



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE

PAST CASES REVIEW 2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SEPTEMBER 2022

THIS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SETS OUT THE PROCESS OF THE PAST CASES REVIEW 2 (PCR2) IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE, AND SUMMARISES THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

CONTENTS

01	Introduction from the Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel	2
02	Message from the Acting Bishop of Newcastle	4
03	Introduction and Background to PCR2	5
04	Process and Data	6
05	Local Themes	7
06	Survivor Strategy	8
07	Implementation of Recommendations	10

1. INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR OF THE DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING ADVISORY PANEL

This is the summary of a significant piece of work undertaken in the Diocese of Newcastle to review past cases of alleged abuse within church settings. It was undertaken as part of the national Past Cases Review 2 process and this local report contributes to the overall understanding and learning about safeguarding within the Church. This report therefore marks an important step along the pathway to embedding a positive safeguarding culture in the Diocese of Newcastle.

We acknowledge that things sometimes went wrong in the past, that people who should have been safe and protected within a church setting sometimes were not, and that sometimes the response of the church in not accepting that abuse had occurred, was in itself felt by victims as further abuse and counter to the healing and restorative process we want to see. We are truly sorry for that and are working hard to make it a thing of the past.

We have considered the findings of the report and have acted on all the recommendations. It is our practice now, should cases of potential abuse be identified, firstly to act swiftly according to the Church's practice guidelines, but secondly to commission a Lessons Learned Review of all such cases. This is part of our attempt to continually improve how we recognise and respond to allegations of abuse.

Victims and survivors are at the centre of our thinking. We have been so fortunate to have a number of survivors of church based abuse who have shown the courage and the determination to work with us to make a real difference in the here and now. We have learnt much from them about how the church might prevent abuse and support those who have been abused. We hope that now, in this diocese, the journey we're on to embed a strong safeguarding culture across the diocese is bearing fruit. You can see an example of the work that survivors have led to push this forward on our [website](#).

Publishing this report is an honest attempt to be open about past failings. We are so sorry for those times when we have not got things right and for the harm and damage caused. We do not underestimate the impact caused.

If you feel that you, or someone you know, may have been or is being abused within a church setting, please do contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, Carol Butler, on c.butler@newcastle.anglican.org.

If you do not feel comfortable with that option, you might contact [Safe Spaces](https://www.safe-spaces.org/) on safespaces@splitz.org

You will be listened to.

Jackie McHanwell

Independent Chair, Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel

2. MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING BISHOP OF NEWCASTLE

“This was the most extensive review of past safeguarding cases ever conducted in the Church of England and I welcome the report.

I am grateful to all those who have engaged with this process which is part of our shared commitment to making our churches safer spaces for everyone.

We committed to implementing the report’s recommendations for the Diocese of Newcastle and completed our Action Plan in May 2022. I commend this report to you.”

The Right Reverend Mark Wroe
Bishop of Berwick and Acting Bishop of Newcastle

3. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND TO PCR2

The Diocese of Newcastle lies in the north east of England, largely between the River Tyne and the Scottish border. It includes the local authority areas of Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside and Northumberland, but also small parts of County Durham and Cumbria. The Diocese has 236 churches (and Newcastle Cathedral) in 172 parishes and serves a population of some 800,000 people across a variety of communities, ranging from sparse rural areas to large urban populations. A cohort of 155 licensed clergy, 167 clergy with Permission to Officiate (PTO) and 53 Readers serve under the episcopal oversight of the Acting Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt Revd Mark Wroe, and are assisted by a team of lay and ordained supporting officers and chaplains.

In May 2007, the House of Bishops decided there was a need to review past cases of alleged abuse following several clergy and church officials being charged with sexual offences against children. As a result of this decision, all dioceses carried out an independent review of files related to licensed clergy, retired clergy, Readers and those in lay ministry who had access to children in the church. The Diocese of Newcastle carried out its first Past Cases Review (PCR1) in 2008 and the findings were reported to the Diocesan Bishop (the Rt Revd Martin Wharton) and the National Safeguarding Adviser.

Following further work at a national level, a national Protocol and Practice Guidance Document was produced (July 2019) and Bishops were asked to initiate a PCR2 in their Dioceses. The aspiration in relation to PCR2 was that, at the completion of the review process, it would be possible to state that:

- all known safeguarding cases have been appropriately managed and reported to statutory agencies, or the police where appropriate.
- the needs of any known victims have been considered and that sources of support have been identified and offered where this is appropriate.
- all identified risks have been assessed and mitigated as far as is reasonably possible.

4. PROCESS & DATA

Three independent suitably qualified and experienced reviewers were appointed by the Diocese of Newcastle. Their work was overseen by a sub-group of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP), which included an independent chair, representatives from local authorities and survivors. The review was carried out between January 2020 and April 2021.

The specific objectives of PCR2 were to:

- identify all information held within parishes, Cathedrals, Dioceses or other church bodies, which may contain allegations of abuse or neglect, where the alleged perpetrator was a clergy person or other church officer and ensure these cases have been independently reviewed.
- ensure all allegations of abuse of children, especially those that have been recorded since the original PCR1, have been handled appropriately and proportionately to the level of risk identified and with the “paramountcy principle” of the welfare of the child evidenced within decision making.
- ensure that recorded incidents or allegations of abuse of an adult (including domestic abuse) have been handled appropriately, demonstrating the principles of adult safeguarding.
- ensure that the support needs of known survivors have been considered.
- ensure that all safeguarding allegations have been referred to Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers and are being/have been responded to in line with current safeguarding practice guidance.
- ensure that cases meeting the relevant thresholds have been referred to statutory agencies.

A total of 782 files were identified for consideration in PCR2. No concerns were identified in 739 of these cases. The vast majority of the remaining cases were already known to the Diocesan safeguarding team

One case which met the threshold for referral to a statutory agency was discovered by the independent reviewers.

A small number of cases were further explored to ensure that any risks have been managed in line with current Church of England safeguarding guidance.

5. LOCAL THEMES

The key finding of the Newcastle PCR2 review was that much progress had been made in diocesan safeguarding systems and practice in recent years.

The shift from the former, very constrained Child Protection Adviser role, the holder of which was also a priest, to a professional safeguarding team has undoubtedly helped this process. This change, of course, was necessary and there is still some way to go, but that should not prevent proper acknowledgement of the distance travelled so far.

In the PCR2 process some disappointing, even concerning, practice was noted, but this was invariably in older cases. In the last five years especially, there were signs of a growing confidence and an increasingly professional approach, appropriate early intervention and good liaison with other organisations and across dioceses.

However, organisational culture always tends to lag behind structural and systemic change. This has been very evident in the PCR2 process. There was certainly a shift to a better balance between pastoral and safeguarding priorities but tensions do, at times, exist between the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and parishes. Such tensions cast doubt on the rigour with which a locality might monitor and enforce, for example, a safeguarding agreement, though this can, realistically, only happen at that level.

6. SURVIVOR STRATEGY

The quality of support for victims and survivors has, over the past twenty years, improved from what was a significantly low base.

Since the completion of PCR2 our Survivors Group 'If I Told You What Would You Do' have been successful with an application to the Safe Spaces National Small Grant Fund. The Diocese committed to match funding.

The project activities are outlined below:

- Design and develop accessible multimedia resources and materials to engage survivors of church-based abuse and educate those who need to respond well to them (infographic poster with supporting and expanding postcards; art exhibition and original music score; short animation exploring helpful and unhelpful responses to survivors, all produced by those with lived experience of church-based abuse).
- Hold an engagement and promotion event (spring 2022) at Newcastle Cathedral.
- Establish a Peer Support Group, co-facilitated by 'If I Told You What Would You Do?' leaders, meeting monthly, sessions alternating in person/online.
- 'If I Told You What Would You Do?' will produce and disseminate original and innovative pieces created by those with lived experience of church-based abuse. They include an original musical score for double choir and organ to be played at the launch events, recorded and uploaded to a dedicated page on the diocesan website; an Art Exhibit using Angels as a theme to explore a survivor's journey; an infographic inspired by trauma informed principles and the key questions:

- o Would you make me feel safe?
 - o Would you show me that I could trust you?
 - o Would you help me find others who understand and can offer me support?
 - o Would you walk with me at my pace?
 - o Would you encourage me to use my voice?
 - o Would you respect my choices?
 - o Would you value who I am right now?
- There are supporting postcards describing what 'I need' from you to heal and recover. A short animation will explore helpful and unhelpful responses to survivors using flower imagery building on the Alexander Den Heijer quote, "When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower".

The target beneficiaries of this work are as below:

- Those with lived experience of abuse in a church context, those who have spoken out and those who have not yet found a voice.
- The families and friends of those who have experienced church-based abuse and are living with the consequences.
- Clergy and lay members of church bodies who need to see, hear and respond well to those who have experienced trauma and abuse in the church.
- Colleagues in non-church professions who work with survivors of church-based abuse (e.g. mental health services) and need to understand the particular impacts of this abuse and how to respond well.

In addition, the materials will be designed to have national reach and wide dissemination across the Church of England.

The Church of England's National Safeguarding Team has invited us to participate in the national implementation of the new guidance for 'Responding Well' to survivors.

7. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are deliberately modest in scope, mostly low in cost and achievable within the Diocese. More strategic issues and suggestions will emerge from the national PCR2 process which was published in October 2022.

The Independent Reviewers noted that, from the experience of PCR2 in Newcastle, what is needed most is more consistent adherence to existing systems, rather than too many new ones. All recommendations are supported by evidence from the PCR2 file reviews noted throughout the main report.

The 25 recommendations fell into seven categories:

- Safer recruitment and ongoing accountability
- Recording and file management
- Risk management
- Culture
- Victims and survivors
- Dealing with complaints
- The special position of the Cathedral

A detailed Action Plan was agreed to progress the recommendations. The implementation of the Action Plan was monitored by the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel and the Action Plan was completed in May 2022.