved new arrangements which would include the triaging of cases into various levels to reflect risk, nature and complexity of the contact with the Safeguarding Service. The data provided to the quarterly Committee meetings will reflect the new system for defining cases, and is designed to help direct future service provision, identify gaps, emerging themes and areas for improvement, provide evidence for capacity building and demonstrate oversight, assurance and governance. The new data collection and casework review arrangement will be implemented from 1st January 2026.

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. The day-to-day work of safeguarding within parishes and ethnic chaplaincies is led by Parish Priests, ethnic chaplains and PSRs, but the Diocese has many other structures to enable it to deliver its mission, and the Safeguarding Service is involved with the work of these structures to make the Culture of Safeguarding a reality for all.

The Committee is most grateful to everyone who participates in this work: the Safeguarding Service, the clergy and all those with whom they work in the Diocese, the Diocesan Curia, and all the volunteers

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.

Nuala O'Loan