



Independent Safeguarding Audit Conclusions and Responses

Introduction

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) carried out an independent safeguarding audit of the Diocese of Coventry on the 6, 7 and 8 December 2016.

The full audit report was received in April 2017, and can be downloaded at:

http://www.dioceseofcoventry.org/images/document_library/UDR01822.pdf

The Right Reverend Dr Christopher Cocksworth, Bishop of Coventry, responded to the report by saying:

“As the person who is ultimately accountable for safeguarding in the diocese, I’m pleased that the auditors recognised that, overall, the culture in the diocese is open to learning and taking safeguarding forward in whatever way it can.”¹

Safeguarding in the Church of England has changed significantly in recent years, and will continue to change in the future. The audit report mentions similar areas of development to those we already had plans to implement, and we are committed to doing so. It has brought reassurance that that we are travelling in the right direction, and I am glad that the auditors have commended our work in a number of ways.

I am grateful for the skills, experience and hard work of our Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and her team. I am also indebted to the hundreds of volunteers in local churches who are working to make our churches a safer place for everyone.”

This paper contains the audit report’s conclusions, together with responses from our Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

What’s working well?

Section 3.1 of the independent audit report concluded:

- A very good DSA who is well respected, internally and by outside agencies, with whom she has good links. She has very good relationships with other faiths and is active within regional DSA and ecumenical safeguarding groups.
- The makings of an effective and robust safeguarding team.
- The Director of Projects and Communications adds significant value to safeguarding in developing online systems to track training, DBS, monitoring in the parishes etc. and in giving guidance to parishes when either clergy or a member of the congregation is the subject of a safeguarding

¹ Section 2.1 of the audit report.

allegation. He has shortened and clarified guidance and policies into easily understandable, plain English documents.

- The Bishop has a clear understanding of his safeguarding role and sees it as his ultimate responsibility. He has a positive working relationship with the DSA and has introduced annual safeguarding study days for members of the clergy over and above their required safeguarding training.
- The Bishop has shown his consideration of safeguarding in his restructure of the Archdeacons' responsibilities by creating the consistency of having one Archdeacon responsible for safeguarding across the Diocese.
- The Diocesan Secretary is committed to securing the future of safeguarding within the Diocese in committing funding for extra posts where required.
- The levels of scrutiny by a largely independent group of relevant professionals making up the Diocesan Safeguarding Scrutiny Group (DSSG) can provide healthy challenge to the Diocese. The Bishop highly values this function.
- Case files are very well maintained and it is easy to find key information and ascertain the main issues.
- Quality of safeguarding training being delivered was rated as high by all those who spoke about it.

Areas for further development

Section 3.2 of the independent audit report concluded:

- Risk assessments, whilst being done, need to be in line with the House of Bishops' Guidance, formally recorded and on file.
Diocesan response: Risk assessments are carried out for all safeguarding cases, and these are now formally recorded on file.
- Awareness needs to be developed regarding Adult Safeguarding.
Diocesan response: Safeguarding adults will be a significant theme in the forthcoming Bishop's Safeguarding Day for clergy. We are also seeking to appoint a new member to the DSSG who specialises in Adult Safeguarding.
- Better support to survivors of abuse is needed, with more publicity and promotion of any service or resource on offer to survivors.
Diocesan response: Support to survivors is currently provided by our Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and we are considering how best to provide additional resources. Relevant information will be publicised on the Diocesan website.
- There are concerns that the DSSG is becoming over-involved in casework rather than strategic scrutiny – the scrutiny of training and the numbers who are trained is an example of an area the DSSG could usefully be closely monitoring.
Diocesan response: New Terms of Reference of the Diocesan Safeguarding Scrutiny Group (DSSG) have been prepared for approval by the Bishop's Council.
- Training – there is a huge demand and a limited supply. There are plans to address this but it needs to be a priority.
Diocesan response: In common with all dioceses, the huge demand has arisen as a result of new national guidance. We are developing more training capacity by appointing additional trainers, but care needs to be taken to maintain the high quality of training that the audit recognised.

- There is an ongoing challenge to ensure that parishes both comply with safeguarding requirements but also understand why this is needed.

Diocesan response: 70% of churches have now completed a self-audit, and we have identified specific areas where parishes require additional support.

- Whilst there are some initiatives regarding support to PSOs, this also needs to be prioritised and developed.

Diocesan response: Last year a temporary post of Diocesan Safeguarding Assistant was created. We are pleased to announce that this has now been made a permanent post, and this includes additional hours specifically for supporting PSOs.

- The Diocese needs to agree with the parishes' guidance about data storage regarding safeguarding and recruitment paperwork.

Diocesan response: In accordance with temporary national guidance from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, all parishes have been instructed to retain all safeguarding paper work. We are working on new guidance which will be issued once this temporary guidance has been revoked.

Concluding response

The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, Carol Clarke, made the following concluding response:

"We found the Independent Safeguarding Audit to be a thorough and helpful process; it has also helped us prioritise areas of future development.

We are grateful to everyone in the Diocesan family that has helped us to get to this point and ask for your continued support as we seek to build upon this vital area of work.

We will continue to develop new resources for parishes, which will be published on our Diocesan website at www.dioceseofcoventry.org/safeguarding