**Diocese of Newcastle**

**Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel**

**Annual report 2022**

The overarching aim of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) is to ensure the effective implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures and to provide challenge, scrutiny and advice on safeguarding matters, leading to a positive safeguarding culture across the Diocese, its churches and the Cathedral.

Membership comprises the Bishop, senior clergy and diocesan officers, independent members from local authorities, the police, the voluntary sector and a survivor with lived experience of church related abuse. There is an independent chair.

During the course of 2022 the DSAP met three times, with supporting work being done by sub groups in between times.

This year we have seen more progress being made to achieve the safeguarding objectives for the diocese:

* 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

We have sought to develop and enhance our partnership approach and to improve the way we operate. We have reviewed and revised our Terms of Reference and have integrated oversight of Newcastle Cathedral safeguarding matters into our work. We now have a more inclusive membership and the survivor voice remains fundamental to DSAP’s work.

We have also sought to develop our shared understanding of church related abuse. Following on from an informative session on Moral Injury presented by Dr Sarah Troughton in December 2021, we benefited from a session exploring Spiritual Abuse led by the National Safeguarding Team to raise and broaden our awareness and to develop a shared understanding by Church officers and external colleagues.

DSAP has discussed a wide range of issues but **our key areas of focus in 2022** have been:

**Past Cases Review2**

The second review into Past Cases of alleged abuse within church settings was undertaken in the diocese by independent reviewers as part of the national PCR2 work. A sub group of DSAP oversaw the work of the reviewers, the production of the executive summary, and the action plan. The action plan was monitored by the sub group and signed off by DSAP in May. All the actions for the diocese have been undertaken and the resulting practices have become business as usual.

**Data and parish dashboard**

DSAP has given much thought to what data could be collected to help us in determining the effectiveness and quality of safeguarding arrangements. Newcastle diocese has been at the forefront of introducing the parish safeguarding data dashboard. The dashboard provides a clearer picture of compliance with safeguarding requirements in parishes and enables the safeguarding team to target support where it is needed.

As the new system beds in the quality of the data will become easier to interrogate and trend data will help us to track progress. This, combined with anonymised data about active cases and worship agreements, helps us to fulfil our responsibilities.

**Lessons Learned Reviews**

Three Lessons Learned Reviews (LLRs) were completed by independent reviewers during 2022, with a fourth close to completion in December. These LLRs were commissioned by DSAP following the completion of safeguarding investigations of a complex or challenging nature or where there was significant cause for concern.

A thematic report of the issues identified in the LLRs has been produced and this notes the changing context of diocesan safeguarding work as policies, procedures and training are all updated. Two of the 2022 LLRs highlighted the significant positive changes in safeguarding culture and practice within the Diocese, as well as in the national Church context.

However, the LLRs also identified a number of areas where there were deficiencies in the handling of the safeguarding cases. These included:

* Some deficiencies in recording the completion of agreed actions
* Some apparent failures to act on concerning information
* Departures from the Church’s Practice Guidance for safeguarding investigations
* A lack of clarity, in the past, on the roles assigned to those providing support to respondents
* Issues in sharing information across Diocesan boundaries
* A blurring of professional boundaries on the part of some respondents
* Issues specifically relating to safeguarding concerns raised by colleagues
* Delays and lack of clarity in disciplinary processes
* A need for more “trauma-informed” approaches, especially in dealing with victims and survivors of abuse
* Issues in administration and record-keeping
* Support for respondents in safeguarding investigations

Whilst the lessons learned review process rightly highlights deficiencies in practice and areas for improvement, much good work was also noted in the 2022 reviews, most commonly the levels of care shown to respondents, victims and those raising concerns.

The thematic report will be presented to DSAP and a detailed action plan will be monitored by a sub group of DSAP during 2023.

**Survivor engagement**

DSAP has continued to encourage and support survivor engagement. We have been fortunate that a number of courageous survivors have been willing to share their experience, their energy and their commitment to help the church improve its response to victims and survivors.

Survivors have led the work on creating resources for the whole Church. June saw the launch event for “If I told you, what would you do?” at Newcastle Cathedral; the videos, art work and music have been shared widely across the Church and in training session to wide acclaim. and will be used in the national implementation of the ‘Responding well’ guidance.

We are rightly proud of these achievements and hope these will be built on in 2023.

**Social media**

The debate about the challenges and concerns presented by potential misuse of social media and on-line harm in the Church context has led DSAP to establish a sub group to draw together guidance from a variety of sources to share with parishes. This work will continue during 2023.

**Governance and administration**

As we seek for continuous improvement in our safeguarding arrangements, we have been keen for the Diocese to participate in the governance and accountability pathfinders introduced by the national team as a result of the IICSA recommendations 1 and 8. This has included participation in the new case management system which has led to safeguarding files being stored electronically. This particular initiative is making a big difference in addressing issues of coherence in record keeping identified in PCR2 and in the LLRs.

Finally, the work of DSAP would not have been possible without the skilled support, commitment and positive attitude of the Safeguarding Team. Thank you.

Jackie McHanwell

Independent Chair