

DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE

DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING ADVISORY PANEL

**ANNUAL REPORT
2023**



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Introduction

DSAP is an independent partnership of Diocesan officers and independent members who work together to ensure that safeguarding arrangements in the Diocese of Newcastle are as good as they can be. We oversee the effective implementation of safeguarding policies and practices by providing scrutiny, support and challenge.

We receive data each month and consider this and a range of safeguarding issues at our regular meetings. Task groups are set up where appropriate to examine specific issues in detail.

Membership includes the Bishop of Newcastle, other diocesan officers, representatives from Newcastle Cathedral, Local Authorities, Northumbria Police, Health, the voluntary sector and a survivor with lived experience of abuse in a church setting.

Following earlier SCIE audit recommendations, we have strengthened the safeguarding links between the diocese and the Cathedral to ensure consistency in practice. The Cathedral provides reports at each DSAP meeting, to allow oversight of Cathedral safeguarding matters and the DSAP chair also chairs the Cathedral Safeguarding Committee.

Business objectives were agreed for 2023:

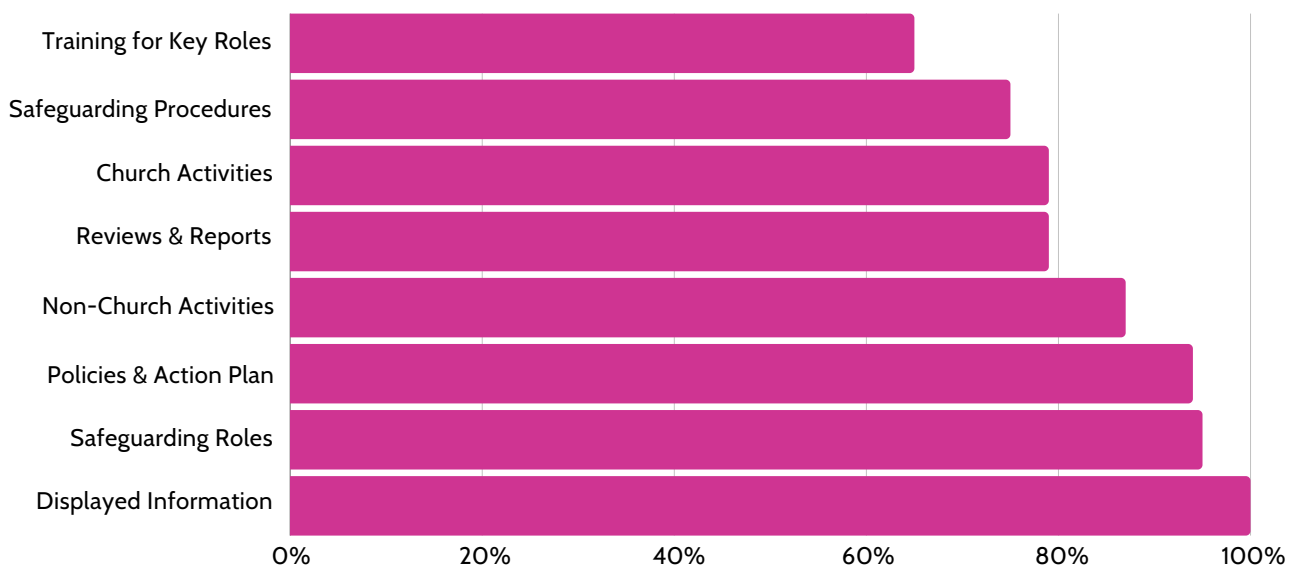
- To deliver an efficient and effective safeguarding service for the Diocese of Newcastle
- To ensure consistently good safeguarding responses across the Diocese of Newcastle
- To embed a healthy safeguarding culture across the Diocese of Newcastle

Data

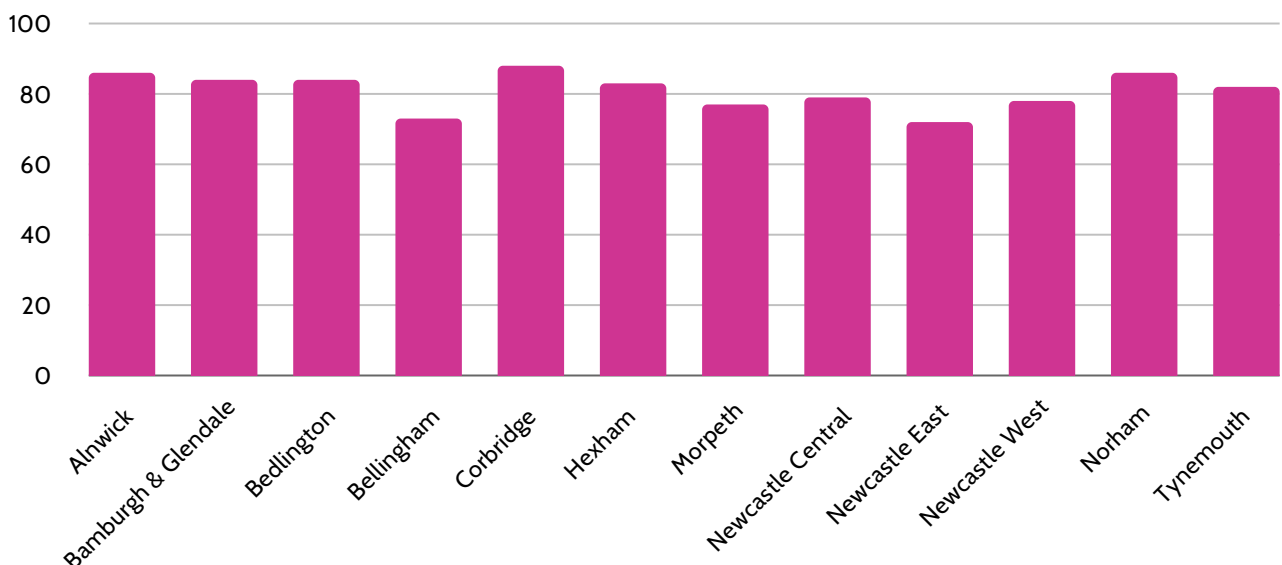
The data below covers the calendar year 2023:

Safeguarding Parish Dashboard

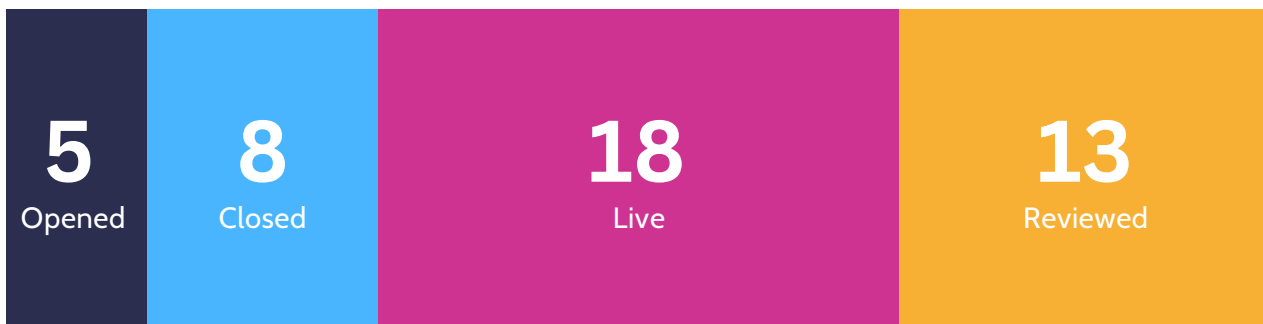
Graph showing overall diocese compliance against each key safeguarding requirement as defined in the Parish Safeguarding Handbook



Graph showing overall compliance to minimum safeguarding requirements, by Deanery



Church Safety Plans



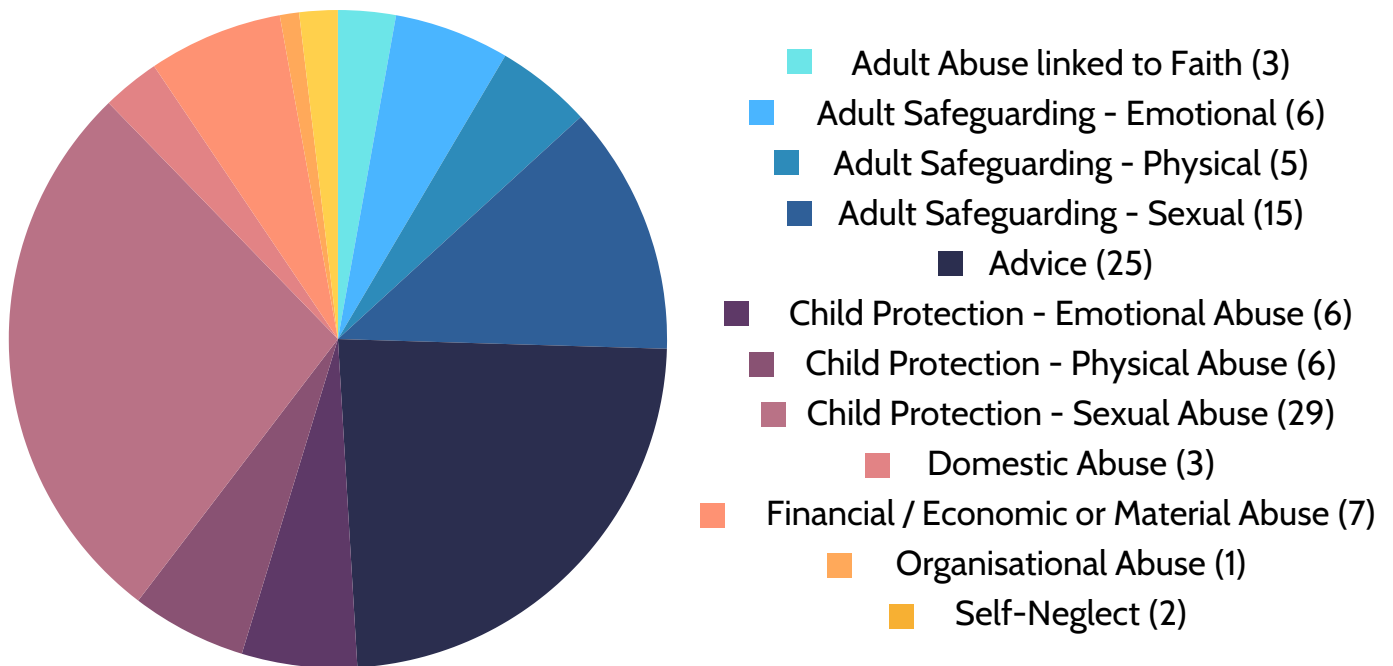
Core Groups and Safeguarding Management Meetings



Cases



Graph showing breakdown of all recorded cases by key category (as defined by the National Safeguarding Team)



Safeguarding Leadership Learning

132 people attended Safeguarding Leadership Learning in 2023, at the close of 2023 there were 3 Clergy, 23 Churchwardens and 3 PSOs whose training was out of date.

By receiving monthly reports and updates on the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard implementation, safeguarding learning events, and the My Concern case management system, we are able to scrutinise and acknowledge progress, and identify areas for focus.



Victims & Survivors

DSAP has welcomed the positive progress on support for survivors of abuse in a church setting. We are enormously grateful to those who have had the courage to lead or participate in innovative ways of raising awareness and seeking positive ways forward. During the year the exhibition of art work following on from “If I told you, what would you do” was shown in several other cathedrals across the country.

We were proud to support the development of the Chaplaincy for survivors, building on earlier work led by survivors with lived experience of abuse in a church setting, and welcomed Maggi Creese to the post in November.

Based in the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, the Chaplaincy for Survivors acts as a main point of contact for survivors from across the diocese, and those affected by abuse, providing pastoral and spiritual care, and a bridge to the Church/Diocese, and to external partners.

The Chaplaincy for Survivors will also have a role in raising awareness within the Diocese about the needs of survivors, and contribute to the training of lay and ordained ministers on issues of trauma and church-based abuse.

In addition, an “If I told you, what would you do” peer support group for anyone who has been harmed by any form of abuse in a church/faith context is now established and meets both virtually, and in person on a regular basis.

Learning to Improve

During 2023 DSAP has considered the above data and discussed a range of issues to support continuing improvement in safeguarding arrangements in the diocese. Some of these are set out below.

The DSAP subgroup monitoring progress on the action plan resulting from the Lessons Learned Reviews (LLR) which were carried out in 2022 has provided feedback to the full DSAP, noting achievements and that some actions are dependent on national actions. A report on the thematic learning from the three LLRs completed during 2022 was presented to the March DSAP meeting. It highlighted a number of deficiencies in practice and areas for improvement, but also noted that much good work had been done, particularly the levels of care shown to respondents, victims and those raising concerns. The LLR action plan was subsequently signed off by DSAP in September.

Safeguarding learning and development has continued throughout the year. Safeguarding leaders learning pathway has been well attended and received positive feedback for the revised approach to enable good practice to flow from understanding and inner motivation.

Links have been made with the University of Sunderland which, following on from PCR2 recommendations, led to research asking: “How can the Newcastle Diocese Safeguarding Team better support Incumbents, Parish Safeguarding Officers and Churchwardens in the effective implementation of Church of England safeguarding policy in practice?”

This researchers presented their report at an event at Newcastle Cathedral and provided a number of” questions for further consideration. The report can be accessed [here](#).

DSAP strives for continuous improvement and innovation. In May, an anonymous SWOT questionnaire was sent to 31 people with a connection to either the delivery or governance of safeguarding in the diocese. This identified 'Strengths' as strong leadership, receptive and innovative culture with focus on survivors, commitment to partnership working, well-structured activity with effective monitoring, a passion for safeguarding. 'Weaknesses' were seen as unclear lines of accountability (parish/diocese), lack of resources in the safeguarding team, culture of resistance and negativity from some Church officers, gaps in training. 'Opportunities' included further development of work with survivors and more creativity and innovation, and 'Threats' included challenges in relation to accountability and complexity in church structures, lack of capacity and resource in safeguarding, and complacency.

Practice Developments

A sub group has produced social media guidance which provides comprehensive advice on safeguarding practice in the social media world. It sets out guidance as to the minimum standards which should be met to ensure good practice and appropriate safeguarding when using social media. This will be promoted in the coming months, but is available here.

Another sub group has produced guidance on lone working, an action which came from the recommendations of a LLR and which is available here.

A Safeguarding Recruitment Hub has been piloted to help managers fulfil their responsibility and compliance with the Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance'. We are planning to roll this out across the diocese in 2024.

Another innovation has been to pilot a trainee social worker placement within the safeguarding team. Our first social work student worked successfully in a variety of roles. She supported churches with training portals, parish dashboards and other technology-based tasks, worked with children with behavioural problems and from disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as people struggling to overcome issues such as addiction. She also struck up a partnership involving retailer Asda, the Bay Foodbank at Meadow Well, and Newcastle Cathedral, which led to large donations of sanitary products.

Past Cases Review² recommendation 24 was for DSAPs to reach out to Theological Education Institutions to ensure a whole system approach to safeguarding and adherence to best safeguarding practices. A joint diocesan group has therefore been established between Newcastle and Durham dioceses, Lindisfarne college of Theology, Cranmer, Newcastle Director of Ordinands and Vocations, and Durham Vocations and Strategy. The group now meets quarterly to take this recommendation forward.

Strategic Development

We have engaged with and contributed to the wider debate on national changes to safeguarding. Newcastle has been a pathfinder diocese for IICSA recommendations 1 and 8, which relate to a new model for governance and accountability. We have commented on the new National Safeguarding Standards and Quality Assurance Framework during their development phase, and members of DSAP have been interviewed by the team led by Professor Alexis Jay reporting on the Future of Safeguarding in the Church of England which will recommend a model for fully independent safeguarding in the Church of England.

DSAP has contributed to the Diocesan Safeguarding Strategy 2023 – 2026. This strategy is now aligned with the new national safeguarding standards (Culture, Leadership and Capacity; Prevention; Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk; Victims and Survivors; Learning, Supervision and Support) and sets out how we intend to deliver on these aims. The full document can be accessed at [\(link\)](#).

Looking Ahead

As we move forward into 2024, we seek to continue to embed a positive safeguarding culture in the diocese and to sustain the existing strong leadership of safeguarding. We hope too that there will be sufficient resources to develop the work further in what will be a year of national changes in the safeguarding structures in the Church of England.

Finally, I would like to thank all those within the parishes and the diocese who have contributed to making it a safer place to worship, and to members of DSAP who have provided wisdom and insight into some challenging issues, and most particularly to the safeguarding team, Carol, Donna and Maggi, whose commitment and positivity has been outstanding. We look forward to further progress in 2024.